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Fostering Greater Conversion for Active Liturgical Participation: Exploring the Thought of Bernard Lonergan

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DECLARATION

I declare that the Thesis, *Fostering Greater Conversion for Active Liturgical Participation: Exploring the Thought of Bernard Lonergan*, is my work. I equally declare that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree in this or in any other University. I also declare that all relevant materials used in this work are duly acknowledged and referenced. No part of this thesis should be reproduced or transmitted in any format without the author's permission.

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Abstract

The challenge before contemporary liturgical and sacramental theologians is to find new means of explaining the notion of sacramental efficacy, which would be sufficient to sustain the Christian faith and enhance worship in our contemporary society. This study argues that the complexities of the human person in today's society have made the traditional categories and framework (like Thomas Aquinas' theory of sanctifying grace) used to express the human person's experience of God inadequate to enhance worship in contemporary times. It presents Bernard Lonergan's approach as a more sustainable model that better elaborates on the position of Thomas Aquinas and The Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Lonergan attempts to understand the idea of grace offered in the sacraments by beginning with human experiences. He advocates for a liturgical and sacramental theology that enables the human person to encounter God. For him, reflection on conversion is the foundation for that new theology.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is to show how Bernard Lonergan's framework on conversion could be applied to the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and liturgy generally. The aim is to draw out implications for liturgical praxis. It argues that Lonergan's treatment of conversion sheds more light on the complexities of conversion as found in RCIA, thereby stressing the idea that conversion is not just an event of grace brought about by the rites but a conscious lifelong process that takes into consideration the religious experience of the human person.[1]

Research Question

This thesis seeks to answer the question: How may the place of conversion (that is, its role, value, and purpose) be identified in the liturgy by employing Bernard Lonergan's treatment of conversion as an interpretative framework and making specific reference to the RCIA? To respond to this fundamental research question, we shall address the following **Sub Questions:**

1. How has the tradition understood conversion, particularly writers reflecting on the liturgy and ecclesial practices?
2. What have been the theological reflections on the role of conversion in RCIA since its introduction?
3. What is Lonergan's framework? How has it been received? How may it be evaluated and implored to strengthen the importance of conversion in the liturgy as intended by RCIA?

[1] For Lonergan, in *Method in Theology,* conversion may be intellectual, moral, or religious. Whereas intellectual conversion enables a person to move from the level of appearance to grasp the reality of particular situations, moral conversion enables him/her to begin to pursue value. In contrast, religious conversion enables the person who has acquired the right values to count everything else as less important except God. The treatment of the triple conversion does not necessarily follow a chronological order. However, this arrangement is necessary for critical contemporary analysis and for the proper understanding of the symbiotic relationship between the three levels of conversion.

Research Structure

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter one will explore Lonergan's philosophical and theological reflections on the understanding of the human person from the standpoint of intentionality and consciousness, with particular reference to conversion as a path to self-transcendence and authenticity as a product of self-transcendence. The aim is to help the reader first understand the nature and complexities of this human person who needs to undergo conversion from Lonergan's point of view. The chapter will take a careful look at Lonergan's *Insight* and *Method in Theology* to establish the true identity of the human person as a being unto self-transcendence. It will also seek to establish the notion that Lonergan's position is "critically realist," which brings out his unique view on subjectivity. His idea of authentic subjectivity recognizes the importance of the other and, by extension, creates a sense of community, influencing his later view on the communal dimension of conversion.

Chapter two will examine how the tradition understood conversion, particularly writers reflecting on the liturgy and ecclesial practices. It will review the understanding and implications of conversion from a historical perspective. It will address whether conversion was understood as an event or a process. Furthermore, the review will unpack the understanding of conversion from the optic of magisterial teachings, papal writings, and contemporary theological discussions. The focus will be on unearthing the ambiguities surrounding the idea of conversion and finding out whether conversion is an experience, or an event of grace accomplished by the sacraments or rituals of the Church.

In chapter three, the place and role of conversion in RCIA will be studied. A careful consideration of why RCIA situates conversion at the heart of the processes leading to the sacraments of initiation will be considered. It will also examine why RCIA insists that certain rituals make the ability to advance in the conversion journey possible. To this end, the chapter will consider not just the structure, place, and centrality of conversion in RCIA, but also the role of ritual in fostering the conversion process. It will also analyze RCIA's position on post-baptismal catechesis *(mystagogy)* and its inherent limitations in fostering an ongoing conversion journey. Equally, it will explore the dimensions of conversion in RCIA as the foundation for Bernard Lonergan's systematic treatment of conversion.

Chapter four will give an in-depth analysis of Lonergan's framework for conversion. It will explore intellectual, moral, and religious conversion as a foundational reality in theology, emphasizing self-appropriation and affirmation as the basis for intellectual conversion, self-consistency as the basis for moral conversion, and religious experience and self-transformation as the basis for religious conversion. It will explore Lonergan's idea that reflection on conversion is foundational for a new theology. This theology will lead us to encounter God through an unconditional falling in love. The chapter will seek to establish that when the human person, illuminated by grace and nurtured by experience, accepts the truth of faith and responds to God in love, then worship will become a lived experience.

The fifth chapter will focus on how Lonergan's framework might be applied to the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and liturgy generally. It will show how Lonergan's analysis of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion helps us understand how conversion, as envisioned by RCIA, works in practice. The purpose is to establish how Lonergan's framework might be evaluated and invoked to strengthen

the importance of conversion in the liturgy as intended by RCIA. It will focus on how the human person can engage in the liturgy as a truly human person, seeking self-transcendence, and how liturgy can be translated to life, practice, and active faith through conversion, thereby allowing liturgy to deepen and strengthen conversion constantly. Furthermore, this chapter will show that Lonergan dialogues with liturgical theology in the sense that religious conversion makes sacramental practice more meaningful to the worshiping person by means of the theology of the symbolic.

The final chapter, chapter six, will summarize this research. It will summarily respond to the key research questions, outline key findings, make adequate recommendations, and a conclusion that wraps up the work.

CHAPTER ONE

INSIGHTS INTO BERNARD LONERGAN'S PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS

1.0 Introduction

This first chapter examines Lonergan's philosophical writings, which laid the foundation for his theological position and from which we shall draw liturgical implications for active liturgical participation. Lonergan's philosophical and theological writings gained prominence with the publication of two outstanding works: *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* and *Method in Theology*. The former captures his philosophical position on the dynamics of the human person, while the latter expresses his theological view centered on religious experience and the place of conversion. Consequently, in this chapter, we shall analyze Lonergan's idea of the human subject from the standpoint of intentionality, consciousness, and authenticity, with particular emphasis on understanding, judgment, and decision in the light of self-transcendence. The aim is first to understand the nature and complexities of this human person who needs to undergo conversion from Lonergan's point of view. The chapter also focuses on Lonergan's position on what constitutes the foundational reality of theology and the place of religious experience.

1.1 Bernard Lonergan: 1904 – 1984

Bernard Lonergan was a Canadian Jesuit, a philosopher and theologian. He was a lecturer at the Gregorian University in Rome, Regis College, Toronto, and Boston College, Boston. He is renowned for publishing two books, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (a 750-page work published in 1957), which focuses on the

complexities of the human person and the process of knowing. The second is *Method in Theology* (406 pages published in 1972), an epoch-making work exploring theology's foundation and its place in religion. He is also famous for an array of papers that Toronto University Press has published in twenty-five volumes, entitled *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan.* These volumes were published to promote Lonergan's writings and preserve his thought. The materials here deal with scientific, philosophical, theological, and mathematical issues, together with topical discussions on the foundation of metaphysics, love and marriage, the nature of inference, and the contribution of university education to modern society.

Lonergan's *Insight* was anchored in the medieval thought of Thomas Aquinas and influenced by the modern philosophical ideas of René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Georg Friedrich Hegel, and David Hume, as well as the modern scientific positions of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein. It focuses not just on the process of knowing, but first, on the human person who engages in it, thereby leading to self-knowledge and self-understanding. His voracious appetite for knowledge led him to explore other fields, such as economics, physics, biology, mathematics, history, and psychology, and how they relate to theology and philosophy.

Building on *Insight,* Lonergan wrote *Method in Theology,* which seeks to provide a set of methods that will midwife a theology that must continually evolve with the times to mediate between religion and culture: resolving the conflicts therein (like religious fundamentalism, religious intolerance, respecting inter- and intra-faith boundaries) and finding answers to emerging contemporary issues like the role of grace in the economy of salvation, the relationship between faith and reason, the capacity of the contemporary person to worship, the role of the Church in a secularized society, and the place of inculturation. *Method in Theology* is said to be a

novel and outstanding publication because, firstly, theology maintains its traditional role of "faith seeking understanding" by allowing the theologian to inquire and interpret the tradition that existed before him/her. Secondly, it is progressive and existential because it allows the theologian to appropriate and apply the tradition in the present context and project into the future.

1.2 Person, Intentionality, Consciousness, and Authenticity in Bernard Lonergan: The Place of Experience, Understanding, Judgement, and Decision

Bernard Lonergan's *Insight* is one of the twentieth century's most complicated and challenging works because it attempts to bring theology into dialogue with other empirical scientific disciplines like modern physics, economics, mathematics, and philosophy. However, as challenging as it may appear, it remains an outstanding work that critically explores the complexities of the human person from the standpoint of intentionality, consciousness, and authenticity. It succinctly examines the place of experience, understanding, judgment, and decision in ascertaining the true identity of the human person as a being unto self-transcendence and, consequently, a worshiping being.

1.2.1 From Substance to Subject

Lonergan expands his idea of personhood with the interesting distinction between "substance" and "subject." From the point of view of human substance, he alludes to human nature being fixed: "A man is a man whether he is awake or asleep, young or old, sane or crazy, sober or drunk, a genius or a moron, a saint or a sinner."[2] In this light, the differences that occur between people are merely accidental. On the other

[2] Bernard Lonergan, "Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980," in the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* Edited by Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 314

hand, the subject "denotes a luminous being"; one who is not only awake but also actively intelligent, actively reasonable, actively responsible, and free.[3] Does this suggest that babies and those who cannot reason are not subjects and, as such, not persons? Lonergan will respond that "the being of the subject is becoming. One becomes oneself."[4] That is, a child is a subject but a subject that is becoming because it is unable to rationally distinguish between right or wrong, true or false, good or bad, and it has "not reached the degree of freedom and responsibility that would make [it] accountable before the law."[5] Being a subject comes with some degree of autonomy. One becomes a subject when one "finds out for himself that it is up to himself to decide what he is to make of himself."[6] From this understanding, being a subject does not admit following the crowd; it entails discovering a will and a mind of one's own, not choosing because everyone is choosing, or thinking the way everyone is thinking, but making one's own independent choices, deciding what one wants to make of oneself, and taking responsibilities for the outcomes. However, Lonergan admits that "it is one thing to decide what one is to make of oneself. It is another to execute the decision."[7]

1.2.2 The Human Subject

The notion of the subject is at the centre of Lonergan's thoughts and writings, especially his understanding of the human person as the foundation of theology. In a 1968 lecture, he observes that the pre-Hegelian philosophers and theologians neglected the subject on three grounds: firstly, the idea of the objectivity of truth; secondly, the rationalistic view of pure reason; and thirdly, the metaphysics of the

[3] Cf. Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid. Words in brackets added by me.
[6] Ibid., 315
[7] Ibid.

soul. On the objectivity of truth, Lonergan argues that truth, first and foremost, actually and ontologically, resides in the subject, since "the fruit of truth must grow and mature on the tree of the subject before it can be plucked and placed in its absolute realm."[8] On the rationalistic view of pure reason anchored on Aristotle's idea of science, Lonergan observes that self-evident scientific and philosophical positions undermine the importance of the individual subject. He says, "when scientific and philosophic conclusions follow necessarily from premises that are self-evident…there is no need to be concerned with the subject."[9] This, for him, should no longer be the case because the importance of the subject cannot be undermined. On the metaphysical view of the soul, Lonergan began by first drawing a line between the soul and the subject. He notes that the human person possesses the soul in whatever circumstance of life one finds himself or herself, whether conscious or unconscious, awake or asleep, religious or irreligious. However, this is not the case with the subject; the subject must be conscious. According to him:

> We have souls, whether awake or asleep, saints or sinners, geniuses or imbeciles. The study of the subject is quite different, for it is the study of oneself inasmuch as one is conscious. Subject and soul, then, are two entirely different topics. To know one does not exclude the other in any way. Nevertheless, it very quickly happens that the study of the soul leaves one with the feeling that one does not need to study the subject and, to that extent, leads to a neglect of the subject.[10]

For Lonergan, whereas the "soul" is an existential component of living beings, the "subject" is the human being capable of consciously inquiring about the events around him/her and rationally reflecting on the realities and circumstances one finds himself/herself. Consequently, he insists that we cannot continue to ignore the subject.

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[8] Bernard Lonergan, "The Subject," in *A Second Collection,* Edited by William Ryan and Bernard Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 71
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 72-73

He treats the subject not just as a knower, "one that experiences, understands, and judges," but also as a doer, "one that deliberates, evaluates, chooses, acts."[11] Because human doing is free and responsible, in it, the subject not only changes himself/herself but also modifies and changes his/her worldview. To this end, objectivity and subjectivity must not be seen as mutually exclusive. The act of "knowing" and "doing" places the existential subject above the other levels of consciousness.

For Lonergan, "the subject" is "the study of oneself inasmuch as one is conscious. It prescinds from the soul, essence, potencies, and habits, for none of these are given in consciousness. It attends to operations and to their centre and source, which is the self."[12] This self or subject, as noted earlier, cannot only experience, think, and judge; it can also decide, "deliberates, evaluates, chooses, and acts."[13] Through this process, the subject learns more about himself/herself and the world around him/her. In doing so, “the human subject makes himself what he is to be, and he does so freely and responsibly.”[14] Here, Lonergan's view is "critically realist," and it brings out his unique view on subjectivity. For him, subjectivity and objectivity are not mutually exclusive but complementary. Coghlan describes it thus:

> For Lonergan, objectivity is knowing that there are others than myself and that I am not those others. So, the context is making judgments that distinguish between the knower and the known. Authentic subjectivity consists not in overcoming the particularities of one's subjective viewpoint but in getting more deeply in touch with the unique particularity of one's perspective to better appreciate both the similarities and differences from the standpoints of other individuals.[15]

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[11] Ibid., 79.
[12] Ibid., 73.
[13] Ibid., 79.
[14] Ibid.
[15] David Coghlan, “Authenticity as First Person Practice: An Exploration Based on Bernard Lonergan” in *Action Research,* 6 (2008): 356.

Lonergan's idea of authentic subjectivity recognizes the importance of the other and, by extension, creates a sense of community, which will influence his latter view on the communal dimension of conversion. He stresses that humans are subjects, but to be fully human is to be conscious. However, a real existential subject is identified by rational self-consciousness. Consequently, he classified different degrees of human subjects in line with the different levels of consciousness, with the existential subject, "so to speak, on the top level."[16]

(i) *Potential Subjects:* One is a potential subject when he/she is unconscious, in dreamless sleep, or in a coma. The potential subject is at the lowest level of consciousness.

(ii) *Helpless Subject:* Here, the subject possesses "a minimal degree of consciousness and subjectivity when we are the helpless subjects of our dreams."[17]

(iii) *Experiential Subject:* A person becomes an experiential subject when one awakes. For Lonergan, we become a subject "when we become the subjects of lucid perception, imaginative projects, emotional and conative impulses, and bodily action."[18]

(iv) *Intelligent Subject:* For Lonergan, "the intelligent subject sublates the experiential."[19] That is, the person at this level gains understanding, invents, innovates, and reveals his/her discoveries.

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[16] Bernard Lonergan, "The Subject," in *A Second Collection,* 80.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] The idea of *sublate* is taken from the Hegelian view, which holds that a higher being retains and preserves the qualities of the lower being yet transcends the features of the lower being and completes it. For example, human intelligence goes beyond human sensitivity but cannot get along without sensitivity. For Joseph Flanagan, *sublation* entails "assimilation to a higher viewpoint"; for full details, see Joseph Flanagan, *Quest for Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Lonergan's Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 32-46.

(v) *Rational Subject:* The rational subject "sublates the intelligent and experiential subject."[20] At this stage, the person becomes critically conscious, thereby questioning and analyzing his/her claims, weighing the *pros* and *cons,* and deciding or judging what should or should not be.

(vi) *Existential Subject:* At this stage, human consciousness is at its epic. Here, the rational consciousness is sublated by rational self-consciousness. Hence, at this level, the person begins to deliberate, evaluate, decide, and act consciously.

According to Lonergan, the different levels of consciousness reveal the idea of transcendence. In continuous self-transcendence, the subject comes to the knowledge of the truth and the good. At this point, the person can confront his/her world, make independent decisions, and act on them. He captures it thus:

> What promotes the subject from experiential to intellectual consciousness is the desire to understand, the intention of intelligibility. What next promotes him from intellectual to rational consciousness, is a fuller unfolding of the same intention: for the desire to understand, once understanding is reached, becomes the desire to understand correctly; in other words, the intention of intelligibility, once an intelligible is reached, becomes the intention of the right intelligible, of the true and, through truth, of reality. Finally, the intention of the intelligible, the true, the real, becomes also the intention of the good, the question of value, of what is worthwhile, when the already acting subject confronts his world and adverts to his own acting in it.[21]

It is clear from the above that desire plays a vital role in transitioning from one level of consciousness to another. Desire alters one's standpoint and broadens one's vision, thereby expanding one's horizon. Lonergan notes that "what lies within one's horizon is in some measure, great or small, an object of interest and knowledge."[22] Horizon, therefore, plays a significant role in the three transcendental conversions.

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[20] Bernard Lonergan, "The Subject," in *A Second Collection,* 80.
[21] Ibid., 81.
[22] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology in the Collective Works of Bernard Lonergan,* Edited by Robert Doran and John Dadosky (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 222.

1.2.3 The Subject and Changing Horizons

In *Method in Theology,* Lonergan notes that “what lies beyond one’s horizon is simply outside the range of one’s knowledge and interest.”[23] This implies that the knowledge one possesses at any given time falls within the scope of one's horizon. However, the circumference of one's horizon at any given time does not suggest the totality of the knowledge of the particular reality. So, as our horizons widen, the scope of our knowledge broadens, and our interest expands. To this effect, there is, in the human person, the potential to self-transcend, and what facilitates the process of self-transcendence is one's horizon. Lonergan notes that the person or subject may possess different horizons, which also determines the scope of one's knowledge; he writes:

> As our field of vision, so too, the scope of our knowledge and the range of our interests are bounded. As fields of vision vary from one's standpoint, the scope of one's knowledge and the range of one's interests vary with the period in which one lives, one's social background and milieu, and one's education and personal development.[24]

Consequently, he identifies specific differences in horizons that "may be complementary, or genetic, or dialectical."[25] Firstly, horizons complement and complete one another. No single vision, profession, or specialty exists in isolation; individuals and groups may have their areas of specialty and develop vast horizons concerning their specialized areas, yet they acknowledge that other fields and areas of specialty also exist with experts in those other fields as well. According to Lonergan, "each is quite familiar with his own world. However, each also knows about the others, and each recognizes the need for the others. So, their many horizons in some

[23] Ibid., 221–222.
[24] Ibid., 221
[25] Ibid., 222.

measure include one another, and, for the rest, they complement one another."[26] In this case, each recognizes its limitations and the importance of the other, and together, they collaborate to acquire the needed knowledge for the proper functioning of society. It is in such a scenario that horizons are complementary.

Secondly, Lonergan notes that horizons may differ genetically. Differences occur in successive stages in some developmental processes: “each later stage presupposes earlier stages, partly to include them and partly to transform them. Precisely because the stages are earlier and later, no two are simultaneous. They are parts, not of a single communal world, but of a single biography or of a single history.”[27] So, one’s horizon broadens and enlarges as he/she goes through different stages of growth and development.

Thirdly, horizons may be dialectically different in that what is true for one individual may be false for another; what one considers good may be considered evil by another; what is intelligible for one may be unintelligible for another. Interestingly, "each may have some awareness of the other, and so each in a manner may include the other. But such inclusion is also negation and rejection."[28]

Finally, Lonergan observes that horizons are the structured result of past achievements and the conditions and limitations of further development.[29] Hence, our intentions and actions fall within a given context which we consult when we want to clarify, amplify, or explain the reasons behind our actions. Such contexts could also create new avenues to develop our knowledge and the opportunity for developing new attitudes. What stands out very clearly in Lonergan's treatment of horizons is that they

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

form the bases that determine our interests and knowledge. They also serve as catalysts for further knowledge, and they widen concerns. However, they can also become the boundaries that hinder our capacity to acquire more knowledge than we already have. Horizons reveal the place of consciousness and intentionality in Lonergan's theological method, which paved the way for his epic discussion on the triple conversion.

1.2.4 Intentionality and Consciousness

Intentionality, for Lonergan, is an idea that characterizes the human person. Drawing insight from Edmond Husserl's concept of *Intentionalitat,* which means a "tension towards" reality or a tension that brings about the emergence of human life, Lonergan reveals the dynamism of intentionality and how it unfolds in four levels: experience, understanding, judgment, and decision. Louis Roy notes that "the human subject moves through these four levels in two directions: in an upward movement and in a downward movement."[30]

In the upward movement from lower to higher, one begins to gather data via the senses. Both humans and animals share the first level (experience) on the upward movement. In contrast, the other three levels are specific to human beings since they have their foundations in the act of questioning.[31] Hence, one advances, for example, from experience (level one) to understanding (level two) by asking questions in line with the data gathered from sense experience. Such questions include: What is this or

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[30] Louis Roy, "Religious Experience According to Bernard Lonergan" in *Sintese, Belo Horizonte 38* (2011): 386.

[31] Speaking on the centrality of the inherent capacity of human beings to question in Lonergan's writings, David Aiken states: "Lonergan's path to self-understanding begins by observing that human beings have a penchant for raising questions." He further insists that "the significance of our primordial wondering is central to Lonergan's understanding of the human person and omnipresent in his writing." See David W. Aiken, "Bernard Lonergan's Critique of Reductionism: A Call to Intellectual Conversion" in *Christian Scholar Review* 15 (2012): 236.

that? What does this or that mean? How does this or that operate? Roy maintains that "the answers to these questions are insights, which are acts of understanding, and are expressed in interrelated concepts that form hypotheses."[32] We move from understanding (level two) to judgment (level three) when we begin to detach critically from the hypotheses of the second level by asking questions of a different kind, such as: Is that the case? Can this be true? Roy believes that "the answers given are for the most part only probable: they are judgments about reality, which is known in a manner that is imperfect, open to revision, and nevertheless probably correct."[33] Moving from the third level (judgment) to the fourth level (decision) requires further questions: what must one do in a given situation? What good accrues from accomplishing a given task? Which behaviour or action is worth taking? Questions like these call for particular decisions that will impact others in any given society. The decision must be intentionally and consciously made with freedom so that one takes responsibility for one's actions. The human person is fundamentally a moral being whose actions have moral consequences for himself/herself and others in the larger society. It is at the level of value that one acts out of love for oneself and love for others. At this level, one necessarily discovers the need to self-transcend, and one ultimately becomes authentically human by continually self-transcending.[34]

Roy notes that human intentionality also acts from higher to lower in the downward movement. According to him:

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[32] Louis Roy, "Religious Experience According to Bernard Lonergan," 386.
[33] Ibid., 387.
[34] The unique and distinctive functions of this fourth level are broadly discussed by Lonergan in chapters one, two, and four of *Method in Theology.* Here, he departs from his position in *Insight,* where he has ascribed the operations of deliberation and decision to the third level - *rational consciousness.* The reason why he changed his mind is highlighted in "Insight Revisited" in Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection,* Edited by William Ryan and Bernard Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 277; also see Bernard Lonergan, "The Subject" in *A Second Collection,* 69ff.

> This second movement starts at the fourth level, the level of values, love, and commitment to others. Here, one lives within a horizon, a set of interests, a particular sensitivity to aspects of one's life. This fundamental state enables us to more readily accept, at the third level, truths that agree with that which we value at the fourth level. Next, as we progressively accept these truths, we gain a deeper understanding of their importance at the second level. Finally, at the first level, we express that which we hold dear (fourth level), consider true (third level), and find meaningful (second level). We then become both creators and communicators of data, which we hope are intelligible, true, and value-laden…[35]

This later movement enables one to find meaning and communicate the same through the influence of what one holds dear and valuable. It presupposes that what one holds dear influences one's horizon and shapes one's vision of life. This study holds that if one's horizon is deficient and misplaced, one's morality will also be altered. If one's morality is deficient, worship is equally undermined, and active liturgical participation is downplayed. Thus, Intentionality and consciousness play a crucial role in theological discourse.

Consciousness "is a personal reality."[36] According to Lonergan, it is what reveals and constitutes the self as *a subject.* That is, the self-as-subject cannot exist without consciousness. Walter Conn puts it thus:

> The 'I' who understands, judges, and decides is not only revealed to itself in consciousness as intelligent, reasonable, and responsible but is capable of understanding, judging, and deciding only through consciousness. The self is brought into being as an 'I' by the very consciousness that reveals it to itself….In short, consciousness is not only cognitive; it is also constitutive of the knowing self-as-subject of the 'I' that is cognitively present to itself.[37]

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[35] Louis Roy, "Religious Experience According to Bernard Lonergan," 387.
[36] Charles C. Hefling Jr., "Consciousness" in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* edited by Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993): 202
[37] Walter E. Conn, "Understanding the Self in Self-transcendence," in *Pastoral Psychology* 46 (1997): 11

This implies that one, for instance, exists not because someone feels, touches, or experiences him/her in any way; one exists because of one's ability to acknowledge oneself as a subject. This conscious awareness of oneself ignites the burning desire for self-transcendence in the subject. However, the possibility of the subject to self-transcend requires it to go beyond itself to understand the self. For Lonergan, this act of introspection is a process that demands the proper judgment, implying that a self is simply a conscious person.

Going by the above understanding of the self-as-subject, one wonders if the "I" is the same as the "me"? This question brings to the fore the two dimensions of the self, which Conn calls the "subject-pole" and the "object pole," that is, the "I" and the "me," respectively.[38] These poles, according to Conn, "exist in a dialectical[sic] relationship. To understand the self we must understand both poles, the "I" and the "me," in their mutually influencing relationship."[39] What we discussed earlier about the self falls within the sphere of the "I" as subject or the self-as-subject. On the other hand, the self-as Object is the self as known from the material, social, and spiritual dimensions.[40] According to James, the body constitutes the core of the *material "me,"* and what I do to preserve the well-being of the body (clothes, shelter, etc.) becomes part of what is called "me." The *social me* consists of the recognition and acknowledgment we get from others, especially those dear to us. People who are dear to us hold some opinions about us, which, to a large extent, contribute to defining and identifying "me." The *spiritual "me"* refers to the totality of the different levels of consciousness. These three dimensions of the self as "me" are what James referred to

[38] Ibid., 13.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Cf. William James, *Psychology: The Briefer Course,* Edited by Allport G. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 45–48.

as the psychic reality of the self, which constitutes what is called "me." Thus, the self as "me" is constituted and formed through personal experience.

From these analyses of the self as "I" (the subjective self) and the self as "me" (the objective self), it could be deduced that the self as "person" is primarily constituted by consciousness and experience; that is, as a combination of the "I" (the subjective-pole) and the "me" (the objective-pole). However, it should be added that this idea of self is rooted, sustained, and preserved in memory since it is a memory that facilitates the process of self-creation by linking the historical past to the present in the view of shaping the future in the entire process of self-transcendence.

1.2.4.1 Intentionality and Consciousness at the Heart of Lonergan's Cognitive Theory

Intentionality and Consciousness are the bedrock on which Lonergan built his theological method. It forms the basis of his treatment of the cognitive theory. In *Method in Theology,* he developed the cognitive theory, which was extensively treated in *Insight.* In *Insight,* the theory consisted of three levels of intentionality and consciousness, namely, the *empirical level* on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, and move; the *intellectual level* on which we inquire, understand, express our understanding, and raise presuppositions of our expressions and the implications thereof: that is, assumptions that are often taken for granted are raised and discussed to determine their proper context and the consequences arising from their correct understanding; the *rational level* on which we reflect and judge the truth or falsity, certainty or probability of our claims. In *Method in Theology,* he added the fourth

level, the *responsible level* on which our actions and values flow.[41] Lonergan gives greater attention to this fourth level since it focuses on ourselves, our operations, our goals, and how we deliberate about the possible courses of our action, evaluate them, decide, and execute our decisions.[42] For him, "all the operations on these four levels are intentional and conscious. Still, intentionality and consciousness differ from level to level….On all four levels, we are aware of ourselves, but as we mount from level to level, it is a fuller self of which we are aware, and the awareness itself is different."[43] This implies that we can never be fully aware of ourselves. As our horizon widens, our experiences broaden, our judgment advances, our knowledge expands, and our actions and values are reshaped. This gives credence to Lonergan's idea that the human person is in a constant process of self-transcendence.

Lonergan notes that the human person becomes a fuller subject when he/she becomes aware through reflective and critical rationality. At this level, the subject is intelligent and, as such, seeks insight. He states:

> And as insights accumulate, he reveals them in his behaviour, his speech, his grasp of situations, and his mastery of theoretic domains. But as reflective and critically conscious, he incarnates detachment and disinterestedness, gives himself over to criteria of truth and certitude, makes his soul concerned with the determination of what is or is not so; and now, as the self, so also the awareness of self resides in that incarnation, that self-surrender, that single-minded concern for truth.[44]

Self-awareness and single-minded concern for truth alone do not reveal the complete dimension of being human. We become fully human when we emerge as persons; when we "meet one another in a common concern for values, seek to abolish the

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[41] David Aiken notes that at this "fourth level of consciousness the *eros* of human enquiry encounters divine *agape* and discovers therein the gentle power which elicits and fulfills our multiple capacities for self-transcendence." See David W. Aiken, "Bernard Lonergan's Critique of Reductionism: A Call to Intellectual Conversion," 240.
[42] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 13.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 14.

organization of human living on the basis of competing egoisms and to replace it by an organization on the basis of man's perceptiveness and intelligence, his reasonableness, and his responsible exercise of freedom."[45] To be human, therefore, does not simply imply that we become conscious, intentional, and aware of the self, but become aware of the "other." The awareness of the "other" necessitates a sense of community, and the proper functioning of the society suggests that each person acts freely and responsibly. Intentionality and consciousness reveal a sense of going beyond, moving from the known to the unknown, striving for a better and fuller understanding of the yet unknown, thus revealing a sense of continuous self-transcendence and search for the ultimate truth - God. Hence, Lonergan emphasizes the need for a transcendental method that is "both foundational and universally significant and relevant."[46]

1.2.4.2 The Transcendental Method

Emphasizing the need for a new theological method, Lonergan set out his agenda:

> First, we shall appeal to the successful sciences to form a preliminary notion of method. Secondly, we shall go beyond the procedures of the natural sciences to something both more general and more fundamental, namely, the procedures of the human mind. Thirdly, in the procedures of the human mind, we shall discern a transcendental method, that is, a basic pattern of operations employed in every cognitional enterprise. Fourthly, we shall indicate the relevance of the transcendental method in the formulation of other, more special methods appropriate to particular fields.[47]

Lonergan sees method not just as "a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results"[48] but “as a prior, normative

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 18.
[47] Ibid., 8.
[48] Ibid.

pattern of operations from which the rules may be derived."[49] The basic pattern suggests that, firstly, the operations must have objects; secondly, they must be operations of an operator who is the subject; thirdly, the operator (subject) must be conscious; and fourthly, the conscious and intentional subject must operate not just in the *empirical, intellectual,* and *rational* levels, but most importantly in the *responsible* level. Lonergan insists that the basic pattern of conscious and intentional operations is materially and formally dynamic. "It is dynamic materially inasmuch as it is a pattern of operations, just as a dance is a pattern of bodily movements, or a melody is a pattern of sounds. But it also is dynamic formally inasmuch as it calls forth and assembles the appropriate operations at each stage of the process, just as a growing organism puts forth its own organs and lives by their functioning."[50] He states further that:

> This doubly dynamic pattern is not blind but open-eyed; it is attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible; it is a conscious intending, ever going beyond what happens to be given or known, ever striving for a fuller and richer apprehension of the yet unknown or incompletely known totality, whole, universe.[51]

This conscious intending of the operator or subject that continually strives to go beyond the known or given raises the need for a transcendental theological method.

Lonergan's transcendental method is important because it examines the subject within the different levels of consciousness and intentionality. Otto Muck observes that it is significant because it "begins with a reflection on the intentional human act. It seeks ultimately to understand the various modes of the human act of existence and its objective domains in terms of the comprehensive order of being."[52] Lonergan notes

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[49] Ibid., 10.
[50] Ibid., 17.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Otto Muck, *The Transcendental Method,* translated by William D. Seidensticker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 335.

that the transcendental method unfolds as a complex series of operations that are both conscious and intentional: namely, experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. He stresses that "whenever these operations are performed, the subject is aware of himself operating, present to himself operating, experiencing himself operating."[53] This analysis highlights Lonergan's treatment of consciousness in some of his earlier writings: for instance, the idea of the subject "aware of himself operating" is drawn from *Insight,* where he notes that consciousness is "awareness immanent in cognitional acts."[54] The notion of the subject "present to himself operating" is taken from *Cognitional Structure*, where he notes that subjective self-presence determines the cognitional operations as conscious.[55] The view of the subject "experiencing himself operating" emanates from *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ,* where he sees human consciousness strictly as experience.[56] The experience intended here is not a separate operation but the same operation, which is both intrinsically intentional and intrinsically conscious.

As Lonergan envisages, the transcendental method is unique because it "is not to be achieved by reading books or listening to lectures or analyzing language. It is a matter of heightening one's consciousness by objectifying it, and that is something that each one, ultimately, has to do in himself and for himself."[57] Objectification, in this sense, implies applying the operations as intentional to the operations as conscious by the

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[53] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 12.
[54] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding in the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan,* Edited by Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 344.
[55] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Cognitional Structure in the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan,* Edited by Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 209–210.
[56] Bernard Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* [De Constitutione Christi Ontologica et Psychologica] *in the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan,* Translated by Michael G. Shield (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 157-169
[57] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 18.

principle of occurrence within the four operational levels of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding.[58] One can speak of:

> A fourfold matter of (1) experiencing one's experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, (2) understanding the unity and relations of one's experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, (3) affirming the reality of one's experienced and understood experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, (4) deciding to operate in accord with the norms immanent in the spontaneous relatedness of one's experienced, understood, affirmed experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding.[59]

From this analysis, it could be deduced that there is a link between consciousness and self-knowledge. Since consciousness, according to Lonergan, consists of "experiencing experience, understanding, and judging," and self-knowledge entails the "reduplicated structure [of] experience, understanding, and judging with respect to experience, understanding, and judging;"[60] It is the view of this research that consciousness reveals one to oneself by heightening one's self-awareness and the discovery of the self that has not been realized. The continuous awareness of oneself and the realization of becoming a self that one has not yet become creates a sense of self-transcendence. Similarly, as one becomes more aware of oneself, one also becomes more aware of one's actions, thereby developing one's feelings. Although Mark Doorley observes that feelings "are not sources of explanation,"[61] Dunne argues that it is feelings "that consolidate our judgment and give focus to our attention, intelligence, reason, and responsibility."[62] And, since feelings "are related to objects, to one another, and to their subject,"[63] consciousness as self-awareness drives one

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Bernard Lonergan, *Cognitional Structure in the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan,* 208.
[61] Mark J. Doorley, *The Place of the Heart in Lonergan's Ethics: The Role of Feelings in the Ethical Intentionality Analysis of Bernard Lonergan* (New York: University Press of America, 1996), 14.
[62] Tad Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985), 70.
[63] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 63.

beyond oneself to develop an interpersonal relationship that makes one conscious that his/her actions have moral implications for others. Lonergan stresses that:

> Feelings are related to one another through personal relationships: so love, gentleness, tenderness, intimacy, and union go together; similarly, alienation, hatred, harshness, violence, and cruelty form a group; so too there are such sequences as an offense, contumacy, judgment, punishment, and gain, offense, repentance, apology, forgiveness. Further, feelings may conflict yet come together: one may desire despite fear, hope against hope, mix joy with sadness, love with cruelty, and union with alienation. Finally, feelings are related to their subject: they are the mass, momentum, and power of his conscious living, the actuation of his affective capacities, dispositions, habits, and the practical orientation of his being.[64]

So, the affective dimension of the human person is very fundamental yet constantly developing. In the development process, one may encounter several aberrations that affect how one feels and thinks of himself/herself and how one feels and thinks about others. These conflicting feelings, resulting in different affective responses, may be occasioned by differences "in age, sex, education, state of life, temperament, existential concern."[65] If this is anything to go by, then I agree with Doorley that "feelings hold the key to the emergence of persons in the realm of human decision and action."[66] It suffices to say that people's feelings and affective dispositions play a fundamental role in determining the depth of a person's conversion and how they worship.

A subject's growth in cognitive capacity depends largely on feelings as intentional responses. Little wonder Lonergan refers to feelings as that which "gives intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive and power."[67] To this end, feelings play a key role in the emergence of a person and the re-orientation of one's choices and

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Mark J. Doorley, *The Place of the Heart in Lonergan's Ethics: The Role of Feelings in the Ethical Intentionality Analysis of Bernard Lonergan* (New York: University Press, 1996), 111.
[67] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 32.

values, which is needed to withstand and overcome the complexities and evil of our contemporary society. Although Lonergan did not explicitly discuss feelings as a mode of consciousness, his transcendental method deals with the objectification of the subject.[68] He insists that through the transcendental method, the conscious operations of the subject are objectified, thereby enabling one to be oneself. One wonders: how can one be oneself, and how can the subject's intentional consciousness be heightened in the light of the transcendental method? In the first instance, the word "heighten" was first used by Lonergan in analyzing the objectification of consciousness in *Insight.*[69] He emphasized that since being oneself by means of objectifying consciousness comes with a tension between the human person and culture, the transcendental method helps to resolve some of the tension, remove some of the confusion, and proffer more clarity on the unity that characterizes the whole. The transcendental method enables a person to examine his/her developmental processes from childhood to adulthood, identify his/her growing capacity to think for himself/herself, and take full responsibility for his/her actions as a part of a historically based human society.

Being oneself is a mode of consciousness heightened by the transcendental method; it involves feelings as data of consciousness and the continuous conscious tension between experience and action. For Lonergan, being oneself is not a "once off" thing; it involves a rigorous process of being disposed for development or breakdown. Hence, the transcendental method highlights and perfects the self-correcting learning cycle, enhancing a person's performance. Thus, the heightened consciousness of the subject is revealed or objectified in a person's performance. It is against this backdrop that

[68] Cf. Ibid., 22–23.
[69] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight,* 266.

Lonergan notes that "one must begin from performance, if one is to have the experience necessary for understanding what the performance is."[70]

Lonergan argues that the ability to fulfil the conditions that make us human persons or subjects opens up for us the capacity to achieve self-transcendence. Self-transcendence means rising beyond the self; it manifests in broadening one's consciousness beyond oneself to the acknowledgment of a higher reality. Lonergan holds that self-transcendence can be either cognitive or moral. It is cognitive when it flows from our questioning for intelligence:

> we ask what and why and how and what for. Our answers unify and relate, classify and construct, serialize and generalize. From the narrow strip of space-time accessible to immediate experience, we move towards the construction of a worldview and towards the exploration of what we ourselves could be and could do."[71]

Again, cognitive self-transcendence can move from questions for intelligence to questions for reflection. Here, self-transcendence goes beyond the subject to seek answers to questions that are independent of the subject so that what matters now "is not what I think, not what I wish, not what I would be inclined to say, not what seems to me, but what is so."[72] Both in questions for intelligence and reflection, self-transcendence is cognitive. On the other hand, self-transcendence is moral when it goes beyond the order of knowing to doing. At this level, the focus is on questions for deliberation; “when we ask whether this or that is worthwhile, whether it is not just apparently good but truly good.”[73] The focus of such inquiry is “not about individual or group advantage, but about objective value. Because we can ask such questions, and answer them, and live by the answers, we can effect in our living a moral self-

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[70] Bernard Lonergan, *Christ as Subject: A Reply, in the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan,* Edited by Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 174.
[71] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 100.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

transcendence."[74] So, what constitutes the capacity for self-transcendence is our questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation. That capacity, according to Lonergan, "becomes an actuality when one falls in love. Then one's being becomes being-in-love."[75] And because this being-in-love is occasioned by "God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us,"[76] one can remark that self-transcendence is achieved by the work of grace and the effort of the human person who makes conscious and intentional efforts to respond to God's love.

Lonergan further states that one of the primary conditions that make us human is consciousness, but at "the topmost level of human consciousness is conscience. It is the conscience that guide our actions as human beings and self-transcendence is effected in the field of action."[77] So, self-transcendence takes us beyond ourselves and opens us up to the principle of beneficence, which makes us capable of genuine collaboration and true love.[78] Self-transcendence, therefore, in as much as it is effected in the field of action, brings out a sense of society for which one's actions transcend the desire to pursue one's individual good in order to pursue that of the community. Hence, the desire in each person to seek what is truly good is activated, not only from the point of view of knowledge but also from the field of action. For, the idea of self-transcendence from the point of view of knowledge leads to either intellectual or moral conversion. In contrast, self-transcendence, from the point of view of action, leads to religious conversion. However, before one comes to terms with the nuances that surround the idea of conversion, it is advisable to understand the complexities of the human person.

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[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 101.
[77] Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980,* 318.
[78] Ibid.

1.3 The Human Person as a Complex Entity

The idea of feelings and their place in a person's emergence reveals the human person's ambiguity. Thus, Lonergan admits that the human person is a complex entity. Therefore, a holistic understanding of the human person must consider his/her psychological, sociological, historical, philosophical, theological, religious, ascetic, and even mystical components.[79] Understanding oneself from these holistic perspectives makes it possible to understand the world's structure. The continuous conversion process brings one to a greater understanding of oneself and the world. Little wonder Lonergan defines conversion as the "transformation of the subject and his world."[80] A proper understanding of the world is necessary to avoid, in the words of David Coghlan, reducing "the world to electro-chemical events as many scientists and neuro-biologists do, or reduce the world to what is known by physics, biology, psychology, sociology, or any of the empirical sciences; or be caught in a fundamentalism, or be seduced by slogans."[81]

Lonergan refers to the process of seeking more excellent knowledge of oneself and the world as "a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further developments of understanding."[82] This "fixed base, an invariant pattern" is what Lonergan uses to analyze the dynamic process of knowing, which flows from the three steps of experience, understanding, and judgment.[83] For him, all knowledge is a product of experience, understanding, and judgment, and engaging in this process of knowing enables one to learn more about oneself and the world around him/her. Here,

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[79] Ibid., 314.
[80] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 125.
[81] David Coghlan, "Authenticity as First Person Practice: An Exploration Based on Bernard Lonergan," 354.
[82] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight,* 22.
[83] For more insights, see Stewart, W. A. *Introduction to Lonergan's Insight: An Invitation to Philosophize.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996. Also, Tekippe, Terry. *What is Lonergan up to in Insight? A Primer.* Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996.

Lonergan's view is "critically realist," and it brings out his unique view on subjectivity. For him, subjectivity and objectivity are not mutually exclusive but complementary. David Ford supports this position; he writes: “Lonergan’s whole philosophy can be seen as an attempt to show that objectivity in every field of knowledge is the result of authentic subjectivity.”[84] Coghlan takes the argument further when he notes that for Lonergan:

> Authentic subjectivity consists not in overcoming the particularities of one's subjective viewpoint but in getting more deeply in touch with the unique particularity of one's perspective to better appreciate both the similarities and differences from the standpoints of other individuals.[85]

Lonergan's idea of authentic subjectivity recognizes the importance of the other and, by extension, creates a sense of community, which will influence his later view on the communal dimension of conversion. Therefore, authenticity, for Lonergan, is a product of continuous self-transcendence.

1.3.1 Understanding Oneself in the Principle of Authenticity

The idea of authenticity, with particular reference to human existence, gained prominence in the philosophical writings of Heidegger, Kant, Kierkegaard, and Sartre.[86] Drawing insights from these philosophers, Lonergan insists that “man is called to authenticity.”[87] That is, to live an authentic life is not an option for a few but a necessity for all who want to realize their humanity fully. Lonergan insists that since authenticity is at the very core of being human, and being human is inconceivable

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[84] David F. Ford, “Method in Theology in the Lonergan Corpus” in *Looking at Lonergan’s Method* Edited by Patrick Corcoran (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007; Previously Published by Talbot Press, 1975), 15.
[85] David Coghlan, “Authenticity as First Person Practice: An Exploration Based on Bernard Lonergan,” 356.
[86] Heidegger, for instance, situates human authenticity in his idea of *Dasein.* See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time, translated by* John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 32.
[87] Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection, edited by Frederick E. Crowe* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 151.

without experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding/acting, what determines authenticity is the four "transcendental precepts" (be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, and be responsible). Tad Dunne observes, "the four precepts make up the fundamental processes going on in us that make us authentic human beings."[88] According to Lonergan, these precepts must be "imperative," that is, they must be concerned about what *ought to be.* He notes that because we experience data, we *ought to* be open and attentive to the data: once a person begins to gloss over issues, turn a deaf ear to events, and pay less attention to situations, such a person begins to deplete his/her authenticity. Hence, the imperative for experience is *be attentive.* Similarly, we often put forth questions and expect answers, so we *ought to* put forth intelligent questions, ponder over them, and seek to gain proper understanding: once a person becomes indifferent or foolishly follows the crowd without curiosity, such a person damages his/her authenticity. Consequently, the imperative for understanding is *be intelligent.* Often, one contemplates the correctness or incorrectness of his/her positions, so our judgment of reality and what we hold as true *ought to* be based on sound reason: the moment we begin to distort facts or hide the truth, we destroy our authenticity. Therefore, the imperative for judging is *be reasonable.* Again, since we must act, we must consider what we ought to do at any point in time and be careful to make responsible choices that are right and true. Whenever we distort evidence or become fraudulent, we diminish our authenticity. Thus, the imperative for deciding is *be responsible.* These four transcendental precepts, in the words of David Coghlan, “are a description of the notion of authenticity and they provide a process of how we can seek to be authentic: being attentive to data, being intelligent in inquiry, being reasonable in making judgments, and being responsible in making decisions and in

[88] Tad Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration*, 60.

taking moment-to-moment action."[89] Consequently, what makes a person authentically human is the extent to which a person is attentive to the data of everyday experience, how intelligently one asks questions and provides answers to emerging realities, how reasonably one judges the rightness or wrongness of available facts, and how responsibly one makes everyday choices.

Lonergan insists that we spend our daily lives striving to be authentic. For him, authenticity must never be undermined, and all efforts must be made to avoid inauthenticity. According to him:

> Human authenticity is not some pure quality, some serene freedom from all oversights, all misunderstanding, all mistakes, all sins. Rather it consists in a withdrawal from unauthenticity [sic], and the withdrawal is never a permanent achievement. It is ever precarious, ever to be achieved afresh, ever in great part a matter of uncovering still more oversights, acknowledging still further failures to understand, correcting still more mistakes, representing more and more deeply hidden sins.[90]

Human authenticity is not a once-off thing but a continuous process of constant self-discovery. As one continuously uncovers the data of experience, more insights are revealed, mistakes and failures are corrected, and hidden faults are atoned for. Thus, the human person must be in a continuous process of self-transcendence.

1.3.2 Authenticity as a Product of Self-Transcendence

Lonergan insists that the human person "achieves authenticity in self-transcendence."[91] Kevin McNamara supports this position when he writes:

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[89] David Coghlan, "Authenticity as First Person Practice: An Exploration Based on Bernard Lonergan," 362.
[90] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 237.
[91] Ibid., 99. Brian Braman corroborates this position thus: "authenticity for Taylor and Lonergan is the experience of a profound transfiguration in one's being and doing." See Brian J. Braman, *Meaning and Authenticity: Bernard Lonergan & Charles Taylor on the Drama of Authentic Human Experience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 98.

> Man's whole personality, and his ultimate destiny, are involved in this fact, in the call to self-transcendence, to a going out from and beyond himself in an act of total self-giving directing towards the absolute. Here is revealed the profound paradox which lies at the heart of human existence that man can only reach the fullness of humanity by going beyond the merely human, that he can achieve true selfhood only by yielding up the self to God.[92]

For him, authenticity as the product of self-transcendence is accomplished through intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. Consequently, an authentic person is one who has undergone the triple conversion.[93] Hence, the religious dimension of the human person must always be taken into consideration.

Lonergan notes further that human beings operate beyond sensitivity and ask unrestricted questions: questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation. These questions are what he calls the transcendental notions. Firstly, the question for intelligence focuses on the *what, why, and how* of events. Through the answers we provide to this questioning, we move "from the strip of space-time accessible to immediate experience…towards the construction of a worldview and towards the exploration of what we ourselves could be and could do."[94] That means our questioning helps us better understand ourselves, the potential we carry, and the possibilities that lie within us.

Secondly, following the questions for intelligence is a question for reflection. The question for reflection moves us "beyond imagination and guesswork, idea and hypothesis, theory and system, to ask whether or not this really is so or that really

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[92] Kevin McNamara, *Sacrament of Salvation: Studies in the Mystery of Christ and the Church* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1977), 93.

[93] Robert Doran captures this point thus: "Authenticity is achieved in self-transcendence, and consistent self-transcendence is reached only by conversion"; see Robert Doran, "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by Conversion"? *A Public Lecture Delivered at University of St. Michael's College,* Toronto (July 2011), 3 (https://docplayer.net/85177-What-does-bernard-lonergan-mean-by-conversion-copyright-2011-by-robert-m-doran.html). That is, what makes a person authentically human is continuous self-transcendence, and to continually self-transcend, one needs to consciously and intentionally undergo the triple and ongoing process of conversion.

[94] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 100.

could be."[95] This gives a new meaning to self-transcendence in that it takes one beyond oneself to seek things external to the subject. That is, judgment about reality is not based on what one thinks, what one imagines, how it appears to him/her, what one wishes, but on what is as it really is.[96]

Thirdly, questions for deliberation. It is in questions for deliberation that self-transcendence becomes moral. According to Lonergan:

> When we ask whether this or that is worthwhile, whether it is not just apparently good but truly good, then we are inquiring, not about pleasure or pain, not about comfort or ill ease, not about sensitive spontaneity, not about individual or group advantage, but about objective value. Because we can ask such questions, answer them, and live by the answers, we can effect a moral self-transcendence in our living.[97]

This idea of moral self-transcendence properly distinguishes one as a person existing in human society. The concern here is not just about the subject but about objective value and truth. To this end, subjectivity and objectivity are not mutually exclusive. Because the concern is more about objective value and truth, this study agrees with Dunne that:

> Transcendental precepts are the living source of all other descriptive precepts, such as 'Do not Kill' or Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' And we do not accept such categorical precepts except insofar as we are attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible ourselves. The most fundamental moral 'action,' therefore, is to obey the transcendental precepts within us.[98]

To be truly authentic, one should consciously and intentionally adhere to the fundamental moral action, and this demands that we be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, or responsible.

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Tad Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration,* 61.

According to Lonergan, “the transcendental notions, that is, our questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation, constitute our capacity for self-transcendence.”[99] This capacity for self-transcendence translates into actuality when a person falls in love. To this extent, one's being becomes being-in-love. Being-in-love, therefore, becomes the first principle from which one's desires and fears, joys and sorrows, discernment of values, decisions, and deeds flow.[100] Should this be the case, there is no gainsaying that the question of God is "implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality….That fulfilment bears fruit in the love of one's neighbour that strives mightily to bring about the kingdom of God on earth."[101] This study argues that the striving to establish the kingdom of God on earth reveals the human person’s capacity to worship, which ultimately launches us into Lonergan’s theological thought.

1.4 Lonergan and the Foundational Reality of Theology

In his analysis of theological foundations, Lonergan posits that the converted theologian is the foundation of theology. Robert Doran captures it thus: “the foundational reality of theology is the subjectivity of the theologian.”[102] This foundational reality is expressed through intellectual, moral, and religious conversions. For Lonergan, the foundation of theology is neither revelation, inspiration of Holy Scripture, nor the Magisterium of the Church, but the individual, who, influenced by grace, sees and experiences the reality expressed in revelation, inspiration of Holy Scripture or the Magisterium of the Church, accepts the truth in them and responds to them by making a journey towards God.

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[99] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 100.
[100] Ibid., 101.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Robert M. Doran, “Subject, Psyche, and Theology’s Foundation” in *The Journal of Religion* 57 (July 1977): 270.

It is important to note that with the introduction of the "good" in *Method in Theology,* there was a slight shift in Lonergan's idea of what constitutes the foundational reality of theology as held previously in *Insight.* In *Insight,* the basis for any philosophical discussion is the cognitive theory, which basically focuses on the question of the subject, reality, and objectivity. He discusses the question of the subject in chapter eleven of *Insight*, while chapters twelve and thirteen examine the notion of reality and objectivity, respectively. For him, the subject must not only possess the knowledge of reality but must intelligently and reasonably know himself/herself and reach the level of self-affirmation or self-knowledge, where such knowledge must be a composite of experience, understanding, and judgment. This self-affirmation of oneself, along with positions on the real and objectivity, is what, in *Insight,* constitutes the foundations or basis of metaphysics, ethics, and (at least philosophical) theology.[103] However, for any philosophical, epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, or even theological assumption to be called a "position," it must fulfil certain conditions; if not, it will be named a "counterposition." In Lonergan's own words:

> …Any philosophic pronouncement on any epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, or theological issue will be named a position if it is coherent with the basic positions on the real, on knowing, and on objectivity; and it will be named a counterposition if it is coherent with one or more of the basic counterpositions.[104]

Stressing the argument further in *Method in Theology,* Lonergan notes that:

> "positions are accepted and counterpositions are rejected. But that can be ensured only if investigators have attained intellectual conversion to renounce that myriad of false philosophies, moral conversion to keep themselves free of individual, group, and general bias, and religious conversion so that in fact each loves

[103] Robert M. Doran, "Subject, Psyche, and Theology's Foundation," 281.
[104] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 413.

> the Lord his God with his whole heart and his whole soul, and all his mind and all his strength."[105]

The three basic positions that form the foundation of theology or any of the other philosophical disciplines in *Insight* are made possible by what Lonergan describes in *Method in Theology* as intellectual conversion. So, the foundations of theology in *Method in Theology* include those in *Insight* and transcend them "by adding that the basic position on knowing is not the full position on the human subject."[106] That is, the human person transcends what he/she knows about himself/herself to a continuous search for what he/she can potentially become. Hence, "the foundational reality of theology is the intellectually, morally, and religiously converted theologian."[107] Lonergan's position on the foundational reality of theology in *Method in Theology* goes beyond the cognitive theory (as held in *Insight*) and focuses on the processes that make way for the emergence of the authentic subject. Lonergan insists that it is conversion that moves the subject from inauthenticity to authenticity.[108] Thus, authenticity is made possible by "a patterned set of judgments of cognitional and existential fact constitutes the foundation of theology."[109] It is the rigorous process of the triple conversion that brings about the emergence of an authentic human person capable of moral and responsible actions. Thus, for Lonergan, the basic position and fundamental reality of the subject lie beyond the cognitional facts. It extends to a proper transcendental consideration of the good of all humans.

It is essential to state that although Lonergan holds that the converted theologian is the foundation of theology, he equally acknowledges that this individual or subject is

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[105] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 253.
[106] Robert M. Doran, "Subject, Psyche, and Theology's Foundation," 281-282.
[107] Ibid., 282.
[108] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 252.
[109] Robert M. Doran, "Subject, Psyche, and Theology's Foundation," 282.

a part and a product of a group with a historical and cultural configuration. In his own words:

> The many expressions of individual living are linked together by an intelligible web. To reach that intelligible connectedness is not just a matter of assembling all the expressions of a lifetime. Instead, a developing whole is present in the parts, articulating under each new set of circumstances the values it prizes and the goals it pursues, thereby achieving its individuality and distinctiveness. Just as human consciousness is not confined to the moment but rises on cumulative memories and proceeds in accord with preference schedules towards its hierarchy of goals, so too its expressions, not only together but even singly, have the capacity to reveal the direction and momentum of life.[110]

He states further that:

> As there is intelligibility in the life of the individual, so too is there intelligibility in the common meanings, common values, common purposes, common and complementary activities of groups. As these can be common or complementary, so too can they differ, be opposed, and conflict. Therewith, in principle, the possibility of historical understanding is reached. For if we can understand singly our own lives and the lives of others, so too we can understand them in their interconnections and interdependence.[111]

Here, Lonergan indicates a shift in understanding the human person as a product of deductive *a priori* principles to viewing the human person as an empirical individual developing in history within a given culture. He sees history and culture as dynamic and not static. Since culture is dynamic, modern understanding of culture has evolved to imply a general notion which:

> "denotes something found in every people, for in every people there is some apprehension of meaning and value in their way of life. So it is that modern culture is the culture that knows about other cultures, that relates them to one another genetically, that knows all of them to be man-made."[112]

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[110] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 199.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Bernard Lonergan, *Belief: Today's Issue, in the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan,* 92.

Thus, Lonergan advocates for a theology that considers the historical and cultural context and a theological foundation that centres on the individual theologian who has undergone the triple conversion.

To meet the contemporary challenges of faith, Lonergan envisages a theology that is historical and futuristic, a theology that looks at the past and positions itself for the future. He says, "if one encounters the past, one also has to take one's stand towards the future."[113] To this end, theology should involve research and communications; “as research tabulates the data from the past, so communications produces data in the present and for the future.”[114] Lonergan explains this position by stating that since theology has two distinct phases, it should manifest in eight functional specializations: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications.[115] The first four (research, interpretation, history, and dialectic) belong to the first phase, while the last four (foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications) pertain to the second phase. Concerning the first phase, Lonergan insists that:

> In assimilating the past, first, there is research that uncovers and makes available the data; second, there is interpretation that understands their meaning; third, there is history that judges and narrates what occurred; and fourth, there is dialectic that endeavours to unravel the conflicts concerning values, facts, meanings, and experiences. The first four functional specialties, then, seek the ends proper respectively to experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding; and, of course, each one does so by employing not someone but all four of the levels of conscious and intentional operations.[116]

This first phase is what he calls mediating theology, which reveals the religious experience of the past and introduces us to the knowledge of the Body of Christ.

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[113] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 128.
[114] Ibid., 130.
[115] Ibid., 123.
[116] Ibid., 129.

The second phase is what Lonergan calls mediated theology, which leads us into "knowledge of God and all things as ordered to God, not as God is known immediately (1 Corinthians 13:12), nor as he is known mediately through created nature, but as he is known through the whole Christ, Head and members."[117] In this second phase, the functional specialties are examined in reverse order. "Like dialectic, foundations is on the level of decision. Like history, doctrines is on the level of judgement. Like interpretation, systematics aims at understanding. Finally, as research tabulates the data from the past, so communications produces data in the present and for the future."[118] He stresses the view that what accounts for the inverted order is that:

> In the first phase one begins from the data and moves through meanings and facts towards personal encounter. In the second phase one begins from reflection on authentic conversion, employs it as the horizon within which doctrines are to be apprehended and an understanding of their content sought, and finally moves to a creative exploration of communications differentiated according to media, according to classes of men, and according to common cultural interests.[119]

Against this backdrop, Lonergan maintains that the foundational reality of theology is the intellectually, morally, and religiously converted subject. However, as Coghlan observes, "while an individual [subject] may strive for personal authenticity within a culture (what Lonergan calls 'minor authenticity'), the culture in which that person lives may itself be inauthentic (what Lonergan calls 'major authenticity'), and be in need of transformation."[120] So, just as history, culture, and the community play a crucial role in shaping an authentic subject, it also ought to undergo continuous conversion and transformation; hence, the need for what Lonergan calls communal

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[117] Ibid., 129-130.
[118] Ibid., 130.
[119] Ibid.
[120] David Coghlan, "Authenticity As First Person Practice: An Exploration Based on Bernard Lonergan," 363.

conversion (we shall examine the notion of communal conversion in a later chapter). It is Lonergan's idea of the foundational reality of theology that motivates his interest in the place of religious experience.

1.4.1 Responding to Lonergan's Critics

Lonergan's idea that the theologian is theology's foundation has been criticized. David Tracy, for instance, has this to say: "I find his articulation of the nature of the foundational task for contemporary theology on the 'fourth level' of consciousness to be highly problematic."[121] He felt it was problematic because, whereas the relationship of the eight functional specialties to the fourfold levels of Lonergan's transcendental method is very clear, the articulation of his foundational task for contemporary theology is ambiguous. Therefore, he insists that "a further clarity may be brought to bear on the discussion by elaborating the more exact meaning of each specialty in the common theological enterprise."[122] In straightforward terms, Tracy brings a fundamental question to the fore: what is the relationship of these specialties (dialectic, history, interpretation, research, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications) to the task of ensuring a successful contemporary foundation for theology? In summary, Lonergan's critics raised the following questions: Is the starting-point of theology *truths* or *data?* Should the theological method not be based on some theological principles? Should theology be dogmatic or critical? What does Lonergan mean by religious conversion?

Lonergan has carefully responded to these concerns. He notes that in *Insight,* he placed the starting-point of theology on truths since "formerly a discipline was

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[121] David Tracy, "Lonergan's Foundational Theology: An Interpretation and a Critique" in *Foundations of Theology: Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970,* Edited by Philip McShane (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan LTD, 1971), 198.
[122] Ibid., 207.

specifically theological because it dealt with revealed truths."[123] However, his later view on the foundational reality of theology is anchored on the idea that contemporary theology is "authentically theological because the theologian has been converted intellectually, morally, and religiously."[124] Lonergan is simply stressing the idea that not all theologians can be said to be theology's foundation, but the theologian who has experienced the triple conversion, especially religious conversion. Hence, he states:

> The theological principle is religious conversion itself. It is not knowledge of religious conversion, awareness of religious conversion, interpretation of the psychological phenomena of conversion, or propositions concerning conversion. It is simply the reality of the transformation named conversion.[125]

Now, one wonders why Lonergan should insist on the converted theologian as the foundational reality of theology and not divine revelation or inspiration of Scriptures or Magisterium. Lonergan's response is intriguing; he says that he does not by any means "imply that divine revelation, inspired Scripture, ecclesiastical pronouncements, patristic and theological writings are not sources for theology."[126] Instead, because foundations consist of a decision to choose between possible horizons that present themselves, the choice to accept one and reject others are "operations on the fourth level of intentional consciousness, the level of deliberation, evaluation, and decision, the level on which consciousness becomes conscience."[127] With conscience comes the need for value-judgment, where values are chosen and disvalues are rejected. But values are judged correctly only by a truly virtuous person who is said to be acting with good conscience. For Lonergan, therefore, "due enlightenment and true virtue are the goals towards which intellectual and moral

[123] Ibid., 224.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., 227.
[126] Ibid., 229.
[127] Ibid., 230.

conversion move."[128] However, for any method to be a method in theology "it must implement a specifically theological principle, and the principle selected has been religious conversion."[129] To this end, while acknowledging the significance and role of divine revelation, inspired Scripture, ecclesiastical pronouncements, and patristic and theological writings for theology, the foundational reality of theology is the converted theologian. That is, attaining a valuable knowledge of God rests fundamentally on one's experience of God which only He is capable of giving.

Lonergan's critics have some strong points; they feared the possibility of undermining the place of dogmatic theology. One can argue, however, that Lonergan calls for a correlation between dogmatic theology and existential theology anchored on the experiential dimension of conversion.

1.4.2 The Place of Religious Experience in Bernard Lonergan

In contrast to the centrality of doctrine that dominated theological discussions in the medieval and pre-modern periods, Lonergan stresses a theology that emphasizes the human person's religious experience. He is of the view that to be able to sustain the Christian faith amidst the complexities of modern and contemporary times; we must take into consideration the religious experiences of the subject. It could be argued that the patristic and pre-modern writings that featured prominently in the first fifteen centuries were more dogmatic than experientially oriented. However, they cannot be said to be devoid of religious experience. Their focus was not on religious experience, they referred to it in the general idea of what Louis Roy calls "the broad concept of

[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., 232.

the history of salvation, because their goal is kerygmatic: to proclaim the good news of the great gift that the Father has granted us in Jesus and in the Holy Spirit."[130]

The sixteenth century witnessed a drastic shift in theological discussion with the emergence of a renewed focus on the importance of human individuality, which paid more attention to the religious experience of the individual. Of great significance was Martin Luther, whose personal religious experience anchored in grace, became the centre of his writings and preaching. However, it was in the nineteenth century, with the theological position of Friedrich Schleiermacher, that the idea of religious experience gained prominence in theology, but it was more an exaggerated individualistic position of extolling religious experience over dogma.[131] Although Schleiermacher's position has influenced both Protestant and Catholic theologians of the twentieth century and beyond (like William James, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, etc.), Lonergan's idea of religious experience departs from the construed position of Schleiermacher, even though they share some common features. In fact, in the words of Ford, "Schleiermacher saw himself as continuing the Reformation, Lonergan sees himself as developing Aquinas, but their common recognition of the subject-centred standpoint may be the best approach to ecumenical reconciliation."[132]

For Lonergan, the idea of religious experience is very fundamental. He sees 'experience' in the light of the levels of intentionality. It designates, in the words of Roy, "what happens on the first level of intentionality, where the data of sense are perceived and recorded. And it also designates the religious component of the fourth

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[130] Louis Roy, "Religious Experience According to Bernard Lonergan," 383.
[131] David Ford affirms that "Schleiermacher was the first theologian to face up to the post-Kantian era of critical philosophy which Lonergan sees as a shift to interiority"; see David F. Ford, "Method in Theology in the Lonergan Corpus" in *Looking at Lonergan's Method* Edited by Patrick Corcoran (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007; Previously Published by Talbot Press, 1975), 14. For more on Schleiermacher views on religious experience see Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology,* trans. by Terrence N. Tice (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977).
[132] David F. Ford, "Method in Theology in the Lonergan Corpus," 22.

level, namely the awareness of an otherworldly love, felt in oneself as a mysterious gift."[133] It is within this fourth level of intentionality that Lonergan situates the idea of religious experience. At this level, one is motivated not only by ordinary value but by ultimate value, not just by finite values but by infinite values, not by primordial values but by transcendental values. Consequently, the state of love that characterizes the fourth level of intentionality goes beyond the conjugal and filial affinity that binds husbands and wives, parents and children, etc. It extends to an other-worldly love that transcends the world of immediacy. Here, one falls in love with God unconditionally and one's actions and values are then driven by this mystical experience. Because the experience envisaged here is mystical, Lonergan is of the view that the consciousness involved in religious experience falls within the fourth level of intentionality. He writes:

> It is this consciousness as brought to a fulfilment, as having undergone a conversion, as possessing a basis that may be broadened and deepened and heightened and enriched but not superseded….So the gift of God's love occupies the ground and root of the fourth and highest level, of man's intentional consciousness. It takes over the peak of the soul, the *apex animae.*[134]

As one becomes aware of this consciousness, he/she goes a step further to seek knowledge of it; it is this knowledge he calls 'faith.' Faith, for Lonergan is "the knowledge born of religious love."[135] It is "the eye of religious love, an eye that can discern God's self-disclosures."[136] The implication here is that the act of love is initiated by God and gracefully made available to human beings who then respond to this love by seeking transcendent values over and above societal and cultural values. In his own words:

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[133] Louis Roy, "Religious Experience According to Bernard Lonergan," 389.
[134] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 103.
[135] Ibid., 111.
[136] Ibid., 116.

> Faith, accordingly, is such further knowledge when the love is God's love flooding our hearts. To our apprehension of vital, social, cultural, and personal values, there is added an apprehension of transcendent values. This apprehension consists in the experienced fulfilment of our unrestricted thrust to self-transcendence, in our actuated orientation towards the mystery of love and awe. Since that thrust is of intelligence to the intelligible, of reasonableness to the true and the real, of freedom and responsibility to the truly good, the experienced fulfilment of the thrust in its unrestrictedness may be objectified as a coloured revelation of absolute intelligence and intelligibility, absolute truth and reality, absolute goodness and holiness. With that objectification, the question of God recurs in a new form.[137]

This actuated orientation of the human person towards the mystery of love and awe which ignites the desire for self-transcendence is discovered through religious experience. At this level, a new idea of God emerges, an idea born out of love, which makes one's disposition to worship unquestionable.

However, it should be stated that as the apprehension of values varies from person to person, so too does faith. But Lonergan maintains that "faith has a relative as well as an absolute aspect."[138] It is absolute when it examines all other values in the light of the supremacy of transcendent value, "for transcendent value links itself to all other values to transform, magnify, glorify them."[139] It is faith that makes this possible as it moves the cradle of one's values from the self to God by seeking the universal good. Lonergan captures it thus:

> Without faith the originating value is man, and the terminal value is the human good man brings about. But in the light of faith, the originating value is divine light and love, while the terminal value is the whole universe. So, the human good becomes absorbed in an all-encompassing good. Where before an account of the human good related men to one another and to nature, now human concern reaches beyond man's world to God's world. Men meet not only to be together and to settle human affairs but also to worship. Human development is not only in skills and virtues but also in holiness. The power of God's love brings forth a new

[137] Ibid., 112.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.

> energy and efficacy in all goodness, and the limit of human expectation ceases to be the grave.[140]

One can argue that this new energy in the human person occasioned by the power of God's love which ignites in him/her the desire for a life beyond the grave rekindles the desire to worship in the contemporary person. Thus, through religious experience, we acquire "a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing."[141]

Both in the upward and downward movements of the four levels of intentionality, Lonergan sees an interplay between the cognitive and affective operations. Whereas the cognitive operations take place at the first three stages of intentionality, the affective stage is visible at the fourth level. Here, love as knowing forms the centrality of Lonergan's idea of religious experience, which situates it appropriately within the revered spiritual tradition of the medieval period. Roy affirms this position when he writes, "the primacy of love permits us to place Lonergan's view of religious experience within one of the medieval spiritual traditions."[142] So, Lonergan's idea of religious experience aligns with the traditional theological position of "faith seeking understanding."

1.4.3 Expression of Religious experience

Religious experience is characteristically transformative as it "spontaneously manifests itself in changed attitudes, in that harvest of the spirit that is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control."[143] St. Paul refers to these virtues as "the fruits of the Spirit."[144] Since religious experience is manifested in

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[140] Ibid., 112-113.
[141] Ibid., 102.
[142] Louis Roy, "Religious Experience According to Bernard Lonergan," 391.
[143] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 104.
[144] Galatians 5:22.

changed attitudes, it is fundamental for good Christian living and the well being of society. The changed attitude is necessary for building a community that acknowledges the importance of others, the good of society, and the beauty of worship that mirrors the heavenly Jerusalem. It has been argued that religious experience is "fundamentally the same, irrespective of the linguistic, cultural, and historical circumstances in which it occurs."[145] Hence, Lonergan insists that religious experience is fundamental in theological discussions as it leads the human person to aspire to ultimate values that fan the desire for self-transcendence.

The expression of religious experience highlights Lonergan's idea of the centrality of conversion, which affects the subject and changes people's horizon to make them better individuals. He analyzes the importance of the triple conversion, which, for him, influences how people see themselves and their faith and how they read the bible and other religious and classical materials. According to him:

> The major texts, the classics, in religion, letters, philosophy, and theology, not only are beyond the initial horizon of their interpretation but also may demand an intellectual, moral, and religious conversion of the interpreter over and above the broadening of his horizon.
>
> In this case, the interpreter's initial knowledge of the object is inadequate. He will come to know it only so far as he pushes the self-correcting process of learning to a revolution in his own outlook. He can acquire that habitual understanding of an author that spontaneously finds his wavelength and locks on to it only after he has effected a radical change in himself.[146]

Although Lonergan stresses the importance of faith in religious experience, his position departs drastically from the *sola fidei* of most Protestant theologians and spiritual writers like Martin Luther. Lonergan sees a correlation between faith and reason. For him, in religious experience, intellectuality and affectivity are not

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[145] Charles C. Hefling Jr., "Consciousness" in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* edited by Michael Downey, 206.
[146] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 152-153.

mutually exclusive but complementary. Roy outlines four ways in which Lonergan's idea of religious experience integrates faith and reason.

Firstly, "religious experience is situated within the overall dynamism of human intentionality. It is definitely not isolated from the rest of human life."[147] He notes that Lonergan situates it in the domain of transcendence, located at the fourth level of intentionality characterized by an other-worldly love. Here, there is a confluence of religious affectivity and religious intellectuality. Lonergan captures it thus: "just as unrestricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfilment of that capacity."[148]

Secondly, Lonergan prioritizes questioning, including "The Question of God."[149] For Roy, "this question is the most radical of all questions, for it amounts to questioning our own questioning, to ask about the significance of human questioning as a whole."[150] For Lonergan, we do not only ask questions to inquire; we inquire into the possibility of fruitful inquiry; we do not just reflect, we reflect on the nature of reflection; we do not only deliberate, we deliberate on the credibility of our deliberating.[151] Thus, the question of God arises from questioning our own questions. Continuous questioning of our questions often leads to some form of obscurity, which leads to further questioning. Hence, there is a transcendental tendency in the human spirit to continue to question and come to the question of God. So, the question of God "lies within man's horizon. Man's transcendental subjectivity is mutilated or

[147] Louis Roy, "Religious Experience According to Bernard Lonergan," 394.
[148] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 102.
[149] Cf. Ibid., 96–99.
[150] Louis Roy, "Religious Experience According to Bernard Lonergan," 394.
[151] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 96.

abolished unless he is stretching forth towards the intelligible, the unconditioned, the good value."[152]

Thirdly, Lonergan situates religious experience at the very centre of theology, which requires that the foundation of theology should be the theologian who has undergone the triple conversion. Theology flowing from the basis of a transformed theologian creates room for the effective application of ecumenical and inculturation theology. This will result in practical expression of faith and active liturgical participation. However, it should be stated that Lonergan does not suggest that the whole theological enterprise be based on religious experience. This is made clear in his analysis of what he called "Functional Specialties," which incorporates research, interpretation, history, and dialectics on the one hand, and foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communication on the other.[153] The implication is that Lonergan stresses not just the place of faith but also the importance of reason in the theological enterprise.

Fourthly, Lonergan sees a correlation between objectivity and authentic subjectivity. For him, "objectivity is simply the consequence of authentic subjectivity, of genuine attention, genuine intelligence, genuine reasonableness, genuine responsibility."[154] The idea here is that objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive but complementary. However, this is possible only on the fourth level of intentionality, where the subject is said to be objective by obeying the four transcendental precepts, namely, "Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible."[155]

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[152] Ibid., 99.
[153] For a vivid discussion on Lonergan's "Functional Specialties," see chapter 5 of *Method in Theology.*
[154] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 248.
[155] Ibid., 22–23.

1.5 Conclusion

We have been able to examine Lonergan's philosophical and theological writings, especially as captured in *Insight* and *Method in Theology.* We have established that Lonergan focuses not just on the process of knowing but, first, on the human person who engages in this process of knowing, thereby leading to self-knowledge and self-understanding. He critically reveals the true identity of the human person as a being unto self-transcendence. Having established his theological method via cognitive theory (which he treated in *Insight* and developed in *Method in Theology)*, Lonergan situates the operations and goals of the human person on the fourth level of cognitive theory. This level explains how the human person deliberates about the possible courses of his/her actions, evaluates them, and decides on how to execute his/her decisions. Deliberating on one's possible course of actions leaves the human person with the constant desire to go beyond, moving from the known to the unknown and striving for a better and fuller understanding of the unknown. Thus, Lonergan advocates for a transcendental method that is foundational, universally significant, and generationally relevant. This method reveals that the capacity for self-transcendence, inherent in the human person, translates into actuality when a person falls in love. Being in love becomes the first principle from which one's desires and fears, joys and sorrows, discernment of values, decisions, and deeds flow. Against this backdrop, Lonergan establishes that the converted theologian is the foundation of theology. The next chapter shall focus on theological reflections on the understanding and role of conversion.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF CONVERSION

2.0 Introduction

The idea of conversion is complex and multi-faceted. This chapter examines how the tradition understood conversion, particularly figures reflecting on the liturgy and ecclesial practices. It will review the historical understanding, magisterial teachings, and theological understandings of conversion. Augustine's *Confessions* (A.D. 397) stand out as an authoritative source for the Christian view on conversion, and his conversion is seen as a model of the Church's understanding of conversion.[1] Augustine reads conversion from his experience as that moment when "there was infused in my heart something like the light of full certainty and all the gloom of doubt vanished away."[2] For Augustine, conversion occurs when divine illumination comes into a person's life, and he/she responds accordingly, leading to a dramatic shift in one's way of life. However, contemporary theology insists that "conversion cannot be isolated and reduced to self-conscious moment."[3] However, there are apparent consequences when the experiential aspect of conversion is lacking.

2.1 Understanding Christian Conversion: A Historical Perspective

The meaning, process, content, manifestation, and understanding of conversion vary from person to person, region to region, epoch to epoch, and from one religious

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[1] Cf. Deal W. Hudson, "The Catholic View of Conversion," in *Handbook of Religious Conversion,* Edited by Newton Malony and Samuel Southard (Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1992), 109.
[2] St. Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion,* trans. and ed. by Albert Outler, as found at *Ethereal* Library (www.ccel.og), book 8, chap.11
[3] Deal W. Hudson, "The Catholic View of Conversion", 110.

tradition to another. Any discussion on conversion throws up a myriad of controversies because it "encompasses religious, political, psychological, social, and cultural domains."[4] As Kling observes, “its process is dynamic and multifaceted and raises a number of questions: Is the change intellectual, social, psychological, moral, or some combination?”[5] Our concern will be on religious conversion, and our focus will be to attempt to understand Christian conversion from a historical perspective. We shall also find out whether it is an event or a process.

2.1.1 Conversion in the Sacred Scriptures

The Old Testament did not expressly use the term "conversion." However, David Kling observes that:

> In the Old Testament, the closest word equivalent to conversion is expressed by two verbs, *hhm* (‘to regret,’ ‘to be sorry’), and particularly, *shubh* (‘to turn back,’ ‘to repent,’ ‘to restore’). Most often, *shubh* refers to the idea of physical movement (a returning or leaving), but our concern is its theological usage. It appears 120 times and refers either to a change of behavior (as in turning from sin) or a return to the living God. Typically, there is a conditional and dynamic quality to *shubh* expressed in conventional language: God called a people bound together by a shared history; they have shunned his covenant love, sinned, or turned to other gods; they must now renew the covenant, and return to God or else national disaster and destruction will follow. If they return, the Lord will be gracious, restore their fortunes, bring them to (or re-establish them in) the land of Israel, and defeat their enemies (e.g., see Deut. 30:1-14; 1 Sam. 7:3-4).[6]

This shows that the prominent sense of conversion in the Old Testament relates to a communal bridge of a covenanted relationship between God and His people. The fear of the consequences of this bridge is the driving force with which people return to God. The return is usually accompanied by the ritual of cleansing and bath, which

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[4] Lewis Rambo & Charles Farhadian eds., “Conversion and Global Transformation” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.
[5] David Kling, *A History of Christian Conversion,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1.
[6] Ibid., 31.

theologically "anticipate the New Testament ministry of John and his call for a 'baptism of repentance' as well as other references to baptism as a defining symbol transformed by the Christian community into the initiatory rite of conversion."[7]

The New Testament does not present a unilateral understanding of conversion, but what stands out is the idea that conversion is "a process of people turning to Jesus himself or responding to the message about Jesus."[8] This response to Jesus' message can either be an individual or group affair; hence, the New Testament talks of individual conversion (e.g., the conversion of Saul - Acts 9:1-31), household conversion (the conversion of the jailer and his household - Acts 16:29-34); and crowd conversion (the conversion of the 3000 after Peter's post-Pentecost message - Acts 2:37-41). The starting point of conversion in the New Testament is the individual, but "the individual who is transformed is transformed into the community of mutual responsibility and commitment."[9] The individual called to faith in the salvific work of Jesus Christ is expected to accept certain truths of faith about Christ, which the Church has summarized into the creed.

Perhaps the question to consider, as Kling puts it, is: "What did people turn from when they turned to Jesus?"[10] Since the call to conversion entails an invitation to accept Jesus Christ and His salvific message, the New Testament account suggests that, firstly, some Jews turned from their Jewish practice to embrace Christianity. Secondly, non-proselytes (Gentiles who were not entirely Jews but followed the Jewish God) turned from following Jewish tradition to Christ. Thirdly, as the gospel message spread to the Gentile territories and other parts of the world, pagans who

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[7] Ibid., 32.
[8] Ibid., 27.
[9] Robert G. Beverly, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 46.
[10] David Kling, *A History of Christian Conversion,* 29.

were neither Jews nor Christians abandoned their practices and accepted the message of Christ.[11] This shows that right from the times of the New Testament, conversion presupposes a radical change from one's ethical, sociological, psychological, and even cultural orientation to embrace the tenets of the Christian faith. For Kling, "the New Testament depicts the call to conversion as turning *from* sin, death, and darkness *to* the grace, new life, and light given to those who place their faith in Jesus."[12]

The call to abandon one's old ways and follow Jesus *(metanoia)* features prominently in the Gospels. Jesus himself presents it as a prerequisite for admittance into the kingdom of God; "truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). John, reporting the account of Jesus and Nicodemus, puts it this way: "No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (John 3:5). Gaining admittance into the kingdom of God in this sense means being admitted into a new community where God reigns as Head. To this end, conversion is a call to do what pleases God and an invitation to a deeper relationship with God. This relationship manifests in bearing good fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, caring for the sick and oppressed, promoting justice, and seeking the well-being of society.

Whereas Luke sees conversion from the point of view of "God's gracious initiative in extending forgiveness and Jesus' welcoming invitation to 'tax collectors' (Jews viewed as collaborators with foreign powers) and 'sinners' (Jews who failed to observe food laws),"[13] Mark sees it as a rigorous process that requires denying oneself and taking up one's cross daily to follow Jesus. Conversion, therefore, "demands an immediate and complete turning to faith in Jesus, but it is also a process, lived out in a

[11] Cf. Ibid., 29.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., *36.*

risk-taking, death-threatening journey of discipleship."[14] So, while Luke sees conversion more as an event of grace, Mark sees it as not just an event of grace but one that needs the conscious and intentional process of self-awareness and self-transformation by a deliberate move to become the self that the self ought to be, but as yet has not evolved.

The conversion theme features prominently in the Acts of the Apostles and some of the epistles. “The author of Acts begins with the mass conversion of the Jews in Jerusalem (first 3,000, then 5,000), followed by incremental daily conversions.”[15] The idea of conversion as an instantaneous event is prominent in Luke's account, as found in Acts of the Apostles. For instance, the conversion of the 3000 after Peter's Pentecost address (Acts 3); the conversion of Saul (Acts 9); the conversion of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10); the conversion of the Gentiles in Antioch and Iconium through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:48; 14:1); the conversion of the Greek men and women in Berean through the ministry of Paul and Silas (Acts 17:11-12). One could argue, as Kling does, that:

> Luke's pithy reports of instantaneous conversions fit his aim of narrating the expansion of the faith and highlighting the supernatural origin of conversion. Conversion is the work of God and the Holy Spirit through the apostles' preaching and miraculous signs and wonders, initially through Peter (chapters 1-12) and then Paul (chapters 13:28).[16]

In each conversion account, the converts were recommended for baptism to authenticate their conversion and express their commitment to the new life. This inter-relatedness of conversion and the rite of baptism features throughout the New Testament, but it leaves several questions unanswered: "What does it confer on the initiate? How should it be administered? Who is the proper candidate for baptism?

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 37.
[16] Ibid.

What is the connection between the outward rite and the inward renewal? How does baptism relate to conversion? Are conversion and baptism simultaneous, or are they separate occurrences? Which one comes first?"[17] Every student of liturgical theology will agree that the uncertainties and ambiguities surrounding the relationship between conversion and baptism make it a subject of debate up to the present. This research seeks to contribute significantly to this ongoing study.

2.1.2 Conversion in the Early Church (Before A.D. 312)

Although Judith Lieu thinks that "the dynamics of conversion to early Christianity are extraordinarily difficult to trace,"[18] the spread of Christianity to the Greco-Roman world and beyond was very successful. Jesus had told His disciples that they would be His "witnesses to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), but little did they know that they would penetrate the Greco-Roman world with extraordinary success. The cruel persecution of the Roman emperors largely facilitated the rapid spread. The attempt by the Roman authorities to quench the spread of Christianity ended up fuelling it. More so, the conversion of Constantine in 312 became the defining moment in the triumph of Christianity. Mark Edwards stresses "that Constantine's conversion and his repeal of persecution were propitious to a growth in Christian numbers."[19] It could be argued that what accounted for the increase in the number of Christians in the early Church was more related to how they lived their daily lives rather than the actual proclamation of the gospel. The unbelievers were persuaded by the community life of love and sharing and were converted to the faith.

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[17] Ibid., 50.
[18] Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 303.
[19] Mark Edwards, "The Beginning of Christianization," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine,* edited by Noel Lenski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 139.

Apart from the community spirit, Kling gave six reasons why people converted to Christianity in the early Church (before A.D. 312): first, the "performance of miracles and exorcisms by powerful, supernaturally connected 'holy men."[20] The people saw a display of supremacy of the Christian God in the healings, exorcisms, the challenge of pagan deities by Christian Holy men, and other miraculous acts. They loved to be part of the group. Secondly, the promise of immortality; the idea that "for Christians, death meant the beginning of another life"[21] was very appealing to the people at a time when there was a high mortality rate. This was undoubtedly responsible for the courage the Christians showed in the face of persecution and their willingness to accept martyrdom. Many believed that "a religion worth dying for was also a religion worth living for."[22] Thirdly, a sense of community care that ignited hope and appealed to the people. The physical and material needs of members were met in the spirit of brotherhood, and no one was allowed to be in want. The corporal works of mercy, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, visit the imprisoned, care for the sick, and shelter the homeless, were taken as a matter of obligation in the early Church. These acts of kindness reveal the Christian community as a place of hope and belonging, attracting converts to join them.[23] Fourthly, in an empire infested by several deities with opposing and competitive cults, "Christianity cut through the countless oppositions in the ancient world, offering a coherent system of beliefs and cults." The people could see that "pagan deities demanded propitiation, appeasement, and gifts to avert their anger, but in Christianity, God was loved because he loved."[24] Fifthly, the centrality of the religious text; “unlike pagans, who sought an answer to divine pleasure or displeasure through divining or oracles, Christians looked to the

[20] David Kling, *A History of Christian Conversion,* 58.
[21] Ibid., 59–60.
[22] Ibid., 60.
[23] Cf. Ibid., 60–61.
[24] Ibid., 62.

book. They found the answer to the question What does God say? in a text."[25] Finally, the strength of organization and coordination: The well-structured leadership that saw the effectiveness of Christian charity and ensured a sense of community attracted converts into the fold.[26]

From this analysis, it could be said that several factors attracted converts in the early Church. These factors were spiritual, eschatological, socio-economical, superstitious, intellectual, and political. However, some scholars have recently emphasized the experiential dimension as a significant factor in converting to Christianity. This affirms the view that conversion is multifaceted, and any holistic discussion on conversion must consider the total composition of the human person.

2.1.3 Conversion in the Post-Constantinian Church (312-500)

The increasing favour shown to Christians after the 313 edict that extended religious tolerance to Christians led to a physical and cultural transformation of the Church in society and gave a new meaning to conversion.[27] At this stage, because of the critical status Christianity assumed in the state, "converts were motivated primarily by status concerns - their role in the new, state-supported religion and how Christianity would affect their honor."[28] So, people were no longer attracted to conversion by the need to respond to the message of Christ, the search for salvation, the influence of friends, or the need to belong to a caring community, but simply by the desire to massage one's aristocratic status. In this light, St. Augustine notes that a person decides to become a Christian "with counterfeit motive, desirous only of temporal advantage."[29] The

[25] Ibid., 63.
[26] Cf. Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 78.
[28] Ibid., 79.
[29] St. Augustine, *The First Catechetical Instruction,* trans, Joseph P. Christopher, ACW 2 (Westminster, MD: New Press, 1952), 1.5.9, 25.

interest was not in transforming life or abandoning pagan practices; people held on to their old pagan practices and used Christianity only as a status symbol. In fact, according to Robert Markus, at this time, "very little separated a Christian from his pagan counterpart in Roman society."[30]

As Christianity spread to different parts of the world, including the Northern part of Africa, the trend of syncretism became even more evident. Frend notes that in some parts of North Africa, around the third century, "the acceptance of Christianity…did not mean for the majority any real break from the basic concepts of African paganism. It was not conversion from heathendom to a higher form of religion. Christianity was something of a transformed popular religion."[31] One could argue that most of the Christian gestures and ceremonies practised during this period were adopted from pagan practices and Christianized. Examples of such practices include; “dancing, festival of saints, the cult of the martyrs, burial rites, vigils, relics, the sign of the cross, the propitiating kiss, offerings of incense, lamp-lighting, and candles.”[32] No doubt, several efforts were made to reduce paganism, and several pagan temples were destroyed. However, the challenge at this time remained the "conflict among Christians over what constituted a 'true' convert."[33]

The aristocratic influence and the romance of paganism and Christianity led to the understanding of conversion mainly from an external perspective. However, as Christianity continued to spread into several cultures, "ritual and ascetic behaviours that had been a part of Christianity from its earliest beginning now emerged to give sharper definition to conversion, demarcating the 'truly' converted from nominal

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[30] Robert A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 27.
[31] William H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 104.
[32] David Kling, *A History of Christian Conversion,* 79.
[33] Ibid., 81.

Christians."[34] That means the sense of conversion that underscores the transformation of the human person by a unique and pious way of life was preserved. Thus, we see, in this era, the conversion of the North African-born Augustine. His conversion, both in tone and substance, "provides a striking departure from other accounts we have previously examined."[35] Unlike the "status-symbol conversion" that was paramount at this time, we see in the conversion of Augustine a "life-transforming" event through the power of the gospel. Through the intercessory role of his mother (Monica) and deep reflection on the Sacred Scriptures (especially the letters of St. Paul), he felt the need for a radical change in life. In *The Confessions, he writes, "*How long shall I go on saying, 'tomorrow, tomorrow'? Why not now? Why not make an end of my ugly sins at this moment?"[36] He felt an urgent need for a transformed life and made the appropriate move towards becoming a faithful Christian.

Nevertheless, one wonders, if Augustine was born and raised a Christian, *from what* and *to what* did Augustine convert? Unlike the popular practice of conversion from pagan practice at this time, it was clear from Augustine's own conversion that he did not change from paganism to Christianity; instead, in his own words: "You converted me to yourself, so that I no longer desired a wife or placed any hope in the world."[37] Augustine was converted to a deeper level of love, a love that transcends the worldly kind of love to what Lonergan calls "an other-worldly love,"[38] one that made him count everything else as rubbish compared to the love of God. This dimension of conversion promoted missionary activities in late antiquity and the early Medieval period.

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[34] Ibid., 82.
[35] Ibid., 89.
[36] St. Augustine, *Confessions,* trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Pengiun Books, 1961), 8.12; 177.
[37] Ibid., 178.
[38] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 228

2.1.4 Conversion in Late Antiquity through the Medieval Era

The barbarian invasion of Rome in 410 and the deposition of the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, brought about the Roman Empire's collapse. With this collapse, "missionary monks and bishops ventured within and beyond the boundaries of the old empire to spread the Christian message, making converts and establishing institutional structures that would ensure a stable Christian presence."[39] From the conversion of the Irish in the fifth century, part of Britain in the sixth and seventh centuries, Frisians and Hessians in the eighth and ninth centuries, to the conversion of the eastern part of Europe in the tenth century, Christianity penetrated different regions.[40] The question to ask is: how were the people converted? What were they converted from? Kling notes that "some groups willingly entered the Christian orbit, attracted by the message of Christianity and the potential benefits of Christian Roman civilization. Others became Christian not of their own choosing but because they had been defeated militarily by Christians and forced to accept their faith."[41] Therefore, several factors were responsible for the conversion of Christians, namely socioeconomic, coercive, religious, and cultural.

In early medieval Europe, "conversion meant a transfer of loyalty or allegiance, not the kind of inner transformation that the modern era views as the norm."[42] Again, at this time, conversion presupposes an acknowledgment of the supremacy and power of the Christian God over and above that of the pagan gods. Following God was not entirely dependent on love for God and transformation of a person's life, but on the expectation that one's security and well-being are more guaranteed in Christianity.

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[39] David Kling, *A History of Christian Conversion,* 103.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 104.
[42] Ibid., 108.

Here, conversion focused more on respect for ecclesiastical authorities and the correct recitation of the creed and prescribed prayers. Kling captures it thus; "conversion meant familiarity with the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's prayer and the acceptance of church authority."[43] The interest was not in whether people's lives were transformed but in the Christian community's nominal membership. Richard Fletcher affirms this position thus: "The spectacle of early medieval conversion to Christianity is generally not one of individuals acting upon conviction."[44]

In the later part of the medieval era, the approach to conversion took a more personal and severe turn. The rise of monastic life saw an increasing desire for personal transformation and more profound spirituality through an ascetic way of life. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, greater emphasis was placed on personal commitment; the need to "…come out from among them and be separate…" (11 Corinthians 6:17) was taken almost literally. At this point, "conversion could mean a more intense and committed faith that distinguished nominal adherents from the personally dedicated."[45] No doubt, this idea of rating Christians based on their level of personal conversion created much division in the Church and gave rise to some heretical teachings. The controversies occasioned by heretical teachings and the complexities surrounding the understanding of conversion necessitated the intervention of the Church's hierarchy. Consequently, several magisterial pronouncements and positions were taken concerning the accurate idea of conversion, which creates a narrative that suggests that the Church, in this period, was the primary determinant of the conversion process. Hence, conformity in public worship was more important than personal religious experience. The unique interest in the

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Richard Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion: From Paganism to Christianity* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), 514.
[45] David Kling, *A History of Christian Conversion, 108*.

conversion of the human person with particular attention to personal religious experience gave rise to a new understanding of conversion championed by the Protestants.

2.1.5 The Protestants on Conversion

The search for a personal and interior conviction about the faith, which started in the latter part of the medieval period, came into full force in the early sixteenth century with the rise of Protestantism or "evangelicals" who rigorously sought the reform of the Church. At this point, the call to conversion took a more radical turn. According to Kling:

> The reformers emphasized not innovation but the restoration of authentic New Testament Christianity. Theirs was a Christianity untainted by a tyrannous papacy, fraudulent monasticism, and the accretions of false doctrines and traditions such as indulgence, purgatory, pilgrimages, relic worship, bleeding hosts, devotion to the saints, and Masses for the dead.[46]

The desire here was for conversion that sought to promote a personal, intimate relationship with God, which characterized New Testament Christianity. Kling observes that "the reformers' understanding of conversion drew initially from their Catholic past, though eventually the new wine of evangelical views of conversion could not be contained in the old wineskins of the Catholic Church."[47] The reformers' quest was to understand the Christian faith in an entirely new way.

Some key early protestant reformers were Martin Luther (1483-1547) and John Calvin (1509-1564). Luther, for instance, understands conversion from his own experience. He sees conversion in the light of an individual radically seeking God's grace and mercy. He was radically influenced in the university of Erfurt by the

[46] Ibid., 203.
[47] Ibid., 203-204

thoughts of a branch of scholasticism known as the *via moderna* (Modernist way), as well as his experience in the monastery. The *via moderna* maintained that the human person has the spark of the divine within the intellect, which means that one can perform good deeds and become better by fanning to a flame that spark of God's truth and revelation. Hence, salvation is guaranteed by God's grace to a person who makes even a little effort to receive it.[48] This teaching unsettled Luther and, in the words of Gerhard Ebeling, became "the hidden atomic fission which set up a chain reaction leading to the events of the Reformation."[49]

Influenced by the *via moderna*, Luther renewed his interest in Sacred Scriptures especially the Psalms, the letters to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. His studies of these biblical texts enabled him to develop some conversion themes. Firstly, conversion is an action of Christ; therefore, to be converted is to be joined to the body of Christ and allow Christ to take the lead in a person's life. Secondly, conversion is a necessity for all and not a few. He broadened his idea of conversion to go beyond what is achievable only in a monastic cloister to become possible in everyday life of a Christian. Thirdly, conversion is an act of divine initiative. "Luther rejects the idea of humankind's natural ability to turn toward God or of a divine spark within."[50] He anchored his theology of conversion more on grace to strengthen his idea that conversion is an act of divine initiative.

For Luther, conversion takes place in two phases. The first phase is at baptism, which marks the "initial, unrepeatable entrance into the Christian life."[51] He notes, however, that one does not always remain in a state of grace after baptism, hence the need for

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[48] Cf. Ibid., 207.
[49] Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought,* trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 71.
[50] David Kling, *A History of Christian Conversion,* 209.
[51] Ibid., 210.

the next phase. The second phase is "the moment of God's self-disclosure:"[52] where God reveals His loving act by which He gave us his only begotten Son "so that he might make us burn with the warmest love toward Him."[53] However, because of the weakness of human nature, which makes a person fall into sin from time to time, conversion ought to be a continuous process of perpetually turning to Christ in repentance and persevering in conversion.[54]

One could deduce that for Luther, conversion is, firstly, the work of God accomplished in Christ's death and resurrection. As Christ died and rose again, we, too, die with Him in baptism and are raised with Him to new life. Secondly, "conversion is God's work through the sacrament of baptism."[55] Thirdly, conversion is not a once-off thing but an ongoing process, an ongoing repentance that entails following the way of the cross in sincere obedience to the commandments of God. Given these views and relating them to the idea of conversion in the different epochs, one wonders whether conversion is *an event* or *a process.*

2.1.6 Conversion: An Event or A Process?

Marc David observes that “UNTIL recently, historians have occasionally presented conversion as a gradual process but more often as a sudden and total change in belief.”[56] In recent times, the question of whether conversion is an event or a process has been given more scholarly attention. Lewis Rambo is of the view that the widespread belief that conversion is a sudden, instantaneous event in a person's life is, at best, mythological. According to him, "contrary to popular mythology, conversion

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Cf. Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Marc David Baer, “History and Religious conversion” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion* edited by Lewis Rambo & Charles Farhadian (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 25.

is rarely an overnight, all-in-an-instant, wholesale transformation that is now and forever."[57] He admits the possibility of sudden conversion (as seen in Saul's case), but he holds strongly that all conversions "are mediated through people, institutions, communities, and groups."[58] To this end, conversion is a journey, a process that takes place all through life. Rambo captures it thus:

> While conversion can be triggered by particular events and, in some cases, result in a very sudden experience of change, for the most part, it takes place over a period of time. People change for a multitude of reasons, and that change is sometimes permanent and sometimes temporary. Certain contemporary theologians believe that genuine conversion transpires over an entire lifetime.[59]

Several factors contribute to shaping the conversion process; they include personal, social, cultural, psychological, and religious. To this end, Rambo states that:

> Conversion takes place (1) when a person or group is connected to relationships in a religious community; (2) when rituals are enacted that foster experience and action consonant with religious mandates and goals; (3) when the rhetoric or system of interpretation of life is transformed into a religious frame of reference; and (4) when a person's role or sense of place and purpose is enacted and guided by religious sensibilities and structures.[60]

Rambo's idea is that conversion goes beyond the sudden event of an individual that takes place once and for all. It is complex and multifaceted. One is converted into a community, and he/she is welcomed through several rituals that are meant to foster the conversion experience. Furthermore, the community enacts regulations and prescribes a role through which the individual lives out his/her life while paying attention to the sensibility of others in the community. These show that conversion is more than an individual affair; in the words of Kling, it "is not just an individual

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[57] Lewis Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 165.
[60] Ibid., 34.

experience or terminal event. Its consequences are lived out over time."[61] It is, arguably, more of a communal orientation that takes place under ecclesiastical ordering and guidance. Therefore, as Rambo notes, "while conversion can be triggered by particular events and, in some cases, result in very sudden experiences of change, for the most part, it takes place over a period of time."[62] However, this research argues that while acknowledging the importance of the communal dimension of conversion and the necessity of the rites to facilitate the conversion process, we must not undermine the place of the religious experience of the individual if we are to raise dedicated converts who would actively participate in the liturgy.

2.2 Magisterial Teaching on Conversion

The magisterial teaching on conversion features prominently in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults, which, of course, is the product of the groundwork laid by the Council Fathers.

2.2.1 Conversion in the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church: Sacrosanctum Concilium

In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* the Council Fathers stated that "before men can come to the liturgy, they must be called to faith and conversion."[63] Here, the Conciliar Fathers recognize that faith and conversion are prerequisites for active liturgical participation. They stressed that since the liturgy "is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed,"[64] those who come to the liturgy should first be converts. The Fathers of the council admit that valid and

[61] David Kling, *A History of Christian Conversion,* 19.
[62] Lewis Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion,* 165.
[63] *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* 9.
[64] Ibid., 10.

licit celebration of the liturgy alone is not enough; the proper disposition of the faithful, their conscious effort to co-operate with God's grace to develop a sincere spiritual life, as well as communion with other members of the Christian community, make the human person share fully in the grace of the liturgical celebration.[65] This reveals the centrality of conversion to the entire mission of the Church and the intrinsic link between faith and conversion. Hence, the Council Fathers laid the foundation for the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

2.2.2 God as the Initiator of Conversion: Gaudium et Spes

In *Gaudium et Spes,* the Conciliar Fathers observed that although the human person, as God's creature, lives in society and is usually helped by society, sometimes, it is society that also puts pressure on him/her to turn away from the good and pursue evil. This temptation to sin posed by society can cause the human person to be alienated from God, from oneself and one's ultimate goal, from others, and from the created universe.[66] However, this "can only be overcome by unflinching effort under the help of grace."[67] This "unflinching effort" is humanity's constant striving to seek conversion, which can be futile without the help of God's grace. The document insists that "man would not exist were he not created by God's love and constantly preserved by it, and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to His Creator."[68] Yet, the document laments that many contemporaries have failed to "recognize this intimate and vital link with God, or have explicitly rejected it."[69] In spite of this, God constantly reaches out to humanity out of love and persistently assists the human person with the necessary grace to

[65] Cf. Ibid., 11-13.
[66] Cf. *Gaudium et Spes, 13.*
[67] Ibid*., 25.*
[68] Ibid., *19.*
[69] Ibid.

respond to His love. This presupposes that God is the initiator of conversion, and He constantly provides the human person with relevant assistance in his/her conversion journey.

2.3 Some Papal Discussions on Conversion

Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis have placed serious emphasis on the role of conversion in realizing a more effective Church in modern society. We shall briefly examine John Paul II's *Ecclesia in America,* Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium,* and the preparatory document "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission."

2.3.1 John Paul II's Ecclesia in America on Conversion

In "Ecclesia in America" (1999), his post-Synodal apostolic exhortation to the clergy, religious, and lay people of the Church in America, Pope John Paul II emphasizes the need for an encounter with the living Jesus Christ, which is brought about through conversion, communion, and solidarity. In this document, he sees conversion in the light of the New Testament *metanoia,* a "change of mentality," which for him implies, "not simply a matter of thinking differently in an intellectual sense, but of revising the reasons behind one's actions in the light of the Gospel."[70] He therefore defines conversion as the ability to "foster a new life, in which there is no separation between faith and works in our daily response to the universal call to holiness."[71] Consequently, he emphasizes two key dimensions of conversion: the social dimension on the one hand and an ongoing dimension on the other. On the social dimension, Pope John Paul II, in line with the synodal fathers, insists that the conversion that excludes

[70] Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America, 26.*
[71] Ibid.

fraternal charity, which manifests itself in the desire to care for the welfare of people in society, is incomplete. According to him, "fraternal charity means attending to all the needs of our neighbor."[72] To this effect, conversion entails ensuring the promotion of the social order and the pursuit of the common good. How can we claim to be converted Christians when those around us are hungry, thirsty, naked, and lacking shelter? It could be argued that Lonergan's conversion model addresses the challenges that Pope John Paul II raised. The act of conversion that transforms a person through religious experience to the point of falling in love with God unconditionally, and thereby falling in love with one's neighbor, will automatically result in the promotion of the social order and guarantee the common good of all. That is why conversion must be an ongoing process, a position held by Lonergan and corroborated by John Paul II. John Paul II maintains that "conversion is a goal which is never fully attained."[73] As long as we sojourn in this spatial and temporal existence, temptations are inevitable; different sources of temptation constantly challenge our struggle to repent; hence, there is the need for continuous conversion, and the liturgy can be that source for achieving an ongoing conversion.

2.3.2 Pope Francis' Evangelii Gaudium on Conversion

Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, sees conversion in the light of having a living relationship with Christ. He states: "I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them."[74] He stresses that conversion is taking that step towards Jesus, who is actually waiting with open arms to welcome us.

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[72] Ibid., 27.
[73] Ibid., 28.
[74] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium,* 3.

Also, following Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis emphasizes the social dimension of conversion. He condemns the idea of inner piety that negates the external manifestation of the gospel demands. According to him, "no one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society."[75] He calls for a collective and communal conversion of the Church to pay more attention to societal concerns that will bring about a better society and promote the common good. He stresses that "all Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world."[76] This research insists that it takes intellectually, morally, and religiously converted persons to build this better world and ensure active participation in the liturgy.

2.3.3 A Double Dynamic of Conversion in the Preparatory Document "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission"

In the 2021 preparatory document "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission," an exciting dimension of conversion is revealed. Reflecting on the account of the encounter between Peter and Cornelius, the document reveals a unique dimension of conversion called: "A Double Dynamic of Conversion."[77] First, one would have thought that in this encounter, Cornelius needed conversion, and Peter was supposed to be the agent to effect that conversion. Nevertheless, the document shows clearly that both men were actually in need of conversion. Cornelius, "a pagan, presumably Roman, a centurion (a low-ranking officer) in the army of occupation,

[75] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium,* 183.
[76] Ibid.
[77] The preparatory document "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission," Section three, article ii.

who practises a profession based on violence and abuse."[78] was indeed in need of conversion. His desire to self-transcend merited "a sort of annunciation."[79] The Angel appeared to him and asked him to send for Peter, who was in Joppa, to facilitate his conversion. On the other hand, the narrative now turns to the conversion of Peter: who would have thought that Peter, a convert, a Christian, and an Apostle, was still in need of conversion? Peter's response to the instruction in the vision to kill and eat what he considered unclean was an indication that conversion for him meant "separation and exclusion from other peoples."[80] While Peter is still wondering what the vision he saw could mean, the envoy from Cornelius arrives. Peter undergoes a conversion by accepting the invitation to mingle with the Gentiles. The document states that:

> This is a true and proper conversion, the painful and immensely fruitful passage of leaving one's own cultural and religious categories: Peter accepts to eat with pagans the food he has always considered forbidden, recognizing it as an instrument of life and communion with God and with others. It is in the encounter with people, welcoming them, journeying with them, and entering their homes, that he realizes the meaning of his vision: no human being is unworthy in the eyes of God, and the difference established by election does not imply exclusive preference but service and witnessing of a universal breadth.[81]

This double dynamic of conversion could be referred to as "conversion from" and "conversion to": whereas Cornelius was converted "from" a pagan way of life to becoming a Christian, Peter, on the other hand, was converted "to" a deeper understanding of the Christian life. This supports Lonergan's idea that conversion is an ongoing exercise. As the human person continues to self-transcend, he/she moves from one level of conversion to another. Secondly, Lonergan emphasizes that

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[78] Ibid., 22.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 23.

conversion takes place within the community. This document also stresses the place of communal conversion; it states, “both Cornelius and Peter involved other people in their journey of conversion, making them companions in their journey. The apostolic action accomplishes God’s will by creating community, breaking down barriers, and promoting encounters.”[82] Here, Lonergan dialogues with this document on the need for an ongoing conversion that culminates in a deeper love for God and neighbour, and this dimension of conversion, the thesis argues, translates into active liturgical participation.

2.4 Some Contemporary Theological Views on Conversion

The thought of Robert Duggan, John Louis, James Dunning, Michael Dick, Edward Braxton, Donald Gelpi, Ines Jindra, and Raymond Moloney form a good review of the position of contemporary theologians on conversion. Following Augustine's idea of conversion, which mirrors the view of some medieval theologians, the early part of the eighteenth century (1815-1848) witnessed a shift toward revivalism championed by American Protestantism. With the exaltation of reason in the nineteenth century, a period of intellectualism occasioned by the tenets of rationalism, which sought to make sense of ultimate reality only via the mind and reason was inaugurated. This changed the spiritual outlook of Christianity, and the tenets of traditional Christianity were heavily criticized. After this period of enlightenment, several theological movements emerged to redirect the ideals of faith but ended up with several theological positions, some quite extreme. For instance, Schleiermacher championed Romanticism, Karl Barth opted for Neo-orthodoxy, Paul Tillich championed Liberal Protestantism, and various liberation theologies began to emerge across the world. At

[82] Ibid., 24.

this stage, the idea of conversion meant different things to different schools of thought. Contemporary theologians have departed from and expanded Augustine's idea of conversion to involve every dimension of the human person. Their thought either affirms, consolidates, or departs from the celebrated position of Lonergan's intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. However, they provide a good foundation through which Lonergan's idea of conversion can be examined.

2.4.1 Robert Duggan: Conversion and the Catechumenate

For Robert Duggan, the conversion experience is multi-faceted. He demonstrates this in his edited work titled "Conversion and the Catechumenate," a collection of eight essays from different authors revealing the multi-dimensional nature of conversion. Each author sees conversion from a unique perspective of personal interest and specialty. John Louis, writing from his spiritual theology background, sees conversion in the light of changes that occur in the various levels of relationships. He emphasizes the transformative effect of relationships on the intellectual, affective, and moral levels. The intellectual level of a relationship heightens one's consciousness and stimulates creativity; the affective level of a relationship creates a degree of intimacy, while the moral level ensures a transformation of values leading to edifying actions. According to Louis, "critical consciousness assists us in 'seeing through' the veil of illusions, half-truths, lies that block the simple and lucid presence of the Lord." So, creative consciousness engendered by intellectual relationship enables one to see beyond the complexities of life to discover the new things that God is doing. This new knowledge of oneself, the world, and God, draws a person into an affective relationship with God, which can lead to active liturgical participation. Affective transformative relationship, occasioned by the feelings of one's religious experience,

takes hold of a person's heart and pulls one into an unconditional love for God and the Christian community. It could be observed that "RCIA does not speak with highly noticeable language of affectivity or feelings. The language of mind [intellectual] and morals is far more in evidence."[83] The third level of human life that is capable of transformation is the moral dimension. Here, the human person develops values that orient one "to make commitments and to take action."[84] At this level, one's relationship with God reshapes one's values and strengthens one's commitment to God in a manner that impacts one's spirituality; according to Louis, "when people are touched by their relationship with God - touched in a deep and lasting way - what they value and what they prize is transformed."[85] Louis' three dimensions of relationship align with Lonergan's intellectual, moral, and religious dimensions of conversion. It also explains RCIA's idea of a change in relationship that a person enters into by the sacrament of initiation: a changed relationship "to Christ, to the Church, to oneself, to the world."[86] However, to what extent does RCIA explicitly express this process of changed relationships, and how much attention is paid to this transforming idea of changed relationships in contemporary times? These are questions that need to be given much attention.

James Dunning views conversion with a Christian optic as a shift from a self-seeking interest to being concerned with building a kingdom that welcomes all peoples. Conversion, for him, entails eradicating the "isms" that create social barriers and discrimination, namely; "consumerism, militarism, racism, sexism, nationalism,

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[83] John Louis, "Caring for the Candidate: Insights of Spiritual Theology," in *Conversion and the Catechumenate,* edited by Robert D. Duggan (Ramsey, N.J: Paulist Press, 1984), 13. Emphasis by me.
[84] Ibid., 18.
[85] Ibid., 20.
[86] Ibid., 6.

privatism, clericalism, fatalism."[87] An excellent approach to conversion should be able to offer healing in our culture and remedy these structures of exclusivity that "are anti-Christ and anti-Gospel" and stand as a stumbling block to authentic conversion.[88] He stresses that in a society faced with the challenges of the drums of war and unrestrained quest for material wealth, the notion of conversion as a private transformative experience between a person and Jesus is insufficient. In his own words:

> In a world where militarism means the possibility of a nuclear holocaust, and consumerism means gobbling up resources like Pac-Man, no treatment of conversion should reduce it to a private, born-again experience and neglect its social dimensions. Conversion, which stops with 'Jesus and me', is abortive.[89]

What Dunning implies is that, as evil is a societal affair, so also is grace and conversion; hence, no holistic treatment of conversion should neglect the social dimension. Authentic conversion should be able to heal our culture from the "network of domination"; dismantle institutionalized structures that enhance poverty, exult discrimination, and favour individualism. Conversion should help build a just and favourable society, since the mission of the Church is to "build the Kingdom of justice and peace with those outside our swinging group."[90] According to Dunning, this is the kind of Church that RCIA should lead people into. However, Dunning notes that the "catechumenate died in the third and fourth centuries when people lost that sense of universal mission." This poor attention to the universal dimension of the Church has contributed to the lack of attention to conversion, and the result is poor liturgical participation in modern times.

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[87] James Dunning "Confronting the Demons: The Social Dimensions of Conversion," in *Conversion and the Catechumenate, 25.*
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., 34

Michael Dick adopts a Scriptural perspective to conversion and sees it in the light of a people turning to God. He notes that as scripturally central as conversion is, "the Bible does not have a distinct, focused doctrine of conversion….Nevertheless, certain characteristics do emerge, which are common to many of the different biblical views of conversion."[91] Such characteristics include: re-establishing a personal relationship with God; a spiritual link between the human and divine; a union of the heart of the individual with that of the community in their search for God; a change in a person's conduct and behaviour; and most importantly, "an ongoing process" that takes into account the "rational, volitional, and affective" dimensions of the human person.[92]

Mark Searle and Regis Duffy examine the sacramental dimension of conversion. For them, every liturgical action is sacramental, and as such, conversion takes place within the Christian community. This is made possible by an experience of the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection. Mark Searle maintains that as simple as the rites may appear, they accomplish an extraordinary effect. However, the relevance of the rites to the actual lives of the people is contentious. Is it possible for the rites to carry out their inherent effect on the human person who sees no relevance of the rites to their existential realities? To this end, Searle poses a fundamental question: should we "emphasize the objective mystery at the expense of subjective meaning and experience, or emphasize the 'celebration of experience' at the expense of the objective mystery"?[93] This raises the basic theological relationship between faith and sacrament. Drawing insights from Fowler's definition of faith, Searle maintains that "faith is the basis of every human life."[94] That is, faith is a

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[91] Michael Dick, "Conversion in the Bible," in *Conversion and the Catechumenate, 43.*
[92] Ibid., 44-45.
[93] Mark Searle, "faith and Sacraments in the Conversion process," in *Conversion and the Catechumenate,* 65.
[94] Ibid., 66.

necessary ingredient in the existential component of every human being; it is present in every living being from the cradle and continuously develops through the developmental stages of every human person. Hence, "no one lives without faith, without some way of 'leaning into life.'"[95] Against this backdrop, Searle makes the following assertions:

(a) Faith is present in every human person even before he/she becomes conscious of it; that is, every human person, consciously or unconsciously, possesses some level of faith that goes beyond what a person believes; "it is our deep-seated, pre-reflexive, way of living our life."[96]

(b) Faith shapes our everyday lives and determines our actions and reactions. That is, "we know who we are when we see what we do; we begin to become aware of the faith we live by when we reflect on how we live."[97] So, my action reflects the faith that is inherent in me.

(c) Not all faith is directed towards God. People can lean on realities other than God: one's career, passion, or relationship can become the object of one's faith and the things that give meaning and direction to one's life. To that extent, they become gods.[98]

From Searle's analysis thus far, we can distinguish between foundational faith and Christian faith. Searle sees Christian faith in the light of Vatican II as the "obedience of faith"; the obedience in which the human person freely surrenders his/her whole life to God and freely believes the divine truth as revealed by God.[99] To this end, the Christian life:

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 67.
[99] Cf. Vatican II, *Decree on Divine Revelation,* paragraph 5.

> is a life lived leaning on God who discloses himself as present to save us, not only in the past but in the present, not only in history but in our own lives. It is an encounter initiated by God, to which the appropriate response is 'obedience,' 'trust,' 'self-surrender, and confidence in God's truthfulness.'[100]

This dimension indicates that it is God who initiates the process of faith with which the individual responds by moving towards God and leaning on Him. However, Searle insists that:

> The faith of the individual Christian is never merely his or her own individual relationship with God. In being called to faith by God, one is called to enter into a pattern of life that is already in place. It is in place in the community of believers, the Church, where the journey into God is a way of life.[101]

Hence, the Church is essentially a community of people called from among the general population to live in God and obedience to faith. So, when a catechumen receives the sacrament of initiation, he or she is initiated into the faith of the Christian community, where one surrenders oneself to be "led by God into an unknown future."[102] It is a surrender that is not immediately total but is continually progressive as the person encounters the uncertainties of life and, in the face of life's challenges, he/she continually affirms their faith in God.

Searle's position mirrors Lonergan's idea that conversion is a lifelong process. One can argue, however, that it plays down the effect of the individual's religious experience and shifts responsibilities for active Christian living away from the individual. Even though Searle notes that the "*performative* character."[103] of the Church's sacraments makes it capable of "reordering our relationships in such a way

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[100] Mark Searle, "faith and Sacraments in the Conversion process," in *Conversion and the Catechumenate,* 68.
[101] Ibid., 69.
[102] Ibid., 68.
[103] By *performative character* of the sacraments, Searle means that liturgical words and gestures are efficacious to the extent that they influence our relationship with God and establish God's presence within His faithful.

as to make them the kind of relationships that belong to the kingdom and thus signs of God's victorious presence in human life,"[104] it could be contended that he did not tell us how a convert's faith grows in practical terms and how the *performative* character of the sacraments can influence active liturgical participation. This research proposes that the implementation of RCIA needs to be reconsidered, and Lonergan's model of the triple conversion can serve as a major template for the implementation of RCIA in contemporary society to achieve active liturgical participation.

Regis Duffy introduced a more practical dimension in examining how the catechumenate and the sacraments can ensure a practical model that leads to fervent conviction and commitment on the part of the converts in modern times. He decries how young adults in America who receive the sacraments of initiation could hardly differentiate their effect from the experience of a college graduate who buys a new car after graduation. He laments the sad reality that "traditional religious rites of passage (e.g., First Communion, confirmation, marriage) tend to get confused or blurred with other public rituals of American life (e.g., graduation and anniversaries),"[105] and how these religious celebrations have been stripped of ecclesial structures. He recalls with regret how the pastoral practice "unwittingly encourages this same unfocused and uncommitted ritualization in the way sacraments are celebrated."[106] What Duffy frowns at is the secularization of the religious space in a way that deprives the faithful of the environment for a practical, focused, and committed Christian life. Hence, he sets forth to examine "the quality of commitment required and evoked by the

[104] Mark Searle, "faith and Sacraments in the Conversion process," in *Conversion and the Catechumenate,* 79.
[105] Regis Duffy, "The Rites and Rituals of Commitment," in *Conversion and the Catechumenate,* 86
[106] Ibid.

sacrament and how this commitment is expressed in the symbols, rituals, and commitments of the RCIA."[107]

Duffy wonders if our beautiful and vital theological principles of the sacrament have a corresponding link with praxis. He observes that:

> in both the teaching and the ministry of sacraments, there is always the temptation to emphasize the objective meaning of Christ's presence without ever attending to the question of our presence or lack of it in these familiar rituals. The result can be a deal of moralizing about the meaning of sacraments in abstract and generalized categories that do not clarify the intentions of the local Church that celebrates the sacraments or the Christians who receive them.[108]

The point here is that the Church intends that those who receive the sacraments show signs of commitment and conversion, and makes themselves physically and spiritually present to the ever-abiding presence of God in the sacraments so that the effects of the sacraments can shape their everyday life in union with the Christian community: but is this the case in contemporary times? Duffy observes that the process of the catechumenate has changed drastically from how it was in the earlier stages of the Church; the long period of the catechumenate fashioned from a pastoral point of view that took into consideration that the lived experience of the candidates helped to reveal the personal commitment and conversion of the candidates. Through this process, the candidates developed a foundational faith that was strengthened by the reception of the sacraments and grew progressively by the encouragement and assistance of the Christian community. But is this the case in our society today? Do we still ensure that those we admit into the sacraments of initiation show some sign of commitment and conversion? No doubt, "the ways in which we initiate Christians or help them appropriate that same commitment at a later period deeply affects the

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[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., 94.

praxis of all the other sacraments for which initiation is the root and model."[109] Indeed, suppose our celebration of the sacraments does not allow Christians to deepen their commitment to God and expose them to the Cross of Christ. In that case, we should not be surprised when we no longer see those we bring to a particular sacrament in Church once the ceremony is over. They merely disappear and reappear when it is time for the ceremony of the next sacrament. The process of RCIA will not actualize its full potential and fulfil its purpose unless it is "celebrated within a committing community";[110] a community that places emphasis on conversion and commitment. According to Duffy, “the Church cannot simply provide theories which explain rituals, but, rather, must relive with the candidates the experience of salvation which it proclaims.”[111] In fact, “the symbols and rituals of RCIA assume their full meaning when a Christian community understands and celebrates them with a deepening sense of commitment.”[112] This thesis believes that the lack of commitment and conversion is the reason for poor liturgical participation in our contemporary society. It is time to revisit the pastoral approach to the application of RCIA, especially the pastoral disposition, to take seriously the initial commitment and conversion of those admitted into the sacraments. Objectivity and validity of rites alone do not guarantee active liturgical participation.

Edward Braxton’s position is of particular interest to this research as it aligns with the thought of Bernard Lonergan. Like Lonergan, he sees conversion in the light of faith as “the radical personal and communal response to the unconditional gift of love that the Creator has for each of us…”[113] This suggests that conversion has both individual

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[109] Ibid., 95.
[110] Ibid., 96.
[111] Ibid., 97.
[112] Ibid., 99.
[113] Edward Braxton “Dynamics of Conversion,” in *Conversion and the Catechumenate,* 110.

and communal dimensions, both originating from God as the initiator.[114] Again, analyzing Lonergan's thought, Braxton suggests that conversion "operates on many different levels within the human person. It may be religious, Christian, ecclesial, moral, or intellectual."[115] The idea here is not that each of these forms of conversion operates independently of the others; they are all interconnected to make the entire conversion experience fruitful and effective. He presents the different levels of conversion thus:

(i) Religious conversion is based on the realization that all human experiences and undertakings have religious foundations. However, loyalty to a laid down institution or ideology does not determine religious conversion. Braxton is of the opinion that "such loyalty, devoid of spiritual vitality, is but the simulation of faith."[116] This study believes that a clear distinction must be made between the correct recitation of the creed and memorization of laid down prayer formats on the one hand and the spiritual vitality of candidates for the sacraments on the other hand. Those who prepare candidates for the sacraments of initiation must come to terms with this distinction if we are to welcome committed Christians to the faith and achieve active liturgical participation. It is the spiritual vitality of the candidates, occasioned by religious conversion, that enables the human person, through the help of the divine spark, to find God through our everyday experience and riddle of life, helping us to develop a sense of prayer that guides our way back to God in worship.

(ii) Christian conversion is the gradual process of recognizing the Lordship of Christ and encountering God through the ministry of Christ. It is, according to Braxton, “a

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[114] This is in line with the position of the Conciliar fathers in *Gaudium et Spes* no.25, who insist that God is the initiator of conversion.
[115] Edward Braxton “Dynamics of Conversion,” in *Conversion and the Catechumenate,* 111.
[116] Ibid.*,* 111-112.

personal appropriation of the paschal mystery."[117] It is an encounter with Jesus that enables the individual see Jesus, not from painted images of theological descriptions, but as "a living, pulsating, challenging brother and Lord who walks with you and talks with you and tells you that he loves you."[118] This awareness is so important for those who are approaching the sacraments, and it is enhanced by faith sharing among members of the Christian community, which in turn gives rise to ecclesial conversion.

(iii) Ecclesial conversion is community-based. It is the result of a coming together of Christian-converted individuals united around the table of the Word and Eucharist. Braxton insists that "ecclesial conversion is not so much having faith in the Church as it is the response to the empowering Spirit's call to *be* the Church, to assemble as the 'ecclesia,' the people of God."[119] Here, every Christian is called to be the sacrament of the encounter with the Church, as the Church is the sacrament of the encounter with Christ, and Christ is the sacrament of the encounter with God.[120] Consequently, it will be difficult for the individual to encounter Christ or God without an encounter with the Church.

(iv) Moral conversion is the quest to grasp values that are transcendent and not barely act to seek human approval; it is the pursuit of good for goodness' sake. The desire to achieve authenticity in every aspect of a person's life is the product of moral conversion. Moral conversion is allowing one's deeds and actions to conform with the values inscribed in a person's heart.[121] This does not suggest perfection but the constant struggle to seek self-transcendence.

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[117] Ibid., 113.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Cf. Ibid.
[121] Ibid., 114.

(v) Intellectual conversion is the painstaking ability to develop the capacity of the mind to know, including the knowledge of the fact that the mind cannot know everything about everything. It is the ability to come "to terms with the complexity of the world" and a "realization that things may not be the way they appear."[122] It enables a person to come to terms with the fact that the disparity of views and the divergent nature of different fields of studies are not in conflict. Conflict is simply a product of misunderstanding, bias, misinformation, etc. "Intellectual conversion reaches its zenith when the person of faith recognizes his or her intellectual limitations in the face of the absolute mystery of God who dwells in unapproachable light."[123] Here, the human person realizes himself or herself as essentially in need of self-transcendence. Braxton stressed the fact that conversion is an ongoing, multi-faceted endeavour that catechumens and all Christians must take seriously.

Duggan himself took a more sociological approach to the dynamics of conversion with regard to the different human factors involved in the conversion process. Although Duggan's "Conversion and the Catechumenate" focuses on the preparatory program for adult initiation in line with RCIA, one could observe that it fundamentally deals with a wider application of conversion to the entire Christian life. It challenges the Christian community to an ongoing conversion that will affect every facet of the Church's life and manifests in a practical lifestyle of members capable of attracting new members. However, it does not reveal how liturgy can be about strengthening conversion, which this thesis promotes.

[122] Ibid., 115.
[123] Ibid., 117.

2.4.2 Donald L. Gelpi: Conversion in the Sacrament of Initiation and Ongoing Conversion

In his celebrated two volume work titled; *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians,* Donald Gelpi projects a theology of conversion anchored on the celebration of the sacraments. Both in his first volume, titled; "Adult Conversion and Initiation," and his second volume, titled; "The Sacrament of Ongoing Conversion," Gelpi explores a dimension of conversion that departs from the pattern presented in RCIA. He advances a theory that considers the holistic understanding of the human person: sociological, political, appetitive, intellectual, moral, religious, and spiritual. Hence, he examines conversion from the standpoint of affective, intellectual, moral, socio-political, and religious. For Gelpi, a conversion starts from the fundamental elements of our everyday life, progresses through every facet of a person's life, and develops all through a person's lifetime. Accordingly, there is a connection between affective, intellectual, moral, socio-political, and religious dimensions of conversion. For him, all these dimensions of conversion find their fulfilment in Christian conversion within the sacraments of Christian initiation (baptism, confirmation, and first Eucharist).

In the second volume, he reveals the significance of conversion in the other sacraments, thereby establishing the idea of ongoing conversion via the sacramental channel that takes place throughout a person's lifetime. He maintains that "conversion in fact encompasses a lifetime and involves all seven of the sacraments."[124] Consequently, to properly understand the dynamics of initial and ongoing conversion, one must first "understand how the sacraments serve to advance the total process of

[124] Donald L. Gelpi, *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians Vol. II* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 250.

conversion."[125] Gelpi notes that a theology of conversion that limits its interest to the sacraments of baptism and reconciliation is grossly inadequate in helping us understand the complexities and dynamics of the conversion process. Hence, there is an urgent need to restore and restructure the catechumenate in a way that brings the whole Church to a continuous converted living, which must take into account the entire programme of the sacraments of the Church, reinterpreted, according to Gelpi, to meet the demands of an integral, fivefold conversion, namely, affective, intellectual, moral, socio-political, and religious. Gelpi notes, however, that the task of a restored catechumenate is very challenging because "it confronts the community of the already baptized with the need to exhibit in their own lives at least that measure of conversion that the Church demands of neophytes."[126] The challenge that Gelpi envisages is essentially attributable to the long period of focusing on a theology of conversion that ignores the religious experience of the human person. This is where Lonergan's idea of the need for continuous self-transcendence facilitated by intellectual, moral, and religious conversion becomes inevitable. It ignites in the human person a post-initiation desire to constantly seek self-transformation in a bid to respond to an act of love initiated by God.

Gelpi reveals an interplay between socio-political conversion and moral conversion. For him, Christian moral conversion must consider a socio-political transformation of both the person and his/her environment. This position, which was born out of his years of pastoral engagement, aligns with the thoughts of Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis that conversion is both a communal and social action. It also dialogues with Lonergan in terms of the experiential and ongoing dimension of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, which finds its essence in the community. Nevertheless,

[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.

what is lacking, and what is my area of concern in this research, is how this view of conversion can ensure more active liturgical participation and how liturgy can strengthen and deepen conversion in contemporary society.

2.4.3 Ines Jindra: A New Model of Religious Conversion

Influenced by her sociological background, Jindra maintains that in discussing conversion, the complexities and dynamics of an individual's life must be taken seriously. Hence, for her, any discussion on conversion must be multilevel and interdisciplinary - "It should take different levels of reality into account (such as the psychological, familial, community, religious, and cultural dimension)."[127] In fact, she is of the view that a person's gender should also be considered in the study of conversion. According to her, "gender-related experiences should be taken into consideration when we study conversion processes."[128]

Jindra insists that given the complex and dynamic nature of the human person, conversion does not simply mean a shift in the religious experience of a person. It includes "changes from one religion to a new one, a shift from no religious commitment to religious faith, and a renewal of one's religious faith within one's religious group."[129] Consequently, she defines conversion as "changes in a person's religious beliefs that can happen suddenly or gradually."[130] To this end, she supports the theological view that conversion is both an event and a process. She stresses further that the changes effected by conversion lead to "an alternate view of reality

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[127] Ines W. Jindra, *A New Model of Religious Conversion: Beyond Network Theory and Social Constructivism* (BRILL, 2014), 186. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nuim/detail.action?docID=1640967. Accessed on 2024-03-09 23:05:17.

[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., 10.
[130] Ibid.

and of self."[131] That means, conversion shapes one's view of oneself and the world. This, as we shall see later, is what Lonergan calls intellectual conversion.

2.4.4 Raymond Moloney: Conversion and Spirituality

Although Lonergan has no systematic treatment of spirituality, Moloney sees in Lonergan's philosophical and theological thought a significant contribution to the theme of spirituality. He notes that Lonergan's treatment of the four levels of "consciousness" (experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding) reveals the centrality of "desire." Hence, "a spirituality based on Lonergan has to be a spirituality of desire."[132] Lonergan's spirituality of desire is seen in his shift in his writing from "a pure desire to know" to "a pure desire to value."[133] Since God, according to Moloney, "is the ultimate value, this pure desire for value is tantamount to the pure desire for God."[134] That means, that hidden in the human person is the natural tendency to go beyond the self, to self-transcend. So, desire takes one beyond oneself in search of the value that satisfies that inner longing, and that ultimate value that satisfies human desire is God. Little wonder St. Augustine said, "you have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You." Moloney believes that because this call to love is God's gift, it "culminates in the fruit of the Holy Spirit, in love, joy, and peace."[135] Therefore, the constant desire to search for God properly takes one into the realm of spirituality, and conversion plays a vital role in this search. Therefore, Lonergan's thought is appropriately "a theology and spirituality of transforming

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[131] Ibid.
[132] Raymond Moloney, "Conversion and Spirituality: Bernard Lonergan (1804-1984)" in *The Way,* 43 (2004): 124.
[133] Cf. *Insight,* 1992, 372-375*;* and *Method in Theology,* 2017, *34-36.*
[134] Raymond Moloney, "Conversion and Spirituality: Bernard Lonergan (1804-1984)," 125.
[135] Ibid., 130.

love."[136] So, for Moloney, conversion necessarily facilitates one's spirituality. However, we argue that it is one's growth in spirituality, which is the product of continuous conversion, that ensures active liturgical participation.

2.5 Conclusion

Our review reveals that given the multi-faceted dimension of conversion, the questions that should preoccupy the minds of advocates of active liturgical participation in contemporary society are: is conversion an experience, or is it an event of grace accomplished by the sacraments or ritual of the Church? While it could be argued that conversion is undoubtedly both an experience and an event of grace actualized by the power of the rituals, it is our view that over the years, too much emphasis has been placed on conversion as a product of the ritual process, and less attention has been paid to the effect of the ritual on the human person. Although Richard Peace observed that ritual "can lead to genuine inner reality later in life,"[137] too much emphasis on ritual without corresponding attention to the effect of the ritual on the human person will end up producing ceremonial Christians, the consequence being poor liturgical participation. So, the challenge for the Church today "is to maintain a sacramental view of theology while emphasizing the experiential side of conversion."[138] It is correct to have professionally executed and well-choreographed rites, as can be found in the RCIA book, but if people's lives are not transformed, what is the point? So, the correlation between the ritual and experiential dimensions of conversion is significant, and this is implicitly captured in The Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and explicitly expressed in Lonergan's thoughts on

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[136] Ibid.
[137] Richard Peace, "Conflicting Understanding of Conversion: A Missiological Challenge," see commentary on footnote 21.
[138] Ibid., 11.

conversion. In the chapter that follows, we shall explore the place and role of conversion in RCIA.

CHAPTER THREE

CONVERSION AND THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULT (RCIA)

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the place and role of conversion in RCIA. RCIA situates conversion at the heart of the processes leading to the sacraments of initiation. The ability to advance in this journey is made possible by certain rituals that help broaden the catechumen's understanding of the path he/she has been enrolled to follow. So, we will examine the structure, place, and centrality of conversion in RCIA. The processes of conversion prescribed by RCIA as the basis for receiving the sacraments of initiation will be re-examined. In addition, the chapter will review RCIA's position on post-baptismal catechesis *(mystagogy)* in the light of fostering an ongoing conversion. It will then carefully consider the role of ritual in fostering the conversion process. Finally, the dimensions of conversion in RCIA as the foundation for Bernard Lonergan's systematic treatment of conversion will be examined.

3.1 Conversion and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adult (RCIA)

The focus of the RCIA journey is to facilitate and enable the individual to advance in a relationship with God through the assistance of the Christian community. God desires to enter into a loving relationship with every human person and extends an invitation to all. We are expected to respond to God's invitation by making a conscious journey towards Him. This movement, in response to God's loving invitation, is called conversion. Robert Duggan argues that "one of the safest places

to turn for a coherent understanding of a specifically Roman Catholic understanding of the adult conversion experience ought to be the RCIA."[1] RCIA is not just a program; it presents a sacramental process with conversion at the centre of that process. It is one of the outstanding achievements of the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers, in the document on the sacred liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), decreed:

> Catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps, is to be restored and brought into use at the discretion of the local ordinary. By this means, the time of the catechumenate, which is intended as a period of suitable instruction, may be sanctified by sacred rites to be celebrated at successive intervals of time.[2]

Thus, RCIA, promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1972, focuses on the desire of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to 'return to the roots' and revive the Church's practice of initiation of adults, which followed an extended and well-planned process of formation and intense catechesis. Robert Grant argues that the catechumenate is a revival of a process rather than an invention of a new process. He writes:

> The catechumenate represents the formalization of something that existed informally from a very early time in the history of the Church. According to Archbishop Carrington [Archbishop of Quebec and Metropolitan of the Province of Canada], there was a relatively simple catechism, Jewish in origin, underlying some of the New Testament epistles; other scholars have also seen this as the case. The more fully developed form of catechism is to be found in the *Didache* or 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,' which differentiates the way of life from the way of death, probably with an allusion to Deuteronomy. The 'two ways' are found in the *Epistle of Barnabas.* Probably a common Jewish source underlies both documents.
>
> The way of life begins thus: 'First you shall love the God who made you, second, your neighbour as yourself; and whatever you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to another.' Then follows what looks like a later explanation of the moral commands with quotations from the Sermon on the Mount. Probably, these

[1] Robert D. Duggan, "Conversion, the Catechumenate and Cultural Adaptation," in *New Catholic World* 222 (1979): 170.
[2] *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* 64.

> quotations reflect a time when a Jewish catechism for proselytes was Christianized.[3]

RCIA is structured in ways that emphasizes the "two ways": love of God and love of neighbour. It is unsurprising that Berard Marthaler notes that the revival of the catechumenate process "is the most far-reaching and ambitious of all the post-Vatican liturgical reforms. Some even go as far as to claim that the restoration of the ancient catechumenate - which is really at the heart of the RCIA – will prove in time to be the most significant of the changes inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council."[4]

One of the key areas in Vatican II's reform of the liturgy was the restoration of the catechumenate. It focuses on the conversion journey of the catechumens. RCIA explores the dynamism of the human person and presents a comprehensive and multifaceted dimension of conversion aimed at bringing about the transformation of the catechumen. Richard Peace observes that "the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is a movement within the Catholic Church that seeks to promote the process of conversion."[5] For Bernard Cooke, "the recent revision of the rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) has already proved to be one of the more significant and enriching developments in the contemporary Church."[6]

The introductory section of RCIA reveals its intention: "the rite of Christian initiation present here is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts."[7] The catechumens are led into a

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[3] Robert M. Grant, "Development of the Christian Catechumenate" in *Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate,* Edited by The Murphy Centre for Liturgical Research (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 39–40.
[4] Berard L. Marthaler, *The Creed: The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology* (New London, CT: Twenty Third Publications, 2006), 312.
[5] Richard Peace, "Conflicting Understanding of Conversion: A Missiological Challenge" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 28 (2004): 10.
[6] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), 120.
[7] RCIA, no.1.

conscious and self-transcendental process of conversion in search of the divine through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This implies that conversion in RCIA is not just an event but a process aimed at reviving, enlivening, and reinvigorating the faith experience of the catechumens and the entire Christian community. Lawrence Mick captures it thus: "we are called by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults to become a Church whose central dynamic is conversion."[8] To this effect, conversion is a lifelong process of discovering new ways and doing new things as one embarks on the adventure of self-discovery and realizing oneself as a self-transcendent being on this journey with others. According to Mick, seeing conversion as an adventure will "cast new light on the concept that conversion is a journey; it is often the adventure trip of a lifetime."[9] For RCIA, this journey follows a laid-down structure.

3.2 The Structure of RCIA

Maxwell Johnson notes that RCIA "directs that the Christian initiation of adults is to be carried out in accord with a ritual process involving four distinct periods of time with three primary liturgical 'steps' correlated closely with each of these periods."[10] Thus, four periods (evangelization, catechumenate, purification/enlightenment, and mystagogy/post-baptismal catechesis) and three steps (acceptance, election, and the celebration of the sacraments of initiation) characterize the structure of RCIA. Through this structure, the candidate is introduced into a conversion journey and supported by the community of the faithful to attain maturity in faith. That means the conversion journey is not just a matter for the individual. The process is structured to

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[8] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 43.
[9] Ibid., 44.
[10] Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2007), 391.

emphasize the conscious responsibility on the part of the individual, as well as the mentorship role of the Christian community. Thus, RCIA notes that:

> The initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community of the faithful. By joining the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the paschal mystery and renewing their own conversion, the faithful provide an example that will help the catechumens obey the Holy Spirit more generously.[11]

The four periods are intercepted by three steps structured to take the catechumen from one stage to another as he/she journeys towards the reception of the sacraments of initiation.

3.2.1 The Period of Evangelization or Pre-Catechumenate (Cf. RCIA, 36-40)

The period of evangelization/pre-catechumenate "is a time of evangelization: faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom He has sent for the salvation of all. Thus those who are not yet Christians, their hearts open by the Holy Spirit, may believe and be freely converted to the Lord and commit themselves sincerely to Him."[12] Although this period is optional, it is so vital that RCIA recommends that it "should not be omitted"[13] because it "provides inquirers with an opportunity to clarify any questions or concerns they have about joining the Catholic Church."[14] It is characteristically one of story-telling, aimed at helping the inquirers understand who they are as individuals, acknowledge their persons as either Christians or non-Christians and acquaint them with the story of the Catholic Church. The stories, Thomas Morris says, "are a part of the process of evangelization and

[11] RCIA, no. 4.
[12] RCIA, no. 36.
[13] RCIA, no. 36.
[14] Donald Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience: A Reflective Process for RCIA Participants and Others* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 140.

conversion."[15] Hence, the focus of the period of evangelization, in the words of Ronald Lewinski, is “sharing the fundamental Gospel message of truth and life, mercy and forgiveness, hope and salvation.”[16] Since the inquirers would also be converted to the Church during this period, the baptized were expected to "welcome them [inquirers] into their homes, into personal conversation, and into community gathering.”[17] As the baptized welcome and interact with the inquirers, they are expected to bring them to the understanding that the Catholic Church is a community of human beings like themselves who are on a continuous journey of faith.

Morris notes that two concepts characterize this period: “evangelization and the process of conversion.”[18] The evangelization envisioned at this period is one that leads to faith and initial conversion.[19] It should be emphasized, however, that the idea of evangelization here is not, strictly speaking, merely preaching the gospel, but, in the words of J. D. Crichton, it is basically "the witness of Christians by their daily living."[20] It is more about how the members of the Christian community journey with the inquirers in a practical daily life of faith. This points to the fact that despite the availability of grace and the transforming power of the rituals, the individual's personal involvement and the appropriation of the rites are to be supported.

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[15] Thomas H. Morris, *The RCIA Transforming the Church: A Resource for Pastoral Implementation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 83.
[16] Ronald J. Lewinski, *An Introduction to the RCIA: The Vision of Christian Initiation* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2017), 23.
[17] RCIA, no. 9.1.
[18] Thomas H. Morris, *The RCIA Transforming the Church: A Resource for Pastoral Implementation*, 82.
[19] See, RCIA, no.37.
[20] J. D. Crichton, “Commentary on the Period of Evangelization and Precatechumenate” in the *Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults, Final Text with Commentaries,* 50.

3.2.2 Step One: Rite of Acceptance (Cf. RCIA, 41-74)

When the inquirers have shown initial signs of conversion and are willing to become Christians, they are accepted into the order of catechumenate through the rite of acceptance. It is the first time that the newcomers appear in public. RCIA captures it thus: “assembling publicly for the first time in public, the candidates who have completed the period of the Pre-catechumenate declare their intention to the Church and the Church in turn, carrying out its apostolic mission, accepts them as persons who intend to become its members.”[21] More so, RCIA provides the conditions for advancing to this first step. It states:

> "The prerequisite for making this first step is that the beginnings of the spiritual life and the fundamentals of Christian teaching have taken root in the candidates. Thus, there must be evidence of the first faith that was conceived during the Period of Evangelisation and Precatechumenate and of an initial conversion and intention to change their lives and to enter into a relationship with God in Christ."[22]

Here, RCIA stresses the importance of a visible sign of personal conversion and the constant desire for continuous self-transformation as the prerequisite for advancing from one stage to another. Hence, “before the rite is celebrated…sufficient and necessary time, as required in each case, should be set aside to evaluate and, if necessary, to purify the candidates’ motives and dispositions.”[23] Sponsors, catechists, deacons, pastors, and the facilitators of the RCIA program have a crucial role to play in this regard. More so, the candidates are encouraged to learn to mirror the mind of Christ by developing a sincere love for God and neighbour. The dialogue between the minister and the candidate in the rite of first acceptance of the Gospel captures it thus: "If, then, you wish to become his disciples…you must learn to make the mind of

[21] RCIA, no. 41.
[22] RCIA, no. 42.
[23] RCIA, no. 43.

Christ Jesus your own. You must strive to pattern your life on the teaching of the Gospel and so to love the Lord your God and your neighbour."[24] Here, RCIA, as also expanded by Lonergan, situates sincere love for God and neighbour at the heart of the conversion journey.

3.2.3 The Period of Catechumenate (Cf. RCIA, 75-117)

This is the most extended period of the RCIA journey. It is a period of formation which focuses on doctrinal teachings, moral instructions, and spiritual growth. This will be achieved through "a suitable catechesis accommodated to the liturgical year."[25] Also, during this time, the catechumens are exposed to the “Christian way of life by the example and support of the community.”[26] Hence, they are allowed to mingle with Christians and take part in both public and private prayer. Cooke remarks, "before the formal ritual of baptizing, the new Christian is starting to share the Christian community's life and purposes and self-understanding."[27] RCIA notes that in this way, the dispositions shown during their acceptance into the catechumenate are brought to maturity: they begin to acquaint themselves with the mystery of salvation, learn to turn to God in prayer, they are purified little by little through the help of the Church, and they learn how to work actively with others to evangelize and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by actively professing their faith.[28] It is important to note that the role played by the community in welcoming the catechumens, showing hospitality, guidance, and support, affirms

[24] RCIA, no. 52. This is an extract from the third questioning in the rite of the Candidates’ First Acceptance of the Gospel.
[25] Ronald J. Lewinski, *An Introduction to the RCIA: The Vision of Christian Initiation,* 36.
[26] Ibid., 36.
[27] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality,* 121.
[28] Cf. RCIA, no. 75.

the fact that “we initiate people not into a theological abstraction but into the living Body of Christ, the community of faith.”[29]

Several rites are celebrated during this period: minor exorcisms, blessings and anointings, and service of the Word and prayer. Lewinski notes that these rites are essential because they "mark transitions between stages of growth in the Christian life. Good ritual communicates the mystery of Christ in ways that words alone [are] unable to do."[30] More so, the catechumens are allowed to join the faithful at Sunday liturgies but are taken away after the liturgy of the Word since the liturgy of the Eucharist was meant to be celebrated only by the baptized. As the catechumens depart, they resolve to follow Christ's command, which they had listened to during the liturgy of the Word.[31]

3.2.4 Step Two: The Rite of Election (Cf. RCIA, 118-137)

The rite of election marks the end of the period of the catechumenate. RCIA notes that "before the rite of election the bishop, priests, deacons, catechists, godparents, and the entire community, in accord with their respective responsibilities, …arrive at a judgment about the catechumens' state of formation and progress."[32] Thus, the choice of those catechumens to be elected for the sacraments of initiation is done by the Church. The faithful are called upon to give sincere testimonies about the catechumens, whether their conversion has matured, whether they have shown evidence of Christlike behaviour in their conduct, or whether they have shown proper understanding of the faith and applied it in their daily lives. This marks the first action

[29] Ronald J. Lewinski, *An Introduction to the RCIA: The Vision of Christian Initiation,* 39.
[30] Ibid., 41.
[31] RCIA, no. 131.
[32] RCIA, no. 119-121.

of the rite of election.[33] The godparents of the candidates are also expected to give testimony about the catechumen, which is subject to the discernment of the pastor, catechists, and all those responsible for the programme. If testimonies can be given to the effect that the catechumens have shown sincere signs of conversion and developed sufficient knowledge of the faith, then the second action of the rite of election, the enrolment of names, can proceed. From this day onwards, the catechumens are appropriately called "the Elect." This rite usually takes place during the First Sunday of Lent.[34]

3.2.5 Period of Purification/Enlightenment (Cf. RCIA, 138-205)

The period of purification/enlightenment is basically an intense moment of retreat and spiritual preparation for the reception of the sacraments. During this period, the Rite of scrutinies, among other rites, is celebrated during Mass of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. RCIA insists that "the priest or deacon who is the presiding celebrant should carry out the celebration in such a way that the faithful in the assembly will also derive benefit from the scrutinies and join in the intercessions for the elect."[35] The National Conference of Catholic Bishops in America explains that:

> The scrutinies are rites for self-searching and repentance and have above all a spiritual purpose. The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the heart of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good. For the scrutinies are celebrated in order to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Therefore, these rites should complete the conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and carry out their decision to love God above all.[36]

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[33] Cf. RCIA, no. 131.
[34] Cf. RCIA, no. 126.
[35] RCIA, no. 145.
[36] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), #141.

Reacting to the position of the bishops above, one can argue that they seem to suggest that the scrutinies bring the conversion process to an end. No doubt, they were echoing the position of RCIA that the rite of scrutinies "completes the conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all else."[37] However, this study argues that conversion is a lifelong journey, and the scrutinies are just special moments of the conversion journey.

During these celebrations, the Christian community is encouraged to support the elect with their prayers to help them overcome their weaknesses and grow in holiness.[38] Cooke notes that the elect "needs the support of a concerned Christian community and the power of God's own Spirit, which is ultimately the only force able to overcome evil."[39] However, at the centre of this process is the individual's conscious effort to commit to a conversion journey. The elect is expected to abandon old ways and grow lovingly with God. Commenting further on the importance of the rite of scrutinies to the conversion process, Ronald Lewinski notes: "the gift of conversion is strengthened and deepened through the scrutinies and exorcisms." The scrutinies and exorcisms are directed towards freedom, life, and salvation. Hence, it brings the catechumens to the experience of that transforming love of God. Also, the rite of presentation occurs twice during this period of purification/enlightenment, where the elect receive the creed and the Lord's prayer. The elect remain in preparation during this period that lasts up to Holy Saturday.

[37] RCIA, no. 141.
[38] Cf. RCIA, no. 9.4
[39] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality,* 140.

3.2.6 Step Three: The Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (Cf. RCIA, 206-243)

The celebration of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Holy Eucharist at the Easter Vigil marks the high point of the preparation process. The lengthy Easter Vigil readings remind the elect and the entire Christian Community that the sacraments have a redemptive effect that draws us to new life. Thus, the elect are then called after the readings to renounce Satan and all his empty promises and profess their faith. After that, they are baptized and presented with white garments and candles, symbolizing that they have become new creations enlightened by Christ.[40] Cooke notes that having received the white garment, "the new Christian is a new creation, with an innocence that is not that of Eden but rather the purification that flows from charity and the Spirit."[41] Similarly, "the conferring of the candle, lighted from the Paschal Candle, which signifies Christ as the light of the world, says quite clearly that the light of faith is to be treasured throughout life but also carried into the world to free others from darkness."[42] The mission of the new Christian to the world to free others from the darkness of sin is an invitation to bring others to the same conversion that he/she has experienced. Thus, conversion stands at the centre of the entire RCIA process.

3.2.7 Period of Mystagogy (Post-Baptismal Catechesis) - (Cf. RCIA, 244-251)

Mystagogy, or post-baptismal catechesis, is the last period of RCIA. It is a time when the neophytes are called upon, through the help of their godparents, to deepen and

[40] Cf. RCIA, no. 229-230.
[41] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality,* 145.
[42] Ibid., 145.

strengthen the faith they received at Easter Vigil and unite more fully with the Christian community. The rites maintain that:

> This is a time for the community and the neophytes to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery and making it part of their lives through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of charity. To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in the newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents, and their parish priests (pastors) should give them thoughtful and friendly help.[43]

Meanwhile, the period of mystagogy is mutually beneficial to the neophytes and the Christian Community: the neophytes would "experience a full and joyful welcome into the community and enter into closer ties with the other faithful. The faithful, in turn, should derive from it a renewal of inspiration and of outlook."[44]

During this period, the neophytes reflect in anticipation how this new life they have received through the sacraments of initiation can be lived out by their continuous participation in the Eucharist and all other sacraments. For Thomas Morris, "mystagogy, then, is the process wherein we ponder the saving experience of the Holy…in order to understand better who we are and whose we are."[45] Thus, Michael Dujarier holds that mystagogy is designed to "enable the newly baptized to acquire a more profound experience of the paschal mystery, both on an intellectual level as on the level of lived personal experience."[46] Therefore, mystagogy presupposes that conversion is a process that brings one to a better understanding of himself/herself as won over by God through the sacraments of initiation. One is, therefore, expected to deepen that relationship with God through an active daily life of faith.

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[43] RCIA, no. 244.
[44] RCIA, no. 246.
[45] Thomas H. Morris, *The RCIA Transforming the Church: A Resource for Pastoral Implementation*, 213.
[46] Michel Dujarier, *The Rites of Christian Initiation,* trans, and ed. Kevin Hart (New York: William H. Sadlier, 1979), 203.

However, RCIA puts a time limit on this process. It notes that it spans through the entire Easter season and terminates at Pentecost.[47] One wonders what happens after Pentecost. No doubt, mystagogy aims to initiate the newly baptized into the mystery of Christ. However, if this catechesis ends at Pentecost, RCIA does not explicitly indicate how Christians can be continuously sustained in the mystery of Christ and equally find meaning for their lives in the wider society. Reacting to this concern, Maxwell Johnson observes that the US National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the *National Status for the Catechumenate,* has suggested one year of mystagogy, wherein the newly initiated can be appropriately incorporated into the liturgy, life, and mission of the community.[48] However, this study holds that more than this one-year structure is needed. The Churches must make efforts to ensure a life-long structure of mystagogy that aids the individual's conversion journey, and liturgy should continually strengthen that conversion journey.

In light of the above, Morris has given an interesting dimension to understanding mystagogy. He notes that:

> Mystagogy, then, places priority on the gathering of the assembly rather than on additional meetings of the neophytes. The neophytes discover anew their baptismal identity when they gather in common worship with the community. Together, we rediscover ourselves as the body of Christ for the world. It is in such worship, especially during the Easter season, that we corporately look back to the mysteries celebrated during the Triduum that marked our transition from death to life….While the Easter season provides a privileged experience of mystagogy for the Easter feast, it also reminds us of the weekly circle of mystagogy we enter whenever we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, the ongoing sacrament of initiation.[49]

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[47] Cf. RCIA no.7.4.
[48] Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation,* 465.
[49] Thomas H. Morris, *The RCIA Transforming the Church: A Resource for Pastoral Implementation*, 215.

Morris' position affirms the view that every liturgical gathering provides an opportunity for ongoing transformation. So, rather than stipulate a special period for mystagogy and prepare special lectures for the neophytes, we should pay more attention to what happens when the Christian community gathers to worship. The collective experiences of the faithful, when properly united with the paschal mystery of Christ, provide an opportunity for the entire body of Christ to deepen their conversion journey. For Morris, therefore:

> Mystagogical catechesis is different from the dismissal catechesis of the period of the catechumenate. We aimed those events at forming the catechumens into a priestly, prophetic, and royal people. To that end, such gatherings served almost as extensions of the liturgy of the Word of the larger assembly. Now that they have assumed their places in the community, the primary gathering is always the celebration of the liturgy.[50]

What Morris argues for is an "ongoing Mystagogy."[51] The focus of this ongoing mystagogy allows the newly initiated members, their sponsors, and the community to speak about their experiences in practical terms to effect both individual and communal transformation. In this way, Aidan Kavanagh notes: "catechesis is no longer confined exclusively to classrooms but thrown open to the whole local Church as a circle of worship events that focus upon the critical issues of conversion in faith and renewal of life not only for individuals but for the entire ecclesial community as well."[52] Therefore, this study advocates for a new understanding of the period of mystagogy that extends beyond the period prescribed by RCIA.

This research asserts that the catechumenate should reveal to the candidates the invitation to conversion, the catechumenate should advance their conversion and enhance their growth in faith, the period of purification/enlightenment through ritual

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[50] Ibid., 215.
[51] Ibid., 222.
[52] Aidan Kavanagh, "Christian Initiation of Adults: The Rites" in *Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate,* 120.

scrutinies and exorcisms should deepen their conversion, while mystagogy should help them reflect on their conversion experience, which will further deepen their conversion, consolidate their membership of the Christian community, and facilitate their desire to worship. Hence, conversion stands at the heart of the catechumenate process.

3.3 The Centrality of Conversion in the Catechumenate Process

Although an explicit outline and treatment of the conversion theme is not well spelt out in RCIA, Aidan Kavanagh observes that "one cannot set an adult catechumenate in motion without becoming necessarily involved with *renewal* in the ways a local Church lives its faith from top to bottom."[53] So, the implicit treatment of conversion runs through the entire process and forms the basis for the RCIA. The visible signs of transformation in the life of the candidate are taken seriously as he/she advances from one stage to another. Thus, William Harmless notes:

> Because of the new rite, converting individuals assumed centre stage in the assembly's worship. Before the whole assembly, their motives and commitments are examined. Before it, they are lavished with blessings, healed with exorcisms, strengthened with anointings. Week after week, they are solemnly dismissed in a vivid, even threatening, gesture meant to catechize the faithful and catechumen alike on the high dignity of their baptism. Through it all, 'their faith, progress, and prognosis in communal faith-living are the concerns of the entire local Church met for solemn public worship.' Candidates are to be public persons, and the witness of their conversion, a matter of public record.[54]

Indeed, the Church acknowledges the grace of conversion and transformation engendered by the rites, but the efforts of the candidate to show visible signs of

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[53] Aidan Kavanagh, "Christian Initiation in Post-Conciliar Catholicism: A Brief Report" in *Living Water, Sealing Spiirit: Readings on Christian Initiation,* Edited by Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1995), 8.
[54] William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 10.

conversion are not ignored. Consequently, RCIA supports the view that conversion is both an experience as well as an event of grace actualized by the power of the rituals.

Harmless reveals the dynamics that come into play in the catechumenate process that shows the centrality of conversion in RCIA.[55] Drawing insight from the position of Robert Duggan, he identifies eight distinctive but interrelated things that take place during the catechumenate process that shows the centrality of conversion.[56] These include:

(i) Radical Transformation: Whereas RCIA demands only an initial sign of an expression of faith for those to be enrolled into the catechumenate,[57] it also demands that those to be baptized must show a visible sign of conversion and radical transformation.[58] For Thomas Morris, radical transformation is not about seeing new things, but seeing things in a new way.[59] This reveals the pride of place given to conversion in RCIA and the importance of the catechumenate process to achieve this aim. In the words of Harmless: "authentic conversion involves more than some sudden moment of illumination, more than some shift of institutional allegiance: it means nothing less than a radical transformation of the whole person."[60] Hence, RCIA makes it clear, in the words of Cooke, "that the liturgical initiation is meant to be a public commitment to radical and ongoing conversion."[61] Mary Pierre Ellebracht supports this idea of ongoing conversion when she writes: "by reflecting on what happens within us as we move along our faith journey, we recognize that purification

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[55] Cf. Ibid., 15-16.
[56] Cf. Ibid., 15-16. These eight things have also been analyzed in Team RCIA News Letter with the titled: "The RCIA is our Definitive Statement on Conversion," see https://teamrcia.com/2019/08/the-rcia-is-our-definitive-statement-on-conversion/
[57] Cf. RCIA, no. 42.
[58] Cf. RCIA, no. 120.
[59] Cf. Thomas H. Morris, *The RCIA Transforming the Church: A Resource for Pastoral Implementation*, 214.
[60] William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate,* 15.
[61] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality,* 135.

and enlightenment go on continually throughout life."[62] However, to be strengthened in this conversion journey, the neophytes need the support of their godparents, pastor, and the Christian community. RCIA captures it thus: "To strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents and their parish priests should give them thoughtful and friendly help."[63]

(ii) Journey: According to David O'Rourke, "Conversion is not a magic moment. It is a human process … with moments and characteristics we can understand. The process may occur quickly … [or] it may occur over a long period of time."[64] Thus, conversion is a journey, a journey that the human person embarks upon in the company of others. Harmless sees human life as a two-dimensional journey of ongoing conversion which involves both the individual and the Christian community. On the part of the individual, the conversion journey begins long before he/she enrols into the catechumenate and continues through the process leading to the sacrament of initiation. Equally, it continues all through a person's life. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council hint at this idea of a journey thus: "the newly converted set out on a spiritual journey…. As they pass from the old to a new nature made perfect in Christ."[65] However, this ongoing journey of the individual involves the local Church into which the candidate has become a member. Hence, the local Church must see herself as a people united in the journey; in fact, she must see herself, in the language of James Lopresti, as "a journeying people, a people going somewhere."[66]

(iii) Times and Seasons: As previously mentioned, RCIA is structured into four periods and three steps. This structure fits into different "times and seasons" which

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[62] Mary Pierre Ellebracht, *The Easter Passage: The RCIA Experience* (Minnesota: Winston Press, 1983), 28-29.
[63] RCIA, no. 234.
[64] David O'Rourke, A Process Called Conversion (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 16.
[65] *Ad Gentes,* 14.
[66] James Lopresti, "New Christians, New Faith," in New Catholic World, 222 (1979): 167.

emphasizes different moments that strengthen the conversion process. "It recognizes that at certain pivotal moments the conversion experience crystallizes in ways that demand ritual expression."[67] Now, since these actions of the catechumenate process are carried out over time, celebrated at specific times and seasons, performed by particular persons following laid down formats, finding meaning and communicating this to participants, then, they can be properly referred to as ritual expressions.[68] Once the ritualization takes place, these actions become transcendental and transformative.

(iv) Covenantal: At the heart of the catechumenate process is the realization that there is a "pact between God and the candidate."[69] RCIA states:

> By their own personal act in the rite of renouncing sin and professing their faith, the elect, as was prefigured in the first covenant with the patriarchs, renounce sin and Satan in order to commit themselves forever to the promise of the saviour and the mystery of the Trinity. By professing their faith before the celebrant and the entire community, the elect expresses the intention, developed to maturity during the preceding periods of initiation, to enter a new covenant with Christ.[70]

The candidate recognizes that the initiative is taken by God to draw him/her to Himself. So, he/she responds to this invitation through the catechumenate process. Since the initiative is taken by God, the duty of the candidate is that of "always hearing, answering, [and] following."[71] The candidate is motivated to respond to God because he/she recognizes the covenant that affords him/her certain blessings, but at the same time makes serious demands on him/her.

(v) Christocentric: Central to the catechumen who undergoes the process of the catechumenate is his/her search for Christ and not necessarily the Church or any set of doctrines. Hence, the process of the catechumenate is Christ-based. RCIA states that

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[67] William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate,* 15.
[68] Ronald L. Grimes, 'Modes of Ritual Necessity' in *Worship* 53 (1979): 127.
[69] William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate,* 16.
[70] RCIA, no. 203.
[71] William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate,* 15.

during the period of evangelization, "the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all. Thus, those who are not yet Christians, their hearts opened by the Holy Spirit, may believe and be freely converted to the Lord and commit themselves sincerely to him."[72] To this end, Harmless insists that:

> The catechumen is signed with the cross of Christ and presented with the Gospel book, which is the "good news of Christ"; in the years of the catechumenate, candidates "come to reflect the image of Christ"; baptism is a "sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ"; confirmation makes them "more like Christ"; and Eucharist marks the culminating point of their incorporation into Christ.[73]

This implies that Christ is at the centre of the catechumenate process, and it equally underscores the importance of the religious experience of the candidate. Through the catechumenate process, the candidate strives to respond to the love of Christ which draws him/her to fall in love with God and with fellow human beings.

(vi) Ecclesial: The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council observe that:

> Catechumens who, moved by the Holy Spirit, desire with an explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church, are by that very intention joined to her. With love and solicitude mother Church already embraces them as her own.[74]

Therefore, far from being individualistic, personal or solitary, RCIA sees conversion as an event that involves the entire Christian community. Here, RCIA echoes the position of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council that "the Church completes the formation of the faithful by means of pious practices for soul and body, by instruction, prayer, and works of penance and of mercy."[75] Thus, RCIA maintains that "the initiation of catechumens is a gradual process that takes place within the community

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[72] RCIA, no. 36.
[73] William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate,* 15. Here, Harmless cites RCIA 55; 64; 66; 8; 233; 217.
[74] *Lumen Gentium,* 14.
[75] *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* 105.

of the faithful."[76] To this end, Harmless reveals that "over the years, candidates slowly form a network of relationships: with sponsors, catechists, priests, the bishop, the whole local assembly. Fellowship with this local community is seen as one of the fruits of conversion."[77] RCIA stresses the imperative for the Church to provide all the necessary support needed by the catechumens to advance in their search for Christ.[78] However, Lonergan believes that the Christian community of which the candidate becomes a part must also be in a process of self-constitution and self-transformation so that it can remain relevant to people of all ages.

(vii) Sacramental: The sacramental moments of the rites of RCIA, namely; the hymns, signings, blessings, election, and exorcisms collectively serve the conversion journey. Through these gestures, signs, and symbols, Christ is revealed to the candidate, who, in turn, desires to self-transcend. Consequently, undermining the sacramental aspects of RCIA amounts to doing a serious disservice to the growth of the catechumen's faith and, indeed, the faith of the entire Christian community.

(viii) Comprehensive: RCIA takes the conversion of every aspect of the human person into account. Harmless notes that the process targets the transformation of one's body, mind, and heart:

> One's body, which is signed, immersed, anointed, fed; one's mind which delves intuitively into the great mysteries and grapples with specific theological insights and tenets; one's heart which savors the love of God and God's people and which is touched by the rite's play of images, metaphors, and symbols; one's behaviour - both the break with sin and the forgoing of virtue, especially charity.[79]

Cooke corroborates this position by insisting "that Christian initiation is a life-long process of growth: growth in knowledge of the gospel, growth in depth of conversion,

[76] RCIA, no. 4.
[77] William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate,* 15.
[78] Cf. RCIA, no. 9.
[79] William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate,* 16.

growth in Christian self-identity, growth in discipleship, growth in commitment to Christian ministry, growth, above all, in personal relatedness to the risen Christ."[80] This holistic understanding of conversion influences the religious experience of the individual and transforms him/her through the help of grace which the rites enhance. Thus, ritual's indispensable role in the conversion process should be supported.

3.4 The Role of Ritual in the Conversion Journey

Robert Duggan notes that the RCIA process is a journey that "has certain rhythms or seasons, that at times there is a crystalization of the conversion experience in ways that demand ritual expression; and, that there are prolonged periods of more gradual change when momentum must be sustained, and the support of further ritual activity is required."[81] Consequently, in this lifelong conversion journey, ritual plays a key role. For instance, baptism, a ritual experience of the paschal mystery, helps incorporate the neophytes into Christ in the Holy Spirit. Hence, the Vatican II Fathers note:

> The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.[82]

Mick identifies a threefold role of rituals. According to him:

> Rituals help to mediate the process, giving some direction to the journey. They help to name the experience, clarifying what is happening to the traveller. And rituals thus help to moderate the instinctive fear of change that we all seem to have, for they reassure us that others have travelled this way

[80] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality,* 230.
[81] Robert D. Duggan, "Conversion, the Catechumenate and Cultural Adaptation," 170.
[82] Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) 10.

> before us successfully and that the journey does have an end.[83]

The point here is that conversion is more of a process than an instantaneous moment in a person's life. The ability to advance in this journey is made possible by certain rituals that help broaden the catechumen's understanding of the path that he/she has been enrolled to follow. The rituals of "Bath" and "Table," for instance, help give clarity to the neophyte as he/she advances in this journey; it initiates a "movement from the old to the new, from sin to grace, from death to life."[84] Thus, Gelpi notes that the sacraments of initiation lay the foundation for this ongoing transformation process. He states:

> The first stage of adult initiation, baptism, commits Christians to the lifelong process of putting on the mind of Christ. The second stage, confirmation, commits one to lifelong openness to the divine Mother's charismatic call, whatever form that may take. One cannot, then, ritually confirm a specific charism of service and respond to it in a Christlike manner without implicitly renewing one's Christian covenant of initiation; for in so acting, one does what one promised to do on becoming a Christian.[85]

However, this journey is primarily the work of God's grace, and as such, it is more an event of grace effected by the rituals of the Church. Nevertheless, there must be a more cohesive link between the ritual and the process. Commenting on this link, Mick writes:

> The process of conversion provides the basis for all the rituals of the catechumenate. It is important not to think of rituals as independent moments that somehow work miracles on people. The rituals of the catechumenate are intended to be expressions of the underlying process that God is bringing about in the lives of the catechumens. The rituals have little meaning or value unless they express a conversion process that is truly occurring.[86]

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[83] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 44.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Donald Gelpi, *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians, Volume II The Sacraments of Ongoing Conversion* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 135.
[86] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 51.

Consequently, the link between process and ritual affirms that conversion is an experience and an event of grace effected by rituals. That is, there must constantly be a link between the human aspect of Christianity and divine intervention. Louis Bouyer stresses this point when he writes:

> … the more perfectly we know the human aspects of Christianity, the more perfectly we shall understand the part of it which is the result of divine intervention. This is not to say that the human and the divine should be found in it separated from one another. It is rather that the divine reveals itself in the transformation it effects in what is human.[87]

No doubt, grace is a gift, but it also invites us to self-transformation and conversion, thereby placing a burden on us that reminds us of the importance of the conversion process. The burden correspondingly reveals the necessity of the group and creates a sense of community aimed at helping one another along this journey. Thus, RCIA sees conversion as an individual affair and an affair of the entire Christian community. It stresses the idea of the Christian community "joining the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the paschal mystery and…renewing their own conversion."[88] This implies that the Church, as a pilgrim people, is constantly in need of conversion. To this end, the various rituals of the catechumenate should "lead people to a life of faith in Christ, hope in his promise, and charity toward those in need. This life of faith, hope, and charity is nourished through communion with Jesus in the liturgy, above all in the Eucharist."[89] The liturgy, in itself, should always be about strengthening and deepening conversion.

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[87] Louis Bouyer, *The Rite and Man,* Trans. by Joseph Costelloe (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 2.
[88] RCIA no. 4.
[89] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis 3* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 10.

RCIA indicates that rituals help facilitate the conversion process. It also stresses the idea that conversion is the basis for which the neophyte is admitted to the catechumenate and prepared for the ritual of baptism, which configures him/her to Christ. It states: "those who are baptized are united to Christ in a death like his; buried with him in death, they are given life again with him, and with him they rise again. For baptism recalls and makes present the paschal mystery itself, because in baptism we pass from death of sin into life."[90] That is, in baptism, we are brought into a new life with Christ through the rituals; we pass from our old ways of life to a new way of life in Christ, and this is conversion. Nevertheless, one wonders: is it the ritual that confers new life on a person, or is it the person himself/herself who consciously takes steps through the instruction received during the period of catechumenate to abandon his/her old ways and embrace a new way of life in Christ? One would argue that whereas RCIA prescribes the process of conversion as the basis for coming into the sacraments of initiation, pastors and those who facilitate the RCIA process may not have done enough to ensure that people who approach the sacraments of initiation consciously aspire to abandon their old way of life in order to embrace a new way of life in Christ. The result is that we continue to witness less commitment to the life of the Church and poor liturgical participation of the faithful after the initiation ritual. It is essential, therefore, to pay closer attention to the dimensions of conversion inherent in RCIA and as widely explored by Bernard Lonergan.

3.5 The Multi-Dimensional Nature of Conversion in RCIA.

Conversion, as envisaged by RCIA, is multidimensional. Duggan argues that "the formation which is prescribed during the catechumenate shows that conversion is

[90] Catholic Church, *Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults, Final Text with Commentaries* (Dublin, Ireland: The Columba Press, 1986), xi.

understood as a reality which touches every dimension of the human person. The view of transformation contained in the Rite embraces cognitive development, affective growth, and behavioural change."[91] Gelpi supports this position by writing: "besides moral and ecclesial consequences, initial religious conversion entails affective, intellectual, and sociopolitical consequences as well."[92] For Mick, conversion includes:

> Acquiring new knowledge and new ways of understanding the mysteries of life [intellectual conversion]. It entails changes in one's moral life, turning away from sin, and developing habits of virtue [moral conversion]. It involves spiritual growth and a developing prayer life [religious conversion]. It encompasses psychological dimensions that may run very deep [psychological conversion].[93]

Therefore, RCIA intended that conversion follows intellectual, moral, and religious dimensions, as carefully analyzed by Bernard Lonergan. It also involves the psychological dimension, as reflected in Robert Doran's addition to Lonergan's triple conversion.

3.5.1 Intellectual Conversion in RCIA

Intellectual conversion entails a new way of looking at oneself and the world at large. Gelpi acknowledges that it is "the decision to turn from an irresponsible and supine acquiescence in accepted beliefs to a commitment to validating one's personal beliefs within adequate frames of reference and in ongoing dialogue with other truth seekers."[94] Elsewhere, he asserts that:

> The catechumenate should also foster the transformation of intellectual conversion in faith. Those who have not yet

[91] Robert D. Duggan, "Conversion, the Catechumenate and Cultural Adaptation," 171.
[92] Donald Gelpi, *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians, Volume I Adult Conversion and Initiation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 17.
[93] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 45. [Words in bracket added by me].
[94] Donald Gelpi, *Committed Worship,* Vol. I, 17.

> experienced intellectual conversion must be challenged to advance beyond fundamentalistic patterns of thinking in every area of their lives. They must learn that no one can hand any human mind truth on a platter. Instead, catechumens must learn to take personal responsibility for the truth or falsity of their own beliefs and for the adequacy or inadequacy of the frames of reference in which they think.[95]

Therefore, this study argues that the intellectual formation received during the period of the catechumenate helps the catechumens' cognitive development and bring them to a wider way of looking at reality. Through cognitive development, Duggan insists: "the Rite means the whole range of new learnings associated with the appropriation of a specific faith tradition, from an intuitive grasp of the meaning of Scripture to an understanding of specific theological insights presented in formal catechesis."[96] Thus, the catechumenate process is designed to foster a sufficient amount of learning that aids growth in faith, expands the candidate's knowledge of doctrine, and broadens the catechumen's knowledge of the scriptures. In the words of RCIA: the "new participation in the sacraments enlightens the neophytes' understanding of the scriptures."[97] Therefore, Mick stresses that:

> The catechumenate is not a watered-down Sunday school class but a place where the hard questions of life will be probed and discussed. As in tribal initiation, the catechumenate should offer the freedom to reflect deeply on the meaning of life and the ultimate mysteries. It should be a time when hard questions are asked and probed. There may not be easy answers to many of these questions, but that is the kind of serious intellectual struggle that a good catechumenate requires.[98]

Consequently, the RCIA process should be able to effect a radical transformation of a person's understanding of himself/herself and the doctrine of the Church. It should, in the words of Lonergan, help the candidate in "the elimination of an exceedingly

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[95] Donald Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience: A Reflective Process for RCIA Participants and Others,* 144.
[96] Robert D. Duggan, "Conversion, the Catechumenate and Cultural Adaptation," 171.
[97] RCIA, no. 236.
[98] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 45.

stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge."[99] Perhaps, in addition, it should lead to the elimination of misleading myths concerning God, the Church, and the sacraments.

3.5.2 RCIA and Moral Conversion

Gelpi observes that "in what concerns moral conversion candidates need to learn how to form their consciences as Christians."[100] Hence, "the call to moral conversion is always relevant."[101] Whether the person is being converted to Christianity or he/she is already a Christian, conversion entails a change in moral lifestyle that involves a continuous withdrawal from sin and imbibing good behaviour. Duggan observes that "the area of behavioral change calls for the fruits of conversion to be visibly manifest in a specifically Christian ethics."[102] Thus, the catechumenate process ensures that candidates begin to pursue value and not just satisfaction.

Mick notes that "because we are continually being seduced by the values of society and the many 'isms' that mark our culture: consumerism, narrow nationalism, egotism, militarism, sexism, etc. the call to conversion is a call to freedom from all those false values, a call to a transformation of life that is truly 'radical,' in the original sense of that word."[103] Consequently, RCIA recommends that before a person is admitted into the sacraments, he/she must have shown a visible sign of moral transformation. It insists that first and foremost, "there must be evidence of the first faith that was conceived during the period of evangelization and pre-catechumenate and of an initial conversion and intention to change their lives and to enter into a

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[99] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 223.
[100] Donald Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience: A Reflective Process for RCIA Participants and Others,* 145.
[101] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 46.
[102] Robert D. Duggan, "Conversion, the Catechumenate and Cultural Adaptation," 171.
[103] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 46.

relationship with God in Christ."[104] This is a call that contemporary liturgical theologians ought to take more seriously. Pastoral agents should pay more attention to what happens to those admitted into the sacraments. Efforts should be made to ensure that the lifestyle of the people who prepare for the sacraments is morally transformed, firstly, by the exemplary life of those who facilitate the RCIA process; secondly, by effective catechesis; and thirdly, by ensuring that the catechumens share their life experiences that borders on the challenges they are facing and the progress they are making.

3.5.3 Religious Conversion in RCIA

Gelpi sees religious conversion as:

> The decision to turn from either ignorance of or opposition to God to acceptance in faith of some historical, revelatory self-communication of God and its consequences. Christian conversion exemplifies a particular normative form of religious conversion. In Christian conversion, converts turn from ignorance of and opposition to God to adult faith in the God definitively and normatively revealed in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God the Father, and in the Holy Breath whom they send into the world. Christian converts also accept the consequences of that decision.[105]

Here, religious conversion is envisioned as growth in affectivity with the divine. RCIA gives special attention to the catechumen's affective growth. Duggan maintains that "affective growth refers to the increasing experiential awareness of one's loving relationship with God, which comes about particularly through prayer and participation in public worship."[106] Therefore, the phrases; "intense spiritual preparation," "interior reflection," "search their own consciences," "purify the minds

[104] RCIA no. 42.
[105] Donald Gelpi, *Committed Worship,* Vol. I, 17–18.
[106] Robert D. Duggan, "Conversion, the Catechumenate and Cultural Adaptation," 171.

and hearts," "deeper knowledge of Christ the Saviour," as used by RCIA,[107] reveals the religious dimension of conversion in the catechumenate process. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council also acknowledge this religious dimension of conversion in RCIA. They state:

> The catechumens should be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and the practice of the evangelical virtues, and they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy and charity of the People of God by successive sacred rites. Then, having been delivered from the powers of darkness through the sacraments of Christian initiation, and having died, been buried, and risen with Christ, they receive the spirit of adoption of children and celebrate with the whole People of God the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection.[108]

Here, the Council Fathers intended that the process of the catechumenate should enable the catechumens not just to acquire the knowledge of doctrines or cultivate some moral values but, most importantly, help to incorporate them into the life of God through the paschal mystery. RCIA maintains that "the whole initiation must bear a markedly paschal character, since the initiation of Christians is the first sacramental sharing in Christ's dying and rising."[109]

Since conversion is a call to respond to God's act of love, it takes the Spirit of God residing within a person to make this deeper move that transcends intellectualism and moralism. Thus, RCIA sees God as the initiator of religious conversion. Even ecclesial, scholastic, and contemporary theological writings support this idea that God initiates religious conversion. For instance, CCC notes that conversion is the movement of a "contrite heart, drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first."[110] Also, Lizette Larson-Miller maintains that "the ability of all creation to reveal the transcendent God is first and foremost through the

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[107] Cf. RCIA, no. 126.
[108] *Ad Gentes Divinitis,* 14.
[109] RCIA, no. 8.
[110] CCC 1428.

initiative of God and then also because of the willingness of an immanent God to communicate that desire and allow it to be known in human heart."[111] Hence, Lonergan holds that religious conversion:

> is revealed in retrospect as an under-tow of existential consciousness, as a fated acceptance of a vocation to holiness, as perhaps an increasing simplicity and passivity in prayer. It is interpreted differently in the context of different religious traditions. For Christians it is God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.[112]

Religious conversion, therefore, focuses on the "growth in responsiveness to the Holy Spirit."[113] RCIA stresses the need for the catechumens and Christians to develop a deep prayer life reflected in active daily Christian living. Consequently, Mick notes that "the catechumenate should offer a variety of prayer experiences so that the candidates can find a style or styles of prayer which are comfortable, and which promote continued growth in the Spirit."[114] To achieve this growth, RCIA recommends that pastors, sponsors, and the facilitators of the process can play a crucial role. Through their support, "the catechumens learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ, to follow supernatural inspiration in their deeds, and to practice love of neighbour, even at the cost of self-renunciation."[115] This love, to the point of self-renunciation, is what Lonergan calls an "other-worldly love."[116]

The point of interest here is that religious conversion calls the candidate to a daily expression of an active life of faith and not just developing a clear understanding of doctrines. Hence, a fruitful RCIA process "requires a full process of formation that

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[111] Lizette Larson-Miller, *Sacramentality Renewed: Contemporary Conversations in Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 6.
[112] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 226.
[113] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 46.
[114] Ibid., 47.
[115] RCIA, no. 75.2.
[116] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 228.

leads the candidates to Christ while leaving them free to decide how and to what extent they will respond."[117] Religious conversion, therefore, entails unconditionally falling in love with God through the religious experience of the person. For Lonergan, "being in love with God, as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion."[118] Hence, the catechumenate process should be able to lead the individual to where he/she can meet or encounter God, love Him above everything else, and develop a personal experience of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3.5.4 Psychological Conversion in RCIA

Any fundamental decision people make in life leads to a significant shift in their self-identity. Therefore, the radical transformation of a person that conversion entails equally brings about some psychological implications. Robert Doran believes that the human psyche is the meeting ground of matter and spirit.[119] So, establishing the connection between the psyche and the spirit creates a healthy blend. To this end, RCIA envisions that the psychological state of grief that comes as a result of remorse for sin and the anxiety that a person faces as he/she contemplates the demands of the new life that conversion entails should be taken into consideration. Therefore, in the catechumenate process, provision is made for the Christian community to give the catechumen the necessary support to navigate these moments of psychological uncertainties and build a healthy, active life of faith.

Again, every catechumen considering the path to conversion is bound to have some relationships and memories from the past about which, after careful examination of conscience, he/she may feel deep regret or sorrow. These, too, are experiences that

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[117] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 47.
[118] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 101.
[119] Cf. Robert M. Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a reorientation of the Human Sciences* (California: Scholars Press, 1981), 150.

place some psychological demands on the candidates. The facilitators of the RCIA process must realize that the candidates need help in this psychological dimension to lead them to a deeper level of conversion.

From our analysis, it is clear that RCIA envisions a holistic understanding of conversion in the catechumenate process that addresses a person's intellect, will, and affective domain. Consequently, RCIA insists that:

> The instructions that the catechumens receive during this period should be of a kind that, while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety, also enlightens faith, directs the heart towards God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ.[120]

Therefore, authentic conversion must consider the entire dimension of the human person. It must be transformative, resulting not just in the radical change of the individual but in informing and affecting every aspect of the individual's life. Lonergan develops this holistic dimension of conversion in *Method in Theology,* as we shall see in the next chapter. The importance of giving attention to this broad dimension of conversion makes the RCIA process pastorally relevant.

3.6 Pastoral Relevance of RCIA: Link between conversion and liturgy

Paul Turner argues that RCIA "prepares catechumens to participate meaningfully in Sunday worship throughout the liturgical year for the rest of their lives."[121] What will be the goal of RCIA if, after receiving the sacraments of initiation, the catechumens are not found in Sunday worship? Gelpi believes that the catechumenate should "help candidates mature in conversion and in the life of faith….It should gradually

[120] RCIA no. 78.
[121] Paul Turner, "My RCIA: The Meaning of Adult Initiation in Post-Vatican II America," *Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions Newsletter,* 41 (December 2014): 7.

introduce candidates into the worshiping community."[122] Therefore, a fruitful RCIA process should enhance the person's transformation and guarantee their regular participation in worship. As a result, the structure of RCIA should provide that link between conversion and liturgy. Pius XII stresses the importance of this link between conversion and liturgy when he writes: “God cannot be honored worthily unless the mind and heart turn to Him in quest of the perfect life, and that the worship rendered to God by the Church in union with her divine Head is the most efficacious means of achieving sanctity.”[123] Hence, this study argues that the RCIA team needs to understand the basic intention of the catechumenate process: to lead the catechumens to conversion and worship. To this end, RCIA opens with the phrase: "the rite of Christian initiation presented here is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion."[124] Therefore, dioceses need to organize training and retraining for pastors and those in the RCIA team to enable them to promote a conversion-centred RCIA process. This training will help fulfil the pastoral goal of RCIA: to enlighten faith, direct the heart towards God, foster participation in the liturgy, inspire apostolic activity, and nurture a life entirely in accord with the spirit of Christ.[125]

Similarly, efforts should be made to enlighten the Christian community about their role in fostering the conversion of the catechumens. In doing so, they too would be more conscious of their continuous conversion since, as Gelpi notes, RCIA “confronts the community of the already baptized with the need to exhibit in their own lives at

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[122] Donald Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience: A Reflective Process for RCIA Participants and Others.* 141.
[123] Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on the Sacred Liturgy), 26.
[124] RCIA, no. 1.
[125] Cf. RCIA, no. 78.

least that measure of conversion that the Church demands of neophytes."[126] More so, "it is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes, and sustains (personal) faith."[127] RCIA emphasizes the need for the community to join "the catechumens in reflecting on the value of the paschal mystery and by renewing their own conversion."[128] Lonergan corroborates and expands this position when he insists that the Church which authenticates individual conversion must also be in "a fully conscious process of self-constitution."[129] Therefore, RCIA aims to direct both the individual and the community on a lifelong journey of conversion and a deeper relationship with God.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, a careful examination of the structure of RCIA has been made, and our study reveals the centrality of conversion in the catechumenate process. It also emphasizes the role of ritual in enhancing the conversion journey. Equally, an assertion was raised and established that the mufti-dimensional nature of conversion in RCIA is the foundation for Lonergan's systematic treatment of conversion. However, the study shows that whereas RCIA prescribes the process of conversion as the basis for coming into the sacraments of initiation, less emphasis has been placed on ensuring that people who approach the sacraments of initiation consciously aspire to abandon their old way of life in order to embrace a new way of life in Christ and be incorporated into the paschal mystery. The result is that we continue to witness less commitment to the life of the Church and poor liturgical participation of the faithful after initiation.

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[126] Donald Gelpi, *Committed Worship,* Vol. II, 250.
[127] CCC, 168.
[128] RCIA, no. 4.
[129] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 335.

Equally this research contends that RCIA places much emphasis on pre-initiation conversion but needs to be more emphatic on ongoing conversion. Conversion should be an ongoing process, and liturgy should always be about strengthening conversion. Some people may argue that RCIA (in the final section) made provision for *Post-Baptismal Catechesis* or *Mystagogy,* intended to strengthen the conversion process of the neophytes. But, we argue that the emphasis is placed more on how the neophyte can "enter into closer ties with the other faithful."[130] The focus is more on the validity of the rites rather than on the effect of the rites on the individual which should lead to personal transformation and conviction. Thus, Lonergan's model of conversion expands the view of conversion in RCIA by emphasizing the need for ongoing conversion anchored in the religious experience of the person.

Similarly, this study recommends that although RCIA is designed for people desirous of and preparing for the sacraments of initiation, it should be expanded to cater for an ongoing renewal programme for all Catholics. The process of evangelization can now focus on the demands of the "new evangelization"; conversion should focus on the totality of the human person, which takes into consideration a person's intellect, will, and affective domain; and rituals should find expression in the concrete life of the individual. We advocate an ongoing *mystagogy* and stress that the focus of this ongoing *mystagogy* should allow the newly initiated members, their sponsors, and the community to speak about their experiences in practical terms to effect both individual and communal transformation.

Furthermore, we recommend that the same dynamics of RCIA should provide the template for a pastoral renewal programme that considers the particular needs of every local Church. This can be achieved through a fruitful engagement of the

[130] RCIA no. 236.

community, together with the catechumens, in a more profound commitment to the observance of Lent, renewed catechesis on the Sacred Paschal Triduum, and community-based celebration of the Easter experience. These can generate renewed interest, leading to genuine spiritual transformation for individuals and the community. In the following chapter, we shall examine Lonergan's treatment of conversion as an expansion of the position of RCIA.

CHAPTER FOUR

BERNARD LONERGAN'S FRAMEWORK ON CONVERSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Lonergan's treatment of conversion. For him, reflection on conversion is the foundation for a new theology, "a foundation which is concrete, dynamic, personal, communal, and historical."[1] A conversion-oriented theology should lead us to "knowledge of God" and not "knowledge about God." A person who has been led to the "knowledge of God" moves from the level of appearance to grasp the reality of particular situations (intellectual conversion), which propels him/her to begin to pursue value (moral conversion), and with the correct values, the person begins to count everything else as less important than God (religious conversion).

Lonergan insists that knowledge of God leads to an experience of God, and theology should lead us to experience and encounter God to the extent that we fall in love with God and, by extension, fall in love with our neighbour. This process of falling in love with God is what Lonergan considers as conversion. To this effect, the foundation of theology is the person experiencing an intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. Warren Harrington captures it thus; "the foundational reality of theology is the theologian's intellectual, moral, and religious conversion."[2] He states further that "the theologian is theology's foundation because what one knows depends on what one is. Knowledge is the personal modification of the knowing subject whereby it becomes

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[1] Avery Dulles, "Fundamental Theology and the Dynamics of Conversion" in *Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review,* 45 (1981): 176.
[2] Warren Harrington, "Conversion as the Foundational Reality in Theology: An Interpretation of Bernard Lonergan's Position," *Dissertation,* Fordham University, 1980, 2.

conscious of the other as other."[3] Hence, Lonergan defines conversion as the "transformation of the subject and his world."[4] This is a radical turn in a person's life; "it is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away."[5] So, conversion occurs when the human person, illuminated by grace and nurtured by experience, accepts the truth of faith and responds to God in love. We shall now discuss the three dimensions of Lonergan's conversion.

4.1 Lonergan on Intellectual, Moral, and Religious Conversion

Lonergan's treatment of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion does not necessarily follow this chronological order. He states: "Though religious conversion sublates moral, and moral conversion sublates intellectual, one is not to infer that intellectual comes first and then moral and finally religious."[6] However, this arrangement is necessary for critical contemporary analysis and a proper understanding of the symbiotic relationship among the three levels of conversion. Lonergan himself states that conversion "may be intellectual or moral or religious. While each of the three is connected with the other two, each is still a different type of event and has to be considered before being related to the others."[7] Consequently, we shall examine them independently.

4.2 Intellectual Conversion

Liddy notes:

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[3] Warren Harrington, "Conversion as the Foundational Reality in Theology: An Interpretation of Bernard Lonergan's Position," 12.
[4] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 125.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 228.
[7] Ibid., 223.

> Lonergan never uses the term intellectual conversion in **Insight**. Even though the term "radical intellectual conversion" had played such a prominent role in his notes on "Intelligence and Reality," the term is not found in his "great work," **Insight**….Perhaps because of the religious overtones of the word "conversion?" After all, **Insight** is written not just for believers but for "any sufficiently cultured consciousness?" As he states in the introduction, the aim of the book is pedagogical: to bring a person to the "startling" and "strange" breakthrough involved in coming to understand the structures of their own knowing.[8]

Intellectual conversion is a unique way of looking at oneself or reality in a completely new way. It is "a basic break from a naive view of oneself and reality. It is the transition to understanding oneself as a source of meaning and of knowledge as attained by the intellectual acts of understanding and true judgment."[9]

For Lonergan, "intellectual conversion is a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge."[10] What he calls myth is the false idea that "knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what is there to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and the real is what is out there now to be looked at."[11] However, the intellectually converted person is one who has been able to eradicate this myth and radically distinguish between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning.[12] Whereas the world of immediacy is a mythical view that presents only a partial and fragmented aspect of reality, objectivity, and knowledge, the world mediated by meaning "is a world known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by

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[8] Richard Liddy, *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 138.
[9] Richard Liddy, "Method and Intellectual Conversion," in *The Lonergan Review: Generalized Empirical Method: Perspectives from Bernard Lonergan,* 1 (2009), 87. Accessed in https://scholarship.shu.edu/religion-publications/183 on 19/02/2023.
[10] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 223.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Lonergan explains that "the world of immediacy is the sum of what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, smelt, felt." It is a small fragment of the world mediated by meaning, 223-224.

the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of the community."[13] That means intellectual conversion leads a person to a better understanding of oneself and creates the opportunity to see the world as it really is. It enables the human person to understand that the world mediated by meaning expands beyond one's comprehension or what one can see. This understanding pushes a person's interest beyond what one can see to the ability to experience, judge, and believe. Therefore, the intellectually converted person must transcend the world of immediacy and realize that:

> *Knowing*...is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing. The criteria of *objectivity* are not just the criteria of ocular vision; they are the compound criteria of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, and of believing. The *reality* known is not just looked at; it is given in experience, organized and extrapolated by understanding, posited by judgment and belief.[14]

Commenting on Lonergan's position, Robert Duggan observes that intellectual conversion has to do with "the effort to reach cognitive integrity in one's intellectual positions."[15] It is the ability to take possession of one's mind; that is, the ability to understand the workings of the mind and all the activities that take place there; identify them, compare them, distinguish them, name them, relate them to one another, grasp their dynamic structure, and in the midst of all these, have an opinion of one's own on more significant issues.

Lonergan holds that the world mediated by meaning is the real world, and only a critical realist can acknowledge this level of human knowing. He puts it thus: "only the critical realist can acknowledge the facts of human knowing and pronounce the world mediated by meaning to be the real world; and he can do so only inasmuch as he knows that the process of experiencing, understanding, and judging is a process of

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[13] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 224.
[14] Ibid. [Emphasis added by me.]
[15] Robert Doran, "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by Conversion"? 5.

self-transcendence."[16] The critical realist can come to this knowledge because he/she has eradicated the misleading myths by intellectual conversion. The effect of these myths results in what Lonergan calls counterpositions, which manifest in various limiting viewpoints, namely:

> The naive realist knows the world mediated by meaning but thinks he knows it by looking. The empiricist restricts objective knowledge to sense experience; for him, understanding and conceiving, judging and believing are merely subjective activities. The idealist insists that human knowing always includes understanding and sense. However, he retains the empiricist's notion of reality, so he thinks of the world mediated by meaning as not real but ideal.[17]

Lonergan insists that intellectual conversion makes possible the distinction between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning. Nevertheless, the knowledge of reality mediated by meaning is facilitated by knowledge acquired in the world of immediacy. In fact, "any questions one asks about the world of immediacy or any answers one gives only serve to make the world of immediacy one of the objects meant within the world mediated by meaning."[18] He reveals further that "any account of human knowing, of its criteria of objectivity, and of the universe thereby known, must be an account not simply of the world of immediacy, but of that world and of the intricate process from it to the world mediated by meaning."[19] Hence, in order to properly speak of knowing, of objectivity, and of reality, Lonergan notes that we must go beyond the idea of knowing from the perspective of looking to acquiring the mastery of ourselves made possible by knowing what one ought to know through the discovery of the possibility of self-transcendence proper to the human process of coming to know. At this point, one is said to be intellectually converted, and he/she

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[16] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 224.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* footnote eight commentary - referencing the position of Regis, 224.
[19] Ibid.

begins a new path of life and seeks further clarifications to enhance his/her development in every facet of life.

Intellectual conversion, therefore, involves, in the words of Richard Liddy, “breaking out of systematically misleading ways of thinking.”[20] By so doing, one becomes very critical, raising fundamental questions about reality to eradicate all forms of what Lonergan calls myths. He says, "being critical means eliminating the ordinary nonsense, the systematically misleading images and so on; the mythical account."[21] At the root of all our questioning is the desire to know. The desire to know necessitates an intellectual conversion in which one's little world fades away, and one's understanding and judging are based primarily on the unsoiled desire to know. To this end, Liddy holds that "intellectual conversion, then, involves a willingness to change one's mind, to die to one's previous habits of thinking, a real asceticism of the intellect…. [It] involves a valuing of intellect itself. It involves a coming to value intellect as enriching, as mediating knowledge of the universe."[22] That means intellectual conversion, in the words of Walter Conn, “is, of course, the master key to fundamental clarification of philosophical issues in the physical and human sciences.”[23] It could be argued, therefore, that no scientific or philosophical breakthrough can be realizable without first eliminating our biases and some of these myths.

Interestingly, to break away from the myths and ask questions that critically lead to the knowledge of truth and reality, one must first value the human mind, which serves as a mediator of reality. Therefore, intellectual conversion must first address the

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[20] Richard M. Liddy, “Theology as Intellectual Conversion” in Department of Religion Publication, 197 (1978): 126.
[21] Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection,* 229.
[22] Richard M. Liddy, “Theology as Intellectual Conversion,” 127.
[23] Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 127.

process of self-affirmation and self-appropriation, which Lonergan discussed extensively in part one of *Insight.*

4.2.1 Self-Affirmation and Self-Appropriation as the Bases for Intellectual Conversion

In analyzing his generalized empirical method, Lonergan maintains that we come to understand the nature and workings of our minds when we can recognize the dynamic operations of our consciousness and the normative pattern that relates these operations to one another. It is this process he called "self-appropriation." According to him:

> Underpinning special methods there is what I have named generalized empirical method. Its operations are the operations we can verify each in his own consciousness. The normative pattern that relates these operations to one another is the conscious dynamism of sensitive spontaneity, of intelligence raising questions and demanding satisfactory answers, of reasonableness insisting on sufficient evidence before it can assent yet compelled to assent when sufficient evidence is forthcoming, of conscience presiding over all and revealing to the subject his authenticity or his unauthenticity as he observes or violates the immanent norms of his own sensitivity, his own intelligence, his own reasonableness, his own freedom and responsibility.[24]

For a person to acquire the knowledge of truth and reality as it ought to be, one must first ask the question of oneself; "Am I a knower?"[25] Asking this question ascertains the rational consciousness of the individual. Consciousness then "supplies the fulfillment of one element in the conditions for affirming that I am a knower."[26] However, when questions like, do I think? Am I considerate? Do I explain clearly?

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[24] Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection,* Edited by Frederick Crowe, (New York: Paulist Press, 1985),150.
[25] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding* in the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Edited by Frederick Crowe and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 352.
[26] Ibid.

are raised, does consciousness supply the fulfillment of the conditions for affirming the knowing subject? Lonergan maintains that "as each has to ask these questions of himself, so too he/she has to answer them for oneself. But the fact of the asking and the possibility of the answering are themselves the sufficient reason for the affirmative answer."[27] Thus, self-affirmation is a judgment that rests heavily upon the experimental component of knowing. Self-affirmation, therefore, is the first stage of self-appropriation. It becomes self-appropriation when the knowing subject consciously and responsibly performs an act in, for, and by himself/herself. It is self-affirmation and self-appropriation that provide the basis for intellectual conversion.

Self-appropriation is a keyword in Lonergan's work. He attributes his interest in self-appropriation to his early years of studying Thomas Aquinas. He notes that through the study of Thomas Aquinas, he discovered himself.[28] In *Insight,* he describes self-appropriation as:

> One’s own rational self-consciousness clearly and distinctly taking possession of itself as rational self-consciousness. Up to that decisive achievement all leads. From it all follows. No one else, no matter what his knowledge or his eloquence, no matter what his rigor or his persuasiveness, can do it for you.[29]

That means, in Lonergan's thought, each individual possesses within himself/herself some internal and conscious experiential activities that aid his/her knowing. That is, the awareness of our own conscious operations becomes the basis with which we ascertain the authenticity of any given theory of someone else. The point here is that each person must first ask the question of himself. The ability to ask the question of oneself affirms a person's rational consciousness.

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[27] Ibid., 353.
[28] Cf. Ibid., 769–70.
[29] Ibid., 13.

Self-appropriation is a process of coming to terms with oneself and recognizing the structure of one's consciousness. Hence, firstly, it is the act of being attentive to oneself "as experiencing, understanding, and judging. Secondly, it is understanding oneself as experiencing, understanding, and judging. Thirdly, it is affirming oneself as experiencing, understanding, and judging."[30] Self-appropriation, therefore, involves the three steps of experiencing, understanding, and judging from a subjective perspective, that is, from the levels of self-presence. Why do we pay attention to self-appropriation if it leads us only to subjective knowledge? To this, Mark Morelli and Elizabeth Morelli note:

> To deal with philosophical questions, one needs a point of reference, a basis that is one's own…. if a person is to be a philosopher, his thinking as a whole cannot depend upon someone or something else. There has to be a basis within himself; he must have resources of his own to which he can appeal in the last resort…. The value of self-appropriation, I think, is that it provides one with an ultimate basis of reference in terms of which one can proceed to deal satisfactorily with other questions.[31]

Therefore, self-appropriation as self-affirmation entails one going beyond accepting answers to fundamental questions just because someone else has said so. It means that one has to provide answers to some questions for oneself, especially when it comes to the question of "what am I doing when I am knowing?"[32] Byrne explains further that "a person taking up the challenges of self-appropriation as self-affirmation cannot and should not accept Lonergan's answers merely on the basis of his authority; Lonergan did offer *his* own answers in the spirit and hope of guiding others to appropriating *their* own activities of knowing." Each person should be able to affirm that Lonergan

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[30] Mark D. Morelli and Elizabeth A. Morelli (Eds.), *The Lonergan Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 357–358.
[31] Ibid., 358–359.
[32] Patrick H. Byrne, *The Ethics of Discernment: Lonergan's Foundations for Ethics* (Bethesda: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 76. ProQuest Ebook Central, accessed February 11, 2023.

is expressing what they, through their own conscious experience of knowing, agree to be true. This suggests that individuals should be able to take their own independent position on issues and not merely follow the crowd. It goes without saying, therefore, that the person who knows what he/she is knowing possesses the capacity to become (scientifically speaking) a theologian. Therefore, self-affirmation and self-appropriation, as discussed by Lonergan under the cognitive theory in *Insight,* are the foundation for intellectual conversion.

4.2.2 The Place of Intellectual Conversion in Theology

We have been discussing self-affirmation and self-appropriation as the basis for intellectual conversion. The task that follows is to ascertain the implications of intellectual conversion for theology. Firstly, in *Insight,* while discussing the cognitive process with respect to the scientist, Lonergan insists that attention should be paid to the conscious operations of the scientist and not to the content of their science. Hence, in discussing the intellectual conversion of the theologian, the focus should be on the rational capacity of the theologian rather than on the theological issues therein. If this is the case, several questions may be thrown up: is intellectual conversion of any relevance to theology? Of what use is intellectual conversion if all it does is to ascertain the intellectual capacity of the theologian without solving core theological issues?

Lonergan's response will be: once an intellectually converted person attains proper self-appropriation, a correct understanding of God will be inevitable; the theologian will be able to acquire an objective knowledge of God and, invariably, an objective knowledge of theology. An intellectually converted theologian, therefore, is one who

has been able to acknowledge the cognitive process and structure and acts on them in order to develop intellectually and morally. To achieve this level of transformation involves, in the words of Richard Liddy, "fidelity to the desire deep within the human spirit to know, to get things straight, to find out what is, a desire to enter into the world of genuine meaning, the world of truth, reality."[33] Lonergan stresses the point that "the desire to know, then, is simply the inquiring and critical spirit of man."[34] All human questioning springs from this pure desire to know. In *Insight,* the desire to know is immanent and operative in consciousness. In his own words: "deep within us all, emergent when the noise of other appetites is stilled, there is a drive to know, to understand, to see why, to discover reason, to find the cause, to explain."[35] By asking questions and genuinely seeking to know, we enter into the world mediated by meaning, a world known by experience, understanding, and judgment. This desire to know in *Insight* becomes the desire to see God in *Method in Theology.* It is, in the words of Lonergan, "an orientation to what is transcendent in lovableness and, when that is unknown, it is an orientation to transcendent mystery….It provides the origin for inquiry about God, for seeking assurance of his existence, for endeavouring to reach some understanding of faith."[36] To this end, intellectual conversion, in the words of Liddy, "functions (or fails to function) in theology's reflection on moral and religious conversion."[37]

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[33] Richard Liddy, "Theology as Intellectual Conversion," in *Department of Religion Publication,* 197 (1978): 126.
[34] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight,* 372.
[35] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight,* 28.
[36] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 315.
[37] Richard Liddy, "Theology as Intellectual Conversion," 124.

4.2.3 Limits of Intellectual Conversion

We have emphasized the importance of intellectual conversion in theology. Intellectual conversion brings us face to face with the different aspects involved in the practice of theology, which Lonergan calls specialization. He enumerates eight specializations: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. Because each of these specializations addresses unique areas of questioning, collaboration is enhanced among theologians, and clarity is given to theological questions. However, there are shortfalls to intellectual conversion in theology. It runs the risk of confining the framework or structure of theological reality within the little world of the individual. This being the case, it produces a theology that tends to locate God somewhere in a particular spot in one corner or another, in an imaginatively conceived and personalized framework. Thus, intellectual conversion runs the risk of egoism/individual bias or even group bias.

4.3 Moral Conversion

Moral conversion occurs when one begins to transcend oneself and deliberately begins to desire value rather than satisfaction. In Lonergan's own words: "moral conversion changes the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfaction to values."[38] In fact, it consists "in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflicts."[39] A morally converted person, therefore, shuns every act of hedonism and self-seeking life in pursuit of what is truly valuable. Whereas satisfaction pertains only to the subjective, value goes beyond subjectivity. The valuable is good in itself; it is characteristically transcendental - it enhances self-transcendence. Thus, it is the desire for values that promotes self-

[38] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 225.
[39] Ibid., 226.

transcendence. At this level, one ceases to be ruled by desire and fear; rather, one launches himself/herself into a principle of authenticity, thereby becoming “a genuine person whose words and deeds inspire and invite those that know him or her to aspire themselves to moral self-transcendence to become themselves genuine persons.”[40] Moral conversion makes the human person authentically human, especially in relation to fellow human beings. It liberates one from the natural tendency of "egoism" and enables one to cultivate the spirit of benevolence and beneficence. Here, the norm of one’s life moves from satisfaction to what is genuinely valuable. Lonergan insists that moral conversion sets one “on a new, existential level of consciousness and establishes him as an originating value.”[41] One fact that needs to be established, however, is that "value" stands for what is "good-without-qualification."[42] and what is “good-without-qualification” is determined by the level of a person’s self-transcendence. Hence, the basis for differentiating between satisfaction and value is self-transcendence.

Value, according to Lonergan, "is a transcendental notion. It is what is intended in questions for deliberation, just as the intelligible is what is intended in questions for intelligence, and just as truth and being are what is intended in questions for reflection."[43] Nevertheless, one wonders: can intending be said to be knowledge? Lonergan will say that the fact that I am intending presupposes that I am yet to know. So, "when I ask whether this is truly and not merely apparently good, whether that is or is not worthwhile, I do not yet know value but I am intending value."[44] Thus, intention is the springboard by which we come to the knowledge of values. This

[40] Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical And Theological Papers 1965-1980* in the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: 325.
[41] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 227.
[42] “Good-without-qualification” means that an action is good in itself and what is good in itself is said to be truly good.
[43] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 35.
[44] Ibid.

implies that the process of moving from intention to knowledge requires self-transcendence, which, of course, is achieved through conscious intentionality. To attain the knowledge of values, therefore, requires a process:

> There is a first step in attending to the data of sense and of consciousness. Next, inquiry and understanding yield an apprehension of a hypothetical world mediated by meaning. Thirdly, reflection and judgment reach an absolute: through them we acknowledge what really is so, what is independent of us and our thinking. Fourthly, by deliberation, evaluation, decision, action, we can know and do, not just what pleases us, but what truly is good, worthwhile. Then we can be principles of benevolence and beneficence, capable of genuine collaboration and of true love.[45]

This is made possible through moral self-transcendence (moral conversion) founded on the principles of benevolence and beneficence. The transcendental notions are not merely abstract principles; they are utterly concrete. Consequently, they remain the source of both initial and further questioning.[46] To this effect, the "good" is not meant to be something abstract but something concrete and real.

4.3.1 The Idea of Feelings in Relation to Moral Conversion

Lonergan's position on feelings in relation to value has its foundational consideration in *Insight* and was properly developed in *Method in Theology.* In *Insight,* his discussion on the “desire to know” analogously relates to his idea of feelings as developed in *Method in Theology.* It is still unclear why Lonergan avoided the use of the word “feeling” in *Insight* when his use of words like drive, intention, meaning, and dynamism clearly serve as synonyms for feelings. It is even more fascinating to discover that the whole index of *Insight* contains only one entry for "feeling," where he made allusion to "feeling" and the "good." Here, we see his apparent aversion to

[45] Ibid., 36.
[46] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 36.

feelings when he writes: "It will not be amiss to assert emphatically that the identification of being and the good bypasses human feelings and sentiments to take its stands exclusively upon intelligible order and rational value."[47] However, in *Method,* we find a clear contrast. In this case, he shows a striking admiration for feelings and expounds their indispensable role in the search for the truly good. The sudden turn of events is not unconnected with his discovery of feelings as intentional responses to value and the distinction of the state and trends of intentional responses. While "the states have causes. The trends have goals. But the relation of the feeling to the cause or goal is simply that of effect to cause, of trend to goal."[48]

Lonergan draws insight into how feelings are and how they work from the works of Max Scheler and Dietrich Von Hildebrand.[49] For Scheler, as interpreted by Frings, feelings, and value are two motivating factors that account for the proper ordering of the human person. In his philosophical study of the inner components of the human person (innerliness - *Innesein*), he notes that humans possess the ability to be connected with objects outside themselves and are internally motivated to move upwards. That is, innerliness manifests itself as an "urge-forward (*Drang*)" and a movement upward (*vapor Dampf*).[50] Scheler's "urge-forward" was an attempt to refute the idea that human existence ends in the biological world. For him, humans, by being a composite of both body and spirit, are elevated above other animals by the *Geist* (spirit). In his words: "Spirit is the elevation to world-openness and the world's

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[47] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight,* 629.
[48] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 31-32.
[49] Walter Conn will argue that in as much as Lonergan's interpretation of feeling as an intentional response is based directly on Dietrich von Hildebrand's (and indirectly Max Scheler's) rather distinctive phenomenological analysis, it relates very positively to the major line of contemporary psychological theories of emotions which stresses their *cognitive* character." See Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender,* 137.
[50] Cf. Manfred Frings, *Max Scheler: A Concise Introduction into the World of a Great Thinker* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University, 1965), 31.

presence. It is *objectification.* Spirit elevates man above world and above himself."[51] This means, in line with Lonergan's position, that human beings are ontologically transcendental. Scheler insists that " spirit " gives us our identity as persons. It also defines us as relational beings. He writes:

> The center of spirit is that which Scheler calls person, an ontic sphere, which in terms of individualizing acts constitutes each individual spirit (as a person), and which, in terms of social acts, constitutes the ontic relation to the "other" in different strata and forms of sociation, as mass, communities of life, society, etc., which all have their foundation in an absolute spiritual center as an absolute person.[52]

As persons energized by the spirit, we become active in the world with the capacity to relate to others in a spatio-temporal setting and self-transcend.

Scheler maintains that emotion has a fundamental place in our composition because we are spiritual beings. It sets us apart as humans, distinct from other animals, and makes us capable of loving and feeling. In fact, these emotional acts, Scheler argues, are "pure intuition (*Anschauung*), feeling, pure loving, hating, pure striving and willing."[53] There are not irrational or illogical acts, neither do they control them, but they function alongside them. In this regard, Scheler does not undervalue rational or logical acts, but insists that both function differently. Because emotional experience flows from the heart, one's understanding of the world from an emotional perspective will be different from the understanding of the world from a rational perspective.[54]

Feeling is the product of emotional relation and it brings us to the consciousness of the existence of the "other." It is when the "I" recognizes the presence of the "thou" that we become ontologically persons and a sense of community is created, where

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[51] Ibid., 38. [emphasis original]
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 50.
[54] Ibid.

both the "I" and the "thou" emotionally feel the need for one another. At this point, we develop human sympathy and our actions are influenced by the emotional condition of the other. This ultimately alters our values and actions towards others which may result in loving, hating, rejecting, etc. Thus, Scheler notes:

> It is *in* such acts of preferring, rejecting, loving, hating, as intentional functions, where values become apparent, i.e., during the *pursuance* of emotional acts the *a priori* value-content is given. This value evidence, as such, is absolutely independent of judgments or propositions about them. All ethics has to go back to facts of moral cognition and its *a priori* conditions. But moral cognition and insight themselves are not ethics. Ethics is constituted by the formulation of that which is *given* in moral cognition, and it is philosophical ethics if it restricts itself to the *a priori* content of that evidently given in such cognition.[55]

From Scheler's analysis, it is clear that feelings take one beyond mere moral cognition. They have moral consequences and are thereby capable of ordering human behaviour and relation in the world. The ordering of human behaviour by feeling has its foundation in love. It is the power of love in a person that determines the structure of his/her values. However, Scheler notes that "love can conform to the realm of values and contradict it."[56] Consequently, love can either be true or false; hence, love can obviously be contrasted with hate. Therefore, a person's emotional state, occasioned by feelings can influence his/her moral choices.

Also, Dietrich Von Hildebrand reaffirms the relationship of feelings to moral choice and gave special attention to the treatment of feeling. He begins by critically examining Aristotle's assertion: "*bonum est quod omnes desirant* - Good is what all things desire."[57] This implies that all things desire the good. His concern was to examine what motivates the human person from an experiential perspective,

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[55] Ibid., 67 [emphasis original].
[56] Ibid., 72.
[57] Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Christian Ethics* (New York: David McKay Company, 1953), 28.

especially towards the good. Central to his treatment of motivation is the idea of "importance."[58] For him, it is that which is important that can generate affective response which in turn creates value. Importance can be objectively good or subjectively satisfying or a combination of both.[59] In whichever case, importance can generate feelings, but the quality of the feeling or delight generated is proportionate to the type of importance.[60] Von Hildebrand argues that whereas the subjectively satisfying produces some level of delight, true happiness comes from the intrinsically or objectively good. Hence, both the means and the end must be considered for determining the right choice for the individual. It is the choice that considers both the rightness of the means and the end that qualifies as choice of "value" over "satisfaction." To this end, Von Hildebrand argues that value (which is true importance) remains the fundamental category that gives the human person his/her identity as a being.[61]

According to Von Hildebrand, all moral reflections are based on value, and intrinsic value has its perfect form in God. To this end, the human person is a transcendent being who attains moral goodness by pursuing values. It is through our share in the intrinsic value (a reflection of God) that we validate our existence as created in the image of God. He notes:

> We should understand that man's transcendence is already manifested in his ability and vocation to realize moral values and to attain moral goodness, which are primarily attributed to God and only analogously to man. We cannot understand the nature of moral values, of the mysterious importance-in-itself of moral goodness, nor can we grasp the nature of its antithesis, moral wickedness, if we look at the moral sphere as a merely human one. That moral wickedness is not restricted to man is clearly revealed by the fact that Satan, the fallen angel, is the

[58] Ibid., 31.
[59] Cf. Ibid., 49–50.
[60] Cf. Ibid., 35–37.
[61] Cf. Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Christian Ethics,* 72.

> very embodiment of moral wickedness. And all human moral goodness is a foreshadowing of the *similitudo Dei.*[62]

Here, he stresses that the human person can pursue goodness because there is a transcendental goodness to which he/she aspires. Owing to this transcendental dimension of the human person, the motivation to seek good and avoid evil or wickedness necessarily ignites the desire to pursue values.

Values are the basis for judging morality. Von Hildebrand argues that morality goes beyond rationality.[63] Our response to value gives us a better appreciation of the truth of the world. Thus, he emphasized the relationship between cognitive actions and intentional responses; according to him, it is like "the great dialogue between the person and being."[64] He stresses further that in this dialogue, "cognitive acts form the basis of all other acts and responses."[65] He views intentional responses from three perspectives: theoretical, volitional, and affective. While theoretical responses are related to knowledge, volitional responses are connected to the will. On the other hand, affective responses are tied specifically to "feelings" and flow from the heart. Because affective response flows from the heart, it is appropriately called "love" in its highest form (supreme affective response). According to him, love is "always granted to us as a gift."[66] It stands out as the highest example of the value response since it is in love that we follow the good from the depth of our being.[67]

Influenced by Max Scheler and Dietrich Von Hildebrand, Lonergan discussed feelings and developed this idea of intentional responses. According to him,

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[62] Ibid., 179.
[63] Cf. Ibid., 184.
[64] Ibid., 197.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Cf. Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Christian Ethics,* 203.
[67] Cf. Ibid., 235–236.

intentional responses “answer to what is intended, apprehended, represented.”[68] So, feeling is at the very core of our knowing and deciding. He states:

> The feelings relates us, not just to a cause or an end, but to an object. Such feeling gives intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive, power. Without these feelings our knowing and deciding would be paper thin. Because of our feelings, our desires and our fears, our hope or despair, our joy and sorrows, our enthusiasm and indignation, our esteem and contempt, our trust and distrust, our love and hatred, our tenderness and wrath, our admiration, veneration, reverence, our dread, horror, terror, we are oriented massively and dynamically in the world mediated by meaning. We have feelings about other persons, we feel for them, we feel with them. We have feelings about our respective situations, about the past, about the future, about evils to be lamented or remedied, about the good that can, might, must be accomplished.[69]

It could be deduced that feelings give meaning and value to our living and operating from vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious perspectives.[70] In all these, Lonergan notes that religious values “are at the heart of the meaning and value of man’s living and man’s world.”[71]

Although there are feelings that “easily are aroused and easily pass away,” Lonergan argues that feelings are not merely transient. He insists that "there are in full consciousness feelings so deep and strong, especially when deliberately reinforced, that they channel attention; shape one's horizon, direct one's life."[72] Here, the basis for enduring feelings is love. To this extent, feelings direct the affairs of the human person beyond this *spatio-temporal* existence and define one as a transcendental being. Lonergan maintains that feelings intend values and manifest in action. Consequently, feelings help reorder a person's behaviour, resulting in moral

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[68] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 32.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Cf. Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 33.
[72] Ibid.

conversion. However, as important as the role of feeling may be, it does not determine value; what it does is the it promotes the judgment of value.

4.3.2 Moral Conversion and the Judgments of Value

In *Method,* the judgment of value is in the fourth level of intentional consciousness: deciding. For Lonergan, the judgment of value is the answer to the question for deliberation, and answering the question for deliberation leads us to what is good. He argues that the judgments of value "affirm or deny that some *x* is truly or only apparently good. Or they compare distinct instances of the truly good to affirm or deny that one is better or more important or more urgent than the other."[73] That means the objectivity or subjectivity of our judgments of value depends largely on the degree of transcendence of the subject. Likewise, the truth or falsity of a judgment depends largely on the authenticity or lack of authenticity of the subject's being.

True judgments of value go beyond merely knowing to doing. That is, they transcend intellectual conversion to moral conversion. A person who knows should also act because "if he knows and does not perform, either he must be humble enough to acknowledge himself to be a sinner, or else he will start destroying his moral being by rationalizing, by making out that what truly is good really is not good at all. The judgment of value, then, is itself a reality in the moral order."[74] However, attaining the moral order is one thing, but developing the moral order is another. Lonergan holds that "it is by the transcendental notion of value and its expression in a good and an uneasy conscience that man can develop morally. But a rounded moral judgment is ever the work of a fully developed self-transcendence subject or, as Aristotle would

[73] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 37.
[74] Ibid., 38.

put it, of a virtuous man."[75] At this point, a person does not only know but also acts and practices.

Judgment of value shares the same structure but differs in content from judgment of fact. Whereas "judgments of fact state or purport to state what is or is not so; judgments of value state or purport to state what is or is not truly good or really better."[76] So, the judgment of value transcends merely knowing to doing. Hence:

> In the judgment of value, then, three components unite. First, there is knowledge of reality and especially of human reality. Secondly, there are intentional responses to values. Thirdly, there is the initial thrust towards moral self-transcendence constituted by the judgment of value itself. The judgment of value presupposes knowledge of human life, of human possibilities proximate and remote, of the probable consequences of projected courses or action.[77]

Moral conversion takes one from the level of knowledge to the level of action or praxis. Because, according to James Marsh:

> To know is one thing, to do is another thing; to know what is right is one thing, to do what is right is another. From the perspective of moral conversion, merely knowing the truth and the good is not enough. The question arises about the conformity of my doing to my knowing. If they do not fit, then my life is a lie. If they do fit, then I am integral, authentic, together.[78]

The idea here is that moral conversion sublates intellectual conversion, thereby introducing something new while at the same time retaining the identity of intellectual conversion. So, moral conversion "promotes the subject from cognitional to moral self-transcendence. It sets him on a new, existential level of consciousness

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[75] Ibid., 41.
[76] Ibid., 38.
[77] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 39.
[78] James L. Marsh, "Praxis and Ultimate Reality: Intellectual, Moral, and Religious Conversion as Radical Political Conversion" 229 in https://www.utpjournals.press/dio/pdf/10.3138/uram.13.3.222 - Sunday, March 05, 2023 12:16:13 PM - IP Adress:54.74.74.240.

and establishes him as an originating value."[79]

Value is different from satisfaction. Whereas satisfaction is merely subjective, value transcends subjectivity. Distinguishing value and satisfaction, Von Hildebrand argues that the valuable is valuable in itself, whereas that which is satisfying can only be satisfying in as much as it pertains to someone else.[80] Based on this distinction, Lonergan sees moral conversion as that state when our choices, decisions, and actions are judged by value rather than satisfaction. According to him, "moral conversion changes the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfaction to values."[81] Here, we come to a point where we discover for ourselves that the choices we make affect us no less than the object we choose or reject. So, it behooves each person to decide for himself/herself what he/she intends to make for himself/herself. In this sense, "moral conversion consists in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict."[82]

4.3.3 Decisions, Actions, and Judgement of Value in the Light of Moral Conversion

Decision begets action, and good decision is the fruit of correct value judgment. The judgment of value, according to Lonergan, "is itself a reality in the moral order."[83] Since “moral conversion changes the criterion of one’s decisions and choices from satisfactions to values,”[84] Undoubtedly, moral conversion is foundational to making right decisions and manifesting good actions.

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[79] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 227.
[80] Cf. Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Christian Ethics,* 35, 121-122.
[81] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 225.
[82] Ibid., 226.
[83] Ibid., 38.
[84] Ibid., 225.

One's journey to self-transcendence and self-transformation begins when one truly starts to desire value and consciously decides to make value the basis for which subsequent decisions in life are governed. Hence, moral conversion reshapes how one perceives moral realities and alters one's vision of the world.

4.3.4 The Place of Moral Conversion in Theology

The place of moral conversion in theology cannot be considered in isolation from intellectual and religious conversion. As noted earlier concerning the place of intellectual conversion in theology, Lonergan emphasizes the influence of moral conversion on theology using the same example of the scientist. This time, he draws the link between knowledge and belief. He acknowledges that "belief plays as large a role in science as in most other areas of human activity."[85] But how do we come to believe? Lonergan argues that we come to believe through the "self-transcendence involved in the true judgment of value."[86] We arrive at the true judgment of value through careful evaluation and decision, which falls strictly within moral conversion.

The decision to believe, Lonergan insists, "is a choice that follows upon the general and particular judgments of value….The combination of the general and the particular judgment yields the conclusion that the statement ought to be believed, for if believing is a good thing, then what can be believed should be believed."[87] So, moral conversion engenders belief that falls within the domain of theology. However, Lonergan notes that as valuable as the decision to believe and the act of believing may be, belief can become a subject of controversy and criticism, especially when many beliefs are involved. These controversies and criticisms of beliefs account for

[85] Ibid., 43.
[86] Ibid., 45.
[87] Ibid., 46.

the reconstruction of theology which leads to the expansion of theological discussions, which also enhances contemporary liturgical engagements.

Similarly, the criticisms emanating from the subject of belief (given the diverse aspects of believing) can engender a dialogue between religion and culture, which in turn will breed fertile ground for inculturation theology. In this dialogue, a morally converted person can critically appropriate cultural values that will enrich theological discussions and enhance liturgical participation while, at the same time, critically rejecting cultural values that are inimical to genuine moral transformation.

Again, Lonergan's discussion of moral conversion plays a dialectical role in promoting ecumenical theology. Dialectics conducted in the spirit of dialogue can help resolve inter-religious conflicts and foster unity among people of different belief systems. While acknowledging that his materials on dialectics aim primarily at settling "conflicts centering in Christian movements," Lonergan acknowledges that "to these must be added the secondary conflicts in historical accounts and theological interpretations of the movements."[88] Dialectics help us acknowledge ecumenical differences and try to avoid unnecessary opposition.

Similarly, moral conversion gives dogmatic theology its practicability since "doctrines express judgments of fact and judgments of value."[89] To this effect, one moves beyond the knowledge of doctrine to practically take steps to act according to dogmatic principles.

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[88] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 124. Here, Lonergan discusses dialectics as one of the eight functional specialties; these include research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. This eightfold division is a structure of method that Lonergan sees as a normative pattern of interdependent normative patterns of recurrent and related operations with progressive and cumulative results.
[89] Ibid., 127.

Furthermore, moral conversion provides a necessary foundation for theology. Since conversion is at the foundation of Christian living, theology is unthinkable without conversion. Lonergan notes that:

> Conversion, as lived, affects all of a man's consciousness and intentional operations. It directs his gaze, pervades his imagination, and releases the symbols that penetrate the depths of his psyche. It enriches his understanding, guides his judgments, and reinforces his decisions. But as communal and historical, as a movement with its own cultural, institutional, and doctrinal dimensions, conversion calls forth a reflection that makes the movement thematic, that explicitly explores its origins, developments, purposes, achievements, and failures.[90]

These are all areas that are foundational to theology. So, moral conversion plays a crucial role in stimulating theological discussions.

4.3.5 Limits of Moral Conversion

Lonergan notes that moral conversion falls within the fourth level of intentional consciousness: decision. He stresses that choosing value over satisfaction is the hallmark of moral conversion.[91] However, deciding is one thing, but doing what one has decided is different. Consequently, moral conversion does not guarantee moral perfection. A morally converted person still has to continuously learn in order to overcome certain biases and strive to be a morally good man or woman. According to Lonergan, a morally converted person still "has to advance and to learn."[92] This shows that moral conversion does not stand in isolation; it must always work symbiotically with intellectual conversion. Walter Conn affirms this when he writes:

> Moral conversion proceeding from an intelligent grasp and reasonable affirmation of one's own interiority is a truly critical self-appropriation. Moral conversion as a mere shift in criterion for decision from satisfaction to value, on the other hand, lacks fundamental self-knowledge, and, while adequate

[90] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 126.
[91] Ibid., 226.
[92] Ibid.

> perhaps for getting along in untroubled times, is vulnerable to exploitation from every side, and, because its values are held uncritically, is like a ship without captain or rudder during stormy times. The fact of the matter is that critical self-appropriation is no luxury; it is an essential part of authentic human living.[93]

Considering this argument, Lonergan explains the importance and interdependence of moral and intellectual conversion. However, he acknowledges that both intellectual and moral conversion will not lead us to the "knowledge of God," hence, he posits another dimension of conversion that can lead us to an experience of God – religious conversion.

4.4 Religious Conversion

Conn notes that "an authentic Christian conversion is characterized especially by a specifically religious quality."[94] It is no wonder that Lonergan places religious conversion at the heart of his treatment of conversion. It "is a process of ever deepening withdrawal from ignoring of transcendence in which God is known and loved, and of ever deeper entrance into that realm."[95] It occurs when the human person, illuminated by grace and nurtured by experience, accepts the truth of faith and responds to God in love. Consequently, religious conversion occurs, in the words of David Kelsey, when we become aware of the Divine or "holy mystery" as the "ground of our being."[96] This dimension of conversion "transforms the existential subject into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love."[97] This kind of love transcends the love of intimacy that exists between husband and wife or parents and children, or even the

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[93] Walter Conn, "Bernard Lonergan's Analysis of Conversion," in *Angelicum* 53 (1976): 395-396.
[94] Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender,* 193.
[95] Robert Doran, "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by Conversion"? 5.
[96] David H. Kelsey, "Paul Tillich," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century.* Ed. David F. Ford (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1997), 92.
[97] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 228.

love that seeks the welfare of other human beings, to a love of God with all of one's being: heart, soul, mind, and strength. However, this love for God is only a recognition and a response to God's divine initiative by loving us first. Lonergan captures it thus:

> Religious conversion is being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love. It is a total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations. But it is such a surrender, not as an act, but as a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts. It is revealed in retrospect as an under-tow of existential consciousness, as a fated acceptance of a vocation to holiness, as perhaps an increasing simplicity and passivity in prayer. It is interpreted differently in the context of different religious traditions. For Christians it is God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.[98]

Here, Lonergan aligns with the thought of the Conciliar Fathers that God is the initiator of conversion.[99]God's love compels us to seek Him above everything and ignites the constant desire to self-transcend. This study argues that the liturgy should be the vehicle through which the human person actualizes that desire to respond to God in love. Therefore, when the human person actively engages in worship, he/she becomes authentically human.

4.4.1 Religious Experience and Self-transformation as the Bases for Religious Conversion

Lonergan's idea of religious experience is a modern and post-modern attempt at integrating faith and reason. It tries to contrast the overly important emphasis that the pre-modern scholars and theologians placed on dogma with a more dynamic modern aspect of Christian living that emphasizes the human person and the religious

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[98] Ibid., 226.

[99] Cf. *Gaudium et Spes,* 25; Here, the Council Fathers emphasized that God draws the human person away from the lure of sin towards Himself and constantly provides him/her with the needed assistance in his/her journey towards self-transcendence.

experiences that define him/her at any given time. It must be said, however, that the idea of religious experience did not just emerge in the modern Christian lexicon. Its tenets predate the modern period and stretch back to the Scriptures. Louis Roy supports this assertion when he writes: "Surely, the biblical texts as well as the patristic and medieval writings include religious experience."[100] However, he notes further that "they are not composed from the perspective of religious experience. Instead [as noted in the preliminary considerations in the first chapter], they locate it in the broad context of a history of salvation because their goal is kerygmatic: to announce what God has done for his people, to proclaim the good news of the great gift that the Father has granted us in Jesus and in the Holy Spirit."[101] Nevertheless, apart from being kerygmatic, these patristic and medieval writings had more of a doctrinal than an experiential appeal. However, some of these biblical and pre-modern writings had very rich experiential substance. Examples are the Johannine gospel, the Pauline epistles, and the writings of Augustine and Bonaventure.

In modern times, precisely around the sixteenth century, there was a renewed emphasis on human individuality; as such, the outlook of religious attitudes was significantly altered. One key figure who aided this drastic change of religious attitude away from too much emphasis on doctrine to one's experience is Martin Luther. His personal experience of grace ushered in, in the words of Roy, "a vibrant act of faith and trust in Jesus."[102] He notes, however, that "it is only in the nineteenth century that the concept of religious experience becomes central in theology, namely with Friedrich Schleiermacher."[103]

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[100] Louis Roy, "Religious Experience According to Bernard Lonergan," in *Sintese, Belo Horizonte* 38 (2011): 383
[101] Ibid., 383.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 384.

In his work, *The Christan Faith,* Schleiermacher (The father of liberal Protestantism) made a clear distinction between the “outward side” and the “inward side” of religion. For him, “the organization of the communicative expressions of piety in a community is usually called O*utward Religion,* while the total content of the religious emotions, as they actually occur in individuals, is called *Inward Religion.”*[104] This implies that the community may hold a certain standard of religiosity, which may be binding on all who uphold the same religion, but what actually makes a person religious is how these contents of belief manifest themselves in the individual's day-to-day life. So, unlike Lonergan, who places *love* at the heart of the religious experience, Schleiermacher sees the "facility of religious emotions" as being at the centre of the religious experience.[105]

What is clear in Schleiermacher's thought is that he extols religious experience over and above dogma. For him, the communicative expressions of piety in a community (o*utward religion)* are simply a prescribed doctrine and a code of rules to establish a proper ordering of the community. Whereas, what really matters for the religious well-being and transformation of the individual, however, is a religious experience born out of religious emotions that are unique to the individual. While one may bear with Schleiermacher, given his evangelical background, this thesis would argue that separating doctrine from religious experience could be catastrophic. It risks subjectifying morality and reducing it to the whims and caprices of individuals whose experiences may have been shaped by societal influences. So, rather than extol religious experience over dogma, Lonergan focuses on the possibility of integrating the former with the latter. To this end, Lonergan's idea of religious experience departs

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[104] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Chrisitan Faith,* trans. by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), art. 6.
[105] Ibid.*,* art. 5.4.

fundamentally from that of Schleiermacher. For Lonergan, religious experience integrates faith and reason, a synthesis where intellectuality and affectivity find a meeting point.

4.4.2 Love at the Core of Religious Experience

Unlike Schleiermacher, Lonergan situates love at the centre of religious experience. In fact, "being in love with God, as experienced, is being in love in an unrestricted fashion."[106] That is, it is limitless and unconditional love without reservations. He notes that at some point in the existential voyage of a person, one must consciously discover and decide what to do with oneself. "Such a discovery, such a decision, such a program of self-actualization becomes effective and irrevocable when one falls in love. Then one's being becomes being-in-love."[107] However, he insists that there are antecedents, causes, and conditions that necessitate being in love. But when it blossoms, "it becomes that immanent and affective first principle. From it flow one's desires and fears, one's joys and sorrows, one's discernment of values, one's day-to-day decisions and deeds."[108] Thus, "religious conversion means the subordination of all conscious activity to transcendent love."[109] It is being-in-love that makes the human person authentically human.

Lonergan notes that firstly, being-in-love manifests itself within the domestic confines of the home, and it is evident in the love of intimacy that spouses and close family members share. Secondly, it is the love of one's fellows, seen in a wider

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[106] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 101.
[107] Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection,* Edited by Crowe, Frederick E. (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 123.
[108] Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection, 123*
[109] Tad Dunne, *Lonergan, and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration (*Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985), 113.

societal space as the love one has for people in his/her territorial confines. But over and above these two is the third love: the love of God:

> To it there testifies a great religious tradition that proclaims: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is the only Lord; love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength*" (Mark 12:29-30).* Of such love St. Paul spoke as God's love flooding our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us (Rom. 5:5). To the power of that love the same Apostle bore witness with the words: "…there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths - nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom.8:38-39).[110]

Within the Christian religion, this third love characteristically defines authentic religious conviction, guarantees religious conversion, and ignites in the human person the desire for worship.

For Lonergan, therefore, religious experience denotes a point when the individual becomes aware of being in love with God. In this light, religious conversion involves consciousness, not in an empirical sense of intentional consciousness where we "sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move";[111] but strictly in a transcendental realm where love comes before knowledge. One wonders: how can one fall in love with someone he/she does not know? To this, Lonergan argues that the knowledge of God is a response to God's love flooding a person's heart, gripping him/her, and transforming him/her. Hence, it is not an act of intellectual insight but one of unconditional and unlimited love. This form of relational consciousness that characterizes religious experience makes its object simply an incomprehensible mystery. However, its content, Lonergan insists:

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[110] Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection,* 124.
[111] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 13.

> is a dynamic state of being in love, and being in love without restriction. It is conscious but it is not known. What it refers to is something that can be inferred insofar as you make it advance from being merely conscious to knowing. And then because it is unrestricted, you can infer that it refers to an absolute being. But the gift of itself does not include these ulterior steps.[112]

Religious experience, therefore, is God's gift to humanity, an awareness of grace, which sets the stage for the human person to self-transcend. Lonergan draws this idea of religious experience from Thomas Aquinas. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles,* Aquinas notes:

> Indeed, this is the principal thing in the lover's intention: to be loved in return by the object of his love. To this, the lover's main effort inclines to attract the beloved to himself; unless this occurs, his love must come to naught. So, this fact that he loves God results from sanctifying grace.[113]

Aquinas insists that sanctifying grace establishes the human person as a lover.[114] And because this love is the gift of grace, the work of sanctifying grace,[115] Lonergan maintains that it reshapes the bases of our knowing, choosing, and acting and places us on a new pedestal where the love of God determines our knowing and transvalues our values. Hence, he sees religious conversion as the radical transformation of the human person more at the practical level than at the intellectual level. In being in love with God, we fulfill our conscious intentionality. "That fulfilment brings a deep-set joy that can remain despite humiliation, failure, privation, pain, betrayal, desertion. That fulfilment brings a radical peace, the peace that the world cannot give. That fulfilment bears fruit in a love of one's neighbour that strives mightily to bring about the kingdom of God on this earth."[116] Building God's kingdom on earth creates a sense of community. This thesis argues that it is a community built from the fruit of

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[112] Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974).
[113] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* Book 111, 151.
[114] Ibid., 151.
[115] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 270.
[116] Ibid., 101.

falling in love with God that shows active commitment to worship, "since loving him means loving attention to him, it is prayer, meditation, contemplation."[117]

Being in love is the basis for self-transcendence and a guarantee of our authentic existence as human beings. Lonergan writes: "Our authenticity consists in being like him, in self-transcending, in being origins of value, in true love."[118] A religiously converted person becomes affectively self-transcendent when he/she breaks his/her individual isolation and begins to act spontaneously, not only for the good of himself/herself, but ultimately for the good of others. Thus, God becomes the source by which human beings love each other. Therefore, as Edward Kilmartin puts it: "the other human being can only be loved in the love of the transcendent Other, the source of all otherness."[119]

4.4.3 Religious Conversion as Falling-in Love with God and Neighbour

Lonergan sought a theology that leads to knowledge of God rather than just knowledge about God. He contends that intellectual and moral conversion may guarantee knowledge about God. But knowledge of God is envisaged as a supernatural conversion that is the product of experience, understanding, and judgment that leverages sanctifying grace and results in an unconditional love of God. Hence, for Lonergan, religious conversion is a supernatural experience of an other-worldly love with God. Being in love with God is a human response to God, who first takes the initiative to love us. Tad Dunne supports this idea, stressing that:

> With transcendent love, we can imagine ourselves caught in a great circle of love, beginning from the One who loves us, pouring this thirst and desire into our souls, and pouring

[117] Cf. Ibid., 105–106.
[118] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 113.
[119] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice* (Kansas City, USA: Sheed & Ward, 1988), 67.

> from our souls towards absolutely all goodness, truth, beauty, and order - which is what is what this One is. Our love is Alpha and Omega, both the source and the object of our loving.[120]

Therefore, “conversion is primarily an *act of God.* It occurs at divine initiative. It is an experience of God’s grace. Human beings interact with this grace and are called to respond to it, but they do not make it happen.”[121] However, as Kilmartin notes, "God's self-revelation also admits of a degree from the standpoint of the openness of the human addressee to receive it."[122] So, the main point to note here is: how would the contemporary person, for whom the word "God" is of no relevance, begin to admit the love of God, fall in love with God, or make a move to respond to God's love?

In response, Lonergan makes recourse to the limitless experience of the subject, devoid of specific adherence to any form of doctrine, which makes him/her fall in love with God unrestrictedly. He writes: "being in love with God is being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations."[123] But one could still argue that Lonergan does not tell us how these experiences can evoke that response to seek God, who takes the divine initiative to come to us through sanctifying grace. There may be some possibilities regarding the subject's experience of wanting to know (intellectual conversion) or desiring value (moral conversion). However, when it comes to the experience of loving God unconditionally (religious conversion), it seems that Lonergan does not give a convincing explanation.

In response, Lonergan will argue further that since the experience of love is prior to any concept of "God" or "doctrine," then being in love with God is, properly speaking, falling in love in an unrestricted manner. Again, one wonders, how can being in love

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[120] Tad Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration,* 111.
[121] Ronald D. Witherup, *Conversion in the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 107.
[122] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice,* 66.
[123] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 101-102.

unrestrictedly be experienced? Lonergan's response is: "not the product of our knowing and choosing, it is a conscious dynamic state of love, joy, peace that manifests itself in acts of kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control (Gal.5:22)."[124] This suggests that being in love in an unconditional or unrestricted fashion is experienced in our feelings and can influence our judgments, decisions, and actions. So, what Lonergan is saying is that the reason that the contemporary person finds the concept of religious conversion challenging to accept is not because he/she does not experience that compelling gift of grace but because he/she misunderstands it or lacks the requisite understanding to identify it when it comes. That means that although one is conscious of the presence of that supernatural gift of grace, one still lacks the knowledge to comprehend it.

The question arises: is it possible to talk about consciousness without knowledge? To this, Lonergan responds that the consciousness implied here is that which operates at the fourth level of intentional consciousness. He states:

> It is consciousness on the fourth level of intentional consciousness. It is not the consciousness that accompanies acts of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching. It is not the consciousness that accompanies acts of injury, insight, formulating, speaking. It is not the consciousness that accompanies acts of reflecting, marshaling, and weighing the evidence, making judgments of fact or possibility. It is the type of consciousness that deliberates, makes judgments of value, decides, and acts responsibly and freely. But it is this consciousness as brought to fulfillment, as having undergone a conversion, as possessing a basis that may be broadened and deepened and heightened and enriched but not superseded, as ready to deliberate and judge and decide and act with the easy freedom of those that do all good because they are in love. So, the gift of God's love occupies the ground and root of the fourth and highest level of man's intentional consciousness. It takes over the peak of the soul, the *apex animae.*[125]

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[124] Ibid., 102.
[125] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 103.

Lonergan's point of emphasis here is that a person in love in an unrestricted fashion is fundamentally moved to seek the object of his love, and this search draws him/her to conversion. Therefore, theology's foundational role is to assist the person in this search to discover God. One comes to this understanding of religious conversion by questioning his/her experience. Hence, religious experience plays a huge role in our response to God's gift of love. Moreover, since the love of God is fruitful, "it overflows into the love of all those that he loves or might love."[126] Humanity's response to God's love brings about conversion.

Conn will argue that religious conversion does not just mean a person's "turning to God,' but a radical reorientation of a person's life in such a way that *God* (not just 'religious ideas, aims, and interests') becomes not only a part but the center and principal reality of that life."[127] A religiously converted person orders his/her daily life by the direction of God. To this effect, Lonergan will contend that conversion transforms every aspect of a person's living, resulting in a change in a person's values, which ultimately leads to "a change in oneself, in one's relations to other persons, and in one's relations to God."[128] That is, religious conversion opens up a renewed and transformed worldview for the convert.

Lonergan's point is that true love for God is manifested in sincere love for neighbours. Karl Rahner corroborates this view when he notes that conversion is a primarily sincere love for neighbour, "because only in conjunction with this can God really be loved, and without that love no one really knows with genuine personal knowledge

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[126] Ibid., 106.
[127] Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender,* 194.
[128] Bernard Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," in *A Second Collection,* Edited by William Ryan and Bernard Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 66.

who God is."[129] In the same vein, Karl Barth argues that conversion would not be the conversion of the whole man if it did not commence and work itself out at once in the relationship with fellow human beings.[130] As seen in Rahner and Barth, this thesis agrees with Lonergan that religious conversion is realized in the love of a neighbour. The effect of this love for a neighbour creates a sense of the Christian community, which in turn encourages members to find true meaning in life through a life of commitment and transcendence. The capacity and desire for self-transcendence are fulfilled "when religious conversion transforms the existential subject into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love."[131] At this point, a new basis for valuing, doing good, and worshiping arises. It should be stated, however, that authentic religious conversion does not undermine the autonomy of the individual "but preserves and transforms it by taking it up into a new horizon of unconditional love and ultimate concern. Only the absoluteness of personal autonomy is destroyed."[132] To this end, it will be essential to remark that "although conversions happen at God's instigation, they also require preparations."[133] Therefore, as transcendental as conversion may be, it cannot be stripped of immanence.

4.4.4 Immanence And Transcendence of Religious Experience

We are looking at transcendence and immanence not as two opposing concepts but from the point of view of one presupposing the other; that is, there is transcendence in immanence. The word "immanence" comes from the Latin verb *immanere*, meaning

[129] Karl Rahner, "Conversion," *Encyclopaedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi,* ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Seabury, 1975), 292-293.
[130] Karl Barth, "The Awakening to Conversion" in his *Church Dogmatics 4/2,* trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark, 1958), 563.
[131] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 228.
[132] Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender,* 225.
[133] Ronald D. Witherup, *Conversion in the New Testament,* 109.

"to abide within." Therefore, speaking of God's immanence means that God dwells in every human person by sanctifying grace. The presence of this sanctifying grace creates the religious experience in the human person that makes one fall in love with God unrestrictedly.

However, the understanding of immanence that undermines the objective norms of faith and exalts the subjective dimension of religious experience, will manifest in a scenario where, according to Bouyer, religion "would consist entirely in the religious feeling itself."[134] This essentially manifests in exalting feeling over reason, resulting in the idea that religious experience is simply an unconscious feeling that wells up in us and creates a sense of the divine. The implication is that God is a product of human imagination and longing. Here, religion becomes the dictate of the individual as persuaded by his/her feelings rather than reason. Thus, our will comes before God's will, and we reject any form of dogma that disagrees with the content of belief held by our subjective feelings. Consequently, Pope Pius X condemned the modernists' idea of immanentism in his encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis.* He points out that its view gives prominence to feelings over reason, negating the objective reality of faith gained through divine revelation and expressed in doctrines. Thus, the reason why we accept the doctrines of faith is not simply a result of how we feel but because we have come to the belief that it is true.

Although Lonergan extensively discussed the place and importance of feelings, he did not undermine the role of reason. Even when he insists that the foundation of theology is neither revelation, inspiration of Holy Scripture, nor the Magisterium of the Church but the individual, he does not fail to add that it is only the intellectually, morally, and religiously converted individual who is the foundation of theology; one

[134] Ibid.

who, influenced by grace, sees and experiences the reality expressed in revelation, inspiration of Holy Scripture or the Magisterium of the Church, accepts the truth in them and responds to them by making a journey towards God. To this end, his view of religious experience emphasizes the idea of immanence; he notes that there is a transcendent reality and that transcendent reality is immanent in human hearts.[135] Thus, Liturgy is the framework for providing the necessary blend of immanence and transcendence. Lonergan stresses that being in love with God is a response to God's gift of love by His sanctifying grace dwelling within us.

4.4.5 Limits of Religious Conversion

We have observed that individual bias or "theological individualism" stands out as a shortfall to intellectual conversion, giving rise to the necessity of moral conversion. We have also seen that moral impotence impedes moral conversion. Lonergan's treatment of religious conversion also has its low side. He notes that religious conversion is a process of ever-deepening withdrawal from ignoring the realm of transcendence in which God is known and loved and of ever-deeper entrance into that realm. To this end, the component of self-transcendence is evident, which makes it connect with intellectual and moral conversion. However, the component of self-appropriation, which is very visible in intellectual and moral conversion, is lacking in religious conversion. This shows that religious conversion places much emphasis on the transcendent life and runs the risk of undermining the place of the body. Meanwhile, there is no guarantee that it will lead one ultimately to a mystical life; it is only probable because it may or may not.

[135] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 105.

Lonergan may argue, however, that when one carefully considers the total experience of religious conversion, which is characteristically love in an unrestricted manner, one will discover that being in love unconditionally ultimately results in a movement of love towards oneself. Therefore, he may insist that just like intellectual and moral conversion, religious conversion follows the same trajectory of self-transcendence and self-appropriation.

4.5 Psychic Conversion: Mediating Lonergan's Position

Doran developed the idea of psychic conversion to complement and provide some form of balance to Lonergan's triple conversions: intellectual, moral, and religious. Doran's psychic conversion, therefore, can be appropriately called the fourth conversion. Lonergan himself adopts it as properly complementing his three conversions when he writes: "I agree with Robert Doran on psychic conversion and his combining it with intellectual, moral, and religious conversion."[136] He acknowledged that Doran has painstakingly examined the issues, and it fits very well with his thoughts and complements his efforts.[137]

Doran's idea of psychic conversion was an attempt to bring the transcendental method to prominence. He states:

> Psychic conversion…is a matter of establishing the connections in consciousness between one's waking orientation as a cognitive, moral, and religious being and the underlying movement of life with its affective and imaginal components. The psyche is the flow of sensations, memories, images, affects, conations, spontaneous intersubjective responses, and so on, that accompany our intellectual and moral activities. If you are asking a question, there is an affective dimension to that experience, not just an intellectual component. If you arrive at a satisfactory answer to your question, there is a

[136] Bernard Lonergan, "A Letter to Fr. Edward Braxton" (February 12, 1975), File132, p.1.
[137] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, "Recommendation to Publisher in support of a book proposal by Robert Doran," A2280 (File 490.1/6), Lonergan Research Institute, Regis College, Toronto.

> change in you that is not only intellectual but also affective; you feel differently from how you felt while you were confused and asking questions. There are factors, however, in our modern cultures that can easily lead us to lose touch with this psychic flow, with the pulsing flow of life, the movement of life. Psychic conversion re-establishes that connection. And the reason for establishing or re-establishing that connection, in terms of authenticity, is that affective self-transcendence is frequently required if we are going to be self-transcendent in the intellectual, moral, and religious dimensions of our living.[138]

Apart from identifying the connective role that psychic conversion plays, he defines it as "the acquisition of the capacity to disengage and interpret correctly the elemental symbols of one's being and to form or transform one's existential and cognitive praxis on the bases of such a recovery of the story of one's search for direction in the movement of life."[139] It helps us appropriate the story of our existential experience while at the same time acknowledging the transcendental nature of the human person.[140] In this regard, it balances and strengthens Lonergan's transcendental method and clarifies the notion of experience more.

For Lonergan, "experience is a term for the first, or empirical, level of consciousness."[141] He maintains that the operations on this level have a bodily basis that is "functionally related to bodily movements; and they occur in some dynamic context that somehow unifies a manifold of sensed contents and of acts of sensing."[142] He calls the context that unifies an "organizing control," which ultimately gives rise to "a factor variously named conation, interest, attention, purpose. We speak of consciousness as a stream, but the stream involves not only the temporal succession

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[138] Robert Doran, "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by Conversion?" Accessed online at https://lonerganresource.com/media/pdf/lectures/What%20Does%20Bernard%20Lonergan%20Mean%20by%20Conversion.pdf

[139] Robert M. Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a reorientation of the Human Sciences* (California: Scholars Press, 1981), 142.

[140] See Ibid., 143.

[141] Ibid., 143.

[142] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight,* 205.

of different contents but also direction, striving, effort. Moreover, this direction of the stream is variable."[143] Doran then picks up from Lonergan's idea of variations of direction to insist that they "are what determine different dynamic *patterns of experience:* biological, artistic, intellectual, dramatic, practical, sexual, scholarly, religious, mystical, existential, introspective."[144] That means experience has both existential and transcendental significance. Consequently, Doran asserts that "the operations and states that constitute experience can function as an operational definition of the term, psyche."[145] To this end:

> Experience does not function in isolation from the orientation of one's existential willingness and, consequently, of one's intelligence and rationality….Empirical sensitivity, then, is not independent of the drama established by the spiritual exigencies for the intelligible, the true, and the good that constitute the normative order of the search for direction in the movement of life. Moreover,…transcendental intentionality includes this empirical level of consciousness and prescribes that a sensitive psyche that is sublated into higher integrations by a spiritual intention of meaning, truth, and value should have its own distinctive finality, a finality that is realized when empirical consciousness is harmoniously integrated by the authentic intention of the ends of the higher levels.[146]

This understanding of experience that draws out the interconnectedness between empiricism, rationality, and spirituality gives a completely new definition to subjectivity. However, the term psychic conversion, as used by Doran, gives an even higher understanding of subjectivity. According to him:

> The term psychic conversion is used in a pretty technical sense to refer to *a specifically third-stage development of subjectivity,* in the same sense as intellectual conversion when the latter term is used to denote not simply the authentic functioning of intelligence and rationality, but the self-appropriation that

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[143] Ibid.
[144] Robert M. Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human Sciences,* 144.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid., 145.

> results from the explanatory self-affirmation of the knower and from the positions on being and objectivity.

Doran's notion of psychic conversion goes beyond Lonergan's idea of intentional consciousness. It enables one to make the needed leap into the third stage of meaning, which cures the lapses of Lonergan's intellectual conversion. Lonergan's idea alienates intelligence and rationality from sensitivity, thereby inflating the human spirit and cutting it off from his/her existential and bodily reality. Doran calls for due respect for the dialectics of transcendence and limitation and for every effort to satisfy the two poles. The psyche brings about the progression of the progressive integration of the ontological duality of spirit and matter that characterize the human person.[147] True worship, therefore, must take into consideration the perfect integration of the human body and spirit. As transcendental as the human person may be, he/she suffers the limitation of the material body, which must receive adequate attention in finding true meaning in human life.

Doran insists that the human sensitive psyche is the meeting ground of matter and spirit. Hence, "the point of psychic conversion is to render the soul transparent to itself with a retrieved or recovered immediacy."[148] The connection between the psyche and the spirit leads to a healthy blend. As the soul becomes transparent to itself and recognizes the limitations that it encounters from the body, the need for continuous conversion becomes more evident. Thus, both Lonergan and Doran agree that conversion is a lifelong journey that takes time.[149] Psychic conversion, therefore, is Doran's scholarly addition to Lonergan's triple conversion. It is meant to help

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[147] Ibid., 148.
[148] Ibid., 150.
[149] Gerard Whelan supports this claim by writing: "Lonergan and Doran recognize that God has chosen to rectify the fallen quality of human nature according to a 'law of the cross' and that this takes time." See Gerard Whelan, *Redeeming History: Social Concern in Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2013), 244.

individuals overcome the challenges that hinder their relations with God and other human beings.

4.6 Conclusion

So far, we have examined Lonergan's framework on conversion. For him, reflection on conversion is the foundation for a new theology. A conversion-oriented theology would lead us to the "knowledge of God." Our examination of Lonergan's triple conversion reveals that Intellectual conversion is the ability to take possession of one's mind, understand the workings of the mind and all the activities that take place there, identify them, compare them, distinguish them, name them, relate them to one another, grasp their dynamic structure, and in the midst of all these, have an opinion of one's own on more significant issues. On the other hand, moral conversion is the ability to opt for the truly good, which results in the deliberate desire for value over satisfaction. It manifests in shunning a self-seeking life in pursuit of the truly valuable. It is when we consciously begin to desire value that self-transcendence and self-transformation of our lives begin. Hence, moral conversion reshapes how one perceives moral realities and alters one's vision of the world. It plays a dialectical role in theology, gives dogmatic theology its practicability, and provides the foundation for theology in general. Likewise, Religious conversion is the ability to enter a more profound realm of transcendence. It occurs when the human person, illuminated by grace and nurtured by experience, accepts the truth of faith and responds to God in love. It is at the centre of Lonergan's treatment of conversion. He believes that without religious conversion, reflection on God is impossible, and if reflection on God is not possible, theology and worship are impossible. Therefore, authentic

religious conviction guarantees religious conversion and ignites in the human person the desire for worship.

We have also noted shortfalls to intellectual, moral, and religious conversions. We saw that egoism/individual bias or even group bias stand out as a drawback to intellectual conversion. That is, it runs the risk of confining the framework or structure of theological reality within the little world of the individual, thereby locating God somewhere in a particular spot, in one corner or the other, in an imaginatively conceived and personalized framework. Equally, moral conversion does not guarantee moral perfection. A morally converted person still has to continuously learn in order to overcome certain biases and strive to be a morally good man or woman. To this end, moral conversion must always work symbiotically with intellectual conversion. Similarly, religious conversion places so much emphasis on the transcendent life that it runs the risk of undermining the place of the body. Meanwhile, there is no guarantee that it will lead one entirely to the mystical life; it is only probable because it may or may not.

In the same way, whereas we have seen that the component of self-transcendence is evident in religious conversion, that of self-appropriation (which is very visible in intellectual and moral conversion) is lacking. However, our findings demonstrate that as transcendental as conversion may be, it cannot be stripped of immanence. Therefore, we introduced Doran's psychic conversion as a fourth conversion to complement and provide some form of balance to Lonergan's triple conversions. The task of the next chapter will be to explore how Lonergan's framework can be applied to the RCIA and liturgy in general.

CHAPTER FIVE

APPLYING LONERGAN'S FRAMEWORK ON CONVERSION TO RCIA AND CONTEMPORARY LITURGICAL PRAXIS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on how the framework of Lonergan might be applied to the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and liturgy generally. It shows how Lonergan's analysis of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion helps us understand how conversion, as envisioned by RCIA, works in practice. The aim is to examine how the human person, through conversion, can move from lovelessness to being in love as a necessary key to active liturgical participation. It focuses on how the human person can engage in the liturgy as a truly human person, seeking self-transcendence, and how liturgy can be translated to life, practice, and active faith through conversion, thereby allowing liturgy to deepen and strengthen conversion constantly.

Furthermore, this chapter will show that Lonergan dialogues with liturgical theology in the sense that religious conversion makes sacramental practice more meaningful to the worshiping person via the theology of the symbolic. Liturgy should be capable of shaping the faith of those who engage in it, giving meaning to their lives, opening them up to a better understanding and appreciation of themselves as human beings, and broadening their perspective on God. The study stresses that Lonergan's thought fosters a deeper level of conversion as advanced by RCIA by drawing more attention to the effect of the rites on the human person who worships.

5.1 The Dialectical Nature of Human Development: The Interdependence of Intellectual, Moral, and Religious Conversion in the Light of the Contemporary Church

Lonergan notes that his treatment of the triple conversion does not necessarily follow a chronological order. He equally stresses the interdependence of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. According to him:

> Without intellectual conversion, religious development is distorted by errors; without moral conversion it is disfigured by evil; without genuine religious conversion the development is a sham. Inversely, because the development is dialectical, intellectual conversion is through the correction of errors, moral conversion is through repentance of sins, religious conversion is through abandoning false gods, rejecting a limited concern for what is not ultimate.

The implication here is that it will be difficult to imagine that an intellectually converted person, for instance, can actualize all of his/her potential as a living being without the careful application and appropriation of the principles of moral and religious conversion.

For Lonergan, conversion is a process; as such, a continuous collaboration around the three levels of conversion must exist. For instance:

> Religious and moral conversion support one another. The eye of love discerns values unappreciated by those who do not love. The power of love transforms human frailty, so that good intentions are matched by good performance. On the other hand, where religious conversion is unsupported by moral conversion, it easily is entangled with alien resources. The love at the root of religious experience can merge with the erotic, the sexual, the orgiastic. The formation of community dedication to righteousness, the institution of power, can merge with the demonic that exults in destructiveness. If these very aberrations are revolting, because they are abominated religion learns that it must join hands with moral conversion.[1]

Similarly:

[1] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 394.

> Religious and intellectual conversion support one another. For the mystery to which religious experience is orientated stimulates human inquiry and directs it to the otherworldly. Without intellectual conversion, religious experience is not understood, or, if understood, then not correctly. The transcendence of the mystery may be so emphasized as to render the divine remote and irrelevant; the immanence of the mystery may be so emphasized as to reduce the divine to cosmic vital process of which man is part. In the former case, religious symbols, rituals, institutions lose their point; in the latter case, the symbols lose their transcendent reference to become the idols of superstitious veneration; the rituals take on the practicality of magic; the institutions promote, not values, but group interests. Still, these very failures can be seen to be failures, and once so seen the conjunction of religious, moral, and intellectual conversion can once more begin the renewal of the religious living.[2]

Explaining the relationship between the three aspects of conversion can be complex. Nonetheless, Lonergan sees the interrelationship of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion (as long as it concerns self-transcendence) in the light of sublation.[3] Moral conversion, for instance, sublates intellectual conversion, not by introducing something new or different, but by putting everything on a new basis, yet not interfering with intellectual conversion or destroying it; instead, it "preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to fuller realization within a richer context."[4] To this end, there is no tension in the relationship between the three conversions. If there is any, it could be called, in the words of John Berry, "a healthy tension."[5] The relationship of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion is such that one needs the other, and yet each remains independently meaningful and necessary. A perfect Christian life demands that a person strives, despite all odds, for the fullness

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Cf. Ibid., 227. Here, Lonergan uses Karl Rahner's notion of sublate rather than Hegel's. For Hegel, in his dialectical method, to sublate means to cancel and preserve simultaneously. Meanwhile, in Rahner (as in Lonergan), to sublate means to assimilate a smaller entity into a larger one so that both entities benefit. What sublates includes and preserves the qualities and features of the sublated and extends it further to a new and better context.

[4] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 227.

[5] John Berry, "Man's Capacity for Self-Transcendence: on 'Conversion' in Bernard Lonergan's Method in Theology," in *Melita Theologica,* 58 (2007): 40.

of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion,[6] because failure in one may prepare the grounds for failure in the others. But success in all brings about a healthy Christian community.

5.2 Conversion and the Christian Community

Lawrence Mick notes, "we are called by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults to become a Church whose central dynamic is conversion."[7] To this end, Lonergan makes an indispensable link between conversion and the community. He stresses the view that the conventional idea that conversion is something that happens to the individual person is unsustainable. While admitting that conversion involves personal experience, it does not happen in isolation; it actively involves religious collectivity. Hence, it is the Christian community that authenticates and gives value to personal conversion. This was what Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann meant when they wrote: “Saul may have become Paul in the aloneness of religious ecstasy, but he could remain Paul only in the context of the Christian community that recognized him as such and confirmed the ‘new being’ in which he now located his identity.”[8] Consequently, religious conversion has both personal and communal dimensions. Against this backdrop, Lonergan states: "though conversion is intensely personal, utterly intimate, still it is not so private as to be solitary. It can happen to many and they can form a community to sustain one another in their self-transformation, and to help one another in working out the implications, and in fulfilling the promise of their

[6] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Doctrinal Pluralism* (Milwaukee: The Marquette University Press, 1971), 33–39.
[7] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiating Assembly* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 43.
[8] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 178.

new life."[9] Thus, the individual Christian shares in the life of the Christian community, where he/she aligns his/her faith with that of the Christian community. By so doing, the Christian community, invigorated by the different catechumens undergoing conversion, can actively engage in worship under the direction of the leaders of the Christian community.

Sociologists also stressed this community dimension of conversion. Roger Strauss, for instance, sees religious conversion "as something that happens to a person who is destabilized by external or internal forces and then brought to commit the self to a conversionist group by social-interactive pressures applied by the "trip" (as I will generally denote 'sects,' 'cults' and other religious or quasi-religious collectivities) and its agents."[10] Against this background, Berger and Luckmann assert that the community makes conversion plausible and sustains its impact.[11] The individual convert must constantly "immerse self in the world of fellow-converts, and master the specific practices institutionalized by the group for the maintenance and expansion of results."[12] It is in the spirit of the community that Christians gather to pray, reflect on the scriptures, and perform all liturgical activities. So, the community strengthens personal conversion and "institutionalizes a variety of practices which members are expected to perform on an ongoing, lifelong basis."[13] Therefore, through the ministry of the Church, the individual responds to God's invitation to conversion and transformation.

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[9] Bernard Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," 66.
[10] Roger A. Strauss, "Religious Conversion as a Personal and Collective Accomplishment" *Sociological Analysis* 40 (1979): 158.
[11] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge,* 177.
[12] Roger A. Strauss, "Religious Conversion as a Personal and Collective Accomplishment" *Sociological Analysis,* 163.
[13] Ibid.

If Lonergan's idea that conversion is the total transformation of the person is anything to go by. In that case, it goes without saying that for such transformation to be authentic, it must be the handiwork of God. It will be difficult for any individual to convert oneself unaided. Thus, Lonergan insists that religious conversion is made possible by God's sanctifying grace, enabling the human person to respond to God's love. For such a conversion to occur, it can only be, according to Avery Dulles, "through the ministry of the Church, which as a community of faith brings the message and the person of Christ within reach of potential believers. The Church makes its impact through committed testimony and through the symbolic embodiment of that testimony in the lives of Christians."[14] The most fundamental way that the Church ought to make the symbolic embodiment of the testimony visible and impactful is through her liturgy. Hence, this study stresses that liturgy ought to deepen conversion by means of the symbolic.

5.2.1 The Place of Symbol in Communal Conversion and the Liturgy

David N. Power explains that “the symbolic belongs to the public forum of life lived in society and community.”[15] So, we intend to examine how symbols, in the light of contemporary religious thought, help our understanding of the liturgy and how this understanding shapes our view of the Church as a conversion-centered liturgical assembly. Symbols, in the light of sacrament and liturgy, are always discussed side by side with traditional definitions of signs. Augustine defines "sign" as that which "leads to something other than itself."[16] But symbols go beyond pointing at something other than itself; they "make present the things that they signify and thus allow

[14] Avery Dulles, “Fundamental Theology and the Dynamics of Conversion,” 186.
[15] David N. Power, *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1984), 5.
[16] Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana II, 1:PL*

communion with them."[17] In the liturgy, "bread," for instance, signifies what can be understood and recognized by common sense as bread. However, ceremonially, it depends largely on the number of meanings it attracts culturally and traditionally. For example, "in the tradition there is the bread that David took from the tabernacle, the bread of manna in the desert, the bread of the Jewish Pasch, the bread that Jesus broke with his disciples, and the bread that he promised for the life of the world. Liturgy suffers when an effort is made to tie down the meaning."[18] The community plays a significant role in unpacking the meaning of the symbol, realizing that symbols can have many layers of meaning. Little wonder Peter Fink, commenting on Paul Ricoeur's symbolism, notes: "in a symbol there are two levels of meaning intended, a first or literal level, and a second, bound intimately to the first, which in religious symbolism expresses the human relationship to the sacred."[19] For instance, a water bath has its literal meaning arising from ordinary usage, which means washing the body of dirt and stains. But in Christian symbolism, it reveals a "deeper meaning of healing and cleansing from sin."[20] It is the Christian community that helps to unpack this deeper meaning. In this light, Ricoeur defines symbol as: "any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first."[21]

To know how symbols function in the liturgy and how they constitute the focal point of Christian belief, David Power notes that “ritual and verbal images constitute

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[17] David N. Power, *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy,* 61.
[18] Ibid., 65.
[19] Peter E. Fink, *Worship: Praying the Sacraments* (Washington: The Pastoral Press, 1991), 33.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Paul Ricoeur, “Existence and Hermeneutics,” in *The Conflict of Interpretation* (Evanstown, III.: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 12.

elements of the Christian symbol."[22] So, even though cosmic images that can be described in physical and verbal terms are found in Christian liturgical symbols, liturgical symbols equally disclose divine presence. Hence, since liturgy has embraced simple bodily things that are used daily and domestically, like bread, wine, water, and oil, symbols demand that "these very simple items and actions are to be held in great awe and respect for what they reveal by their nature."[23] Chauvet also echoes this idea that symbol introduces us to a realm beyond the world of the present when he writes: "the symbol introduces us…*into a cultural realm to which it belongs* inasmuch as it is a symbol, a realm which is 'of an order completely different from that of immediately experienced reality.."[24] Therefore, while liturgical symbols point to daily and domestic things, they ultimately reveal the extraordinary.

To link this idea of symbol to Lonergan's thought, Avery Dulles maintains that:

> Unlike a mere sign, a symbol communicates by inviting people to participate in what the symbol means, to inhabit the world that the symbol opens up, and thereby to discover new horizons with new values and goals. Symbols, therefore, do something to us. They shift our centre of awareness and thereby change our perspectives and values. Symbols, therefore, have the kind of transformative power that is needed for conversion to come about.[25]

The Church makes this transformative power of symbol either effective or ineffective. How the Church communicates the symbolic mysteries to her members helps facilitate their conversion journey. Here, we see a link between the communal and individual dimensions of conversion. The conversion of the individual Christian can only be complete when "it situates the convert solidly within the community of

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[22] David N. Power, *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy,* 96.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 113. Emphasis original.
[25] Avery Dulles, "Fundamental Theology and the Dynamics of Conversion," 189-190.

faith."[26] Furthermore, since the Church subsists in Christ, those who are initiated into the Church through the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults are initiated into Christ, who is the head of the Church. Therefore, Lonergan stresses the importance of conversion in the initiation process: "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away and, behold, the new has come" (II Cor.5:17).[27]

Lonergan discusses the hermeneutic of symbol by emphasizing a new understanding of myth and symbol. In *Insight,* he vehemently rejected the idea of myth because being is known by a rational self-affirmation. However, he complements his idea of myth with his strong belief in mystery. For him, the human person lives always in mystery because of the limitlessness of human questioning. Our constant questioning, even of the transcendental realities, only reveals the enduring and sustaining power of mystery. However, Edward Braxton notes that in *Method,* "both the negative term myth and the positive term mystery of *Insight* are in this work encompassed by the term symbol."[28] Lonergan defines a symbol as "an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling."[29] It does not necessarily follow the rules of logic; while logic reveals a single meaning, symbols reveal multiple meanings. Consequently, he draws a line between symbolic meaning and logical meaning. Symbolic meanings do not necessarily need logical proof to ascertain their veracity; their meanings are a revelation of several images converging into one. That is, a symbol can have several meanings. So, to get to the interpretation or explanation of a symbol requires reflection. As the human person advances (by reflection) "through the stages of meaning, from common sense to theory, from theory to the

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[26] Ibid., 191.
[27] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, "Theology in Its New Context," 66.
[28] Edward K. Braxton, "Bernard Lonergan's Hermeneutic of the Symbol," in *Irish Theological Quarterly,* 43 (1976): 189.
[29] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 62.

autonomy of the sciences and the reflexive grasp of his interiority, the symbolic appearance is left behind."[30]

From the above analysis, it could be deduced that in Lonergan's hermeneutic of symbol, the meaning mediated by the symbol unfolds in stages. In the first stage, the meaning revealed is merely potential, dependent largely on several factors, but it becomes actualized when the potential meaning and the meaning converge. At this point, one can distinguish between mere *representation* and the *real* meaning. This distinction is made possible through the help of religious experience, which ultimately brings about conversion. In the first instance, what brings about the religious experience is the experience of mystery, which falls within the realm of the transcendent. Thus, Lonergan's idea of symbol leads us towards the transcendental.

From Lonergan's treatment of symbols, it could be noted that in every Christian community, sacred symbols play an explanatory function that influences and impacts our daily living. Sacred symbols help us understand liturgical rituals; they make the rituals more meaningful to us as they offer explanations within the cultural ethos or worldview and give meaning to transcendental realities. Such religious symbols, revealed in rituals or connected to what Lonergan refers to as myth, show forth and influence the community's behavioral patterns and prescribe how people ought to behave and express themselves in the world. Hence, religious symbols hold together and preserve the meanings and values of any given society. Symbols, therefore, play a key role in the transformation and conversion process of the community as well as the individual members of the community.

In Christian theology, symbols can become the focal point defining the Christian community's religious expressions. For instance, Bread and Wine symbolize Christ's

[30] Edward K. Braxton, “Bernard Lonergan’s Hermeneutic of the Symbol,” 192.

Body and Blood, but more than that, it has become the symbol of the centre of Catholic worship. Those who faithfully participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice are drawn to the person of Jesus seated at the Right hand of the Father's glory, and as such, they become citizens of heaven while on earth. This move from the temporal to the transcendental ignites the desire for conversion and self-transformation. The symbol, therefore, becomes the focal point of worship and religious ritual. This idea of symbols fits into Lonergan's view that symbol plays an explanatory role.

Robert Doran develops this explanatory role of symbols further. According to him: "a mind that knows the terms and relations of its own symbolic productions can use symbols in a [an] explanatory fashion…"[31] John Dadosky argues that the sense of explanation used by Doran differs significantly from Lonergan's position in *Insight.* However, suppose Lonergan's notion of explanation is used in a broader sense. In that case, in the relation of things to one another, it goes beyond fulfilling a descriptive purpose to providing explanations as symbols do since symbols are subject to varied and multiple interpretations.[32] Meanwhile, it is Lonergan's religious conversion that is closely tied with the symbolic. This is because the role of the symbol (unlike sign) is to "engage the person and the society affectively. This is where the role of symbol differs from that of indicative signs, which are simply intended to communicate knowledge or to remind."[33]

Religious conversion, in the light of the symbolic, brings about deep personal growth and spiritual advancement. It promotes self-transcendence, as one gives oneself

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[31] Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 61.
[32] John D. Dadosky, "Sacred Symbols as Explanatory: Geertz, Eliade, and Lonergan," in *Fu Jen International Religious Studies,* 4 (2010): 149.
[33] David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1999), 270.

completely, not just to others, but to God in love.[34] Power stresses that "from this point of view, Christian symbol and sacrament serve to engage persons and communities wholeheartedly in the love of God, made known in Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within as a dynamic force of self-giving."[35] To this end, religious conversion seeks to integrate the body and spirit of the human person toward the transcendental end to which a person is ontologically drawn. Thus, it is Lonergan's view that liturgy or theology should ultimately lead us to knowledge of God and not just knowledge about God. For, according to Aidan Kavanagh, when liturgy or theology focuses on knowledge about God rather than on knowledge of God:

> It shifts towards being some form of education done in a doxological context for ideological ends … concepts become more precise, the assembly more passive, ministries more learned, sermons more erudite, and pews fixed. Texts proliferate, the sonic arts of liturgical oratory and the kinetic arts of ceremony fade, and people find themselves in Church to receive a message rather than to do, somehow, the World according to divine pleasure. The liturgical anchor of rite begins to drag and all those other facets of rite - law, ascetical and monastic structures, evangelical and catechetical endeavors - begin to collapse or disappear. Even particular ways or idioms of theological reflection desert the pulpit to become no longer a pastoral but an academic effort…. The Church becomes a clergy support group. The centre no longer holds. Christianity becomes one telegram of consolation among others rather than a sustained experience of the presence of the living God, an experience which is itself the corporate message a liberated people proclaim in a world snared in thickets of its own making.[36]

Kavanagh emphasizes a theology aimed at bringing people to the knowledge of God. Consequently, this study argues that those brought to the sacraments of initiation are invited to acknowledge that they are entering the way of Christ's *kenosis* - Christ's self-emptying and self-giving out of love. This should be the driving force with which

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[34] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 103.
[35] David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 270.
[36] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 116–117.

people approach the sacrament: the desire to give oneself entirely in an "other-worldly" kind of love to God and neighbour. So, Power writes:

> The testimony which corroborates the sacramental symbolism is that of the martyr, or of a fool for Christ, such as Francis of Assisi or Ignatius of Loyola or Edith Stein. All mature intelligent people, it was not their human maturity that witnessed to Christ and his love but going beyond, even outside of, human wisdom in their giving and in their identification with Christ.[37]

A liturgical community drawn together by this "other-worldly" love develops a new understanding of sacramental actions.

5.2.2 Communal Conversion as Invitation into Sacramental Conversion

David Power notes that "sacramental conversion is the readiness to let oneself be invited into the world of the sacrament, to hear the word, to enter into the prayer and ritual, and to let oneself and one's world be called into question."[38] He continues, "today, this applies to the Church community as such, and not only to individuals, as it continues to initiate its members into sacramental celebration."[39] Here, Power affirms Lonergan's idea that conversion is not just a matter for the individual but also for the community. More so, the Christian community - the Church (the Sacrament of Christ)- should constantly transform itself, be drawn daily to the person of Christ (its Head), and provide opportunities for its members to be brought into sacramental celebration with Christ.

One's physical growth and the process of human maturation cannot be said to be sacramental conversion. The central focus of the sacrament is conversion to Christ

[37] David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 271.
[38] Ibid., 265.
[39] Ibid.

and the Holy Spirit.[40] Therefore, every sacramental action should aim at bringing people to Christ, and the ritual form and practice should be able to effect a change of heart. It should help to make the members of the Church have a genuine Christian self-understanding. The sacramental experience shapes the interpretive frame of reference for ongoing conversion in conscious and unconscious ways and informs every other element of the process.[41] Consequently, sacramental conversion is essential for active liturgical praxis in any Christian community since conversion pertains not only to individuals "but by analogy applies to the ongoing conversion of the communities."[42] Sacramental conversion occurs “when a whole people begin to see reality in a totally new way under the sign of the divine event of Word and Spirit.”[43]

Following this analysis, we argue that the traditional way of looking at sacrament from the point of view of validity or invalidity is no longer enough. It is no longer sufficient to hold the idea that if the correct liturgical actions are carried out with the correct matter (e.g., bread, wine, water, oil) and form (e.g., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit), and performed by the proper minister for the particular sacrament, then, the sacrament is said to be valid. There is more to the sacraments than validity, legality, and licitness.

Lonergan will argue that the contemporary Church while remaining concerned about sacramental validity, should be more concerned about sacramental authenticity. For him, since authenticity is at the very core of being human, and what determines authenticity is the four “transcendental precepts” (be attentive, be intelligent, be

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Joseph J. Guido, “College Students and Conversion: The Sacramental Context of Catholic Higher Education,” in *America Magazine* (February 5, 2001): 17. Accessed online at www.americamagazine.org.
[42] David N. Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God’s Giving, 265.*
[43] Ibid., 265.

reasonable, and be responsible),[44] Rather than concern ourselves with judgments about the validity and invalidity of sacraments alone, we should focus more on making judgments about sacramental authenticity and inauthenticity. The judgment of sacramental authenticity or inauthenticity is an attempt to discern whether the ritual action corresponds or does not correspond to the practical goals or intentions of the persons taking part in the ritual. When those of us who are pastors and shepherds take the lead in this shift of understanding, our sacraments will begin to manifest potential and actual signs of conversion and transformation.

From a transformative perspective, sacraments should be commemorative, celebrative, and evocative. They should be commemorative as they remind us of the need to turn away from former ways and become new creatures in Christ. They should be celebrative and cause us to fall in love with God and our neighbour, what Lonergan calls "being in love in an unrestricted fashion."[45] Furthermore, they should be evocative enough to invite us to boundless future possibilities that are open to us as we make our daily journey with Christ toward an eschatological reunion with God. Consequently, the Church's sacraments should be conversion-oriented; they should help us encounter God and fall in love with Him. To this end, liturgy should strengthen the conversion process. Therefore, the contemporary Church should continuously self-constitute itself to draw its members consistently to authenticity through a lifelong process of conversion.

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[44] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection,* 151: Also see: Tad Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration*, 60; David Coghlan, "Authenticity as First Person Practice: An Exploration Based on Bernard Lonergan," 362.
[45] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 101.

5.3 The Contemporary Church as a Product of a Conscious Process of Self-Constitution

Lonergan notes that "the Church is an out-going process. It exists not just for itself but for mankind. Its aim is the realization of the kingdom of God not only within its own organization but in the whole of human society and not only in the after life but also in this life."[46] Therefore, if the Church, which authenticates personal conversion, must remain relevant to contemporary society, she should always be in "a fully conscious process of self-constitution."[47] Now, because the complexities of contemporary society are so great, Daniele Hervieu-Leger is of the view that if the Church is to remain relevant in the future, then she ought "to give serious attention to the flexible nature of believing as it affects them [contemporary persons], and which must oblige them to come to terms with the dynamics of the propagating and reprocessing of religious signs."[48] The emphasis here is not that the Church should compromise core religious values, but rather find new ways of making those values relevant to the contemporary person. Hence, Lonergan insists that she (the Church) must constantly perfect herself within the larger human society and develop a coordinated plan to unite all her members. He stresses that the Church "can become a fully conscious process of self-constitution only when theology unites with all other relevant branches of human studies."[49] To this end, he emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary study in contemporary liturgical theology.

Writing on the benefit and urgent need for interdisciplinary studies, Jenifer G. Jesse, citing Mark C. Taylor, notes: "the division of labor model of separate departments

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[46] Ibid., 335.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Daniele Hervieu-Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory,* translated by Simon Lee (UK: Polity Press, 2000), 168.
[49] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 336.

must be replaced with a curriculum structured like a web or complex adaptive network. Responsible teaching and scholarship must become cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural."[50] She points out that the benefit of such inter-disciplinary cooperation will enable Ph.D. graduates from biblical, church history, and theological programmes to know how to relate their specialties to the lived experience of faith communities.[51] According to her, *"lived experience is inherently interdisciplinary."*[52] When these areas of specialty find fulfillment in the day-to-day life of the people, they can find meaning in the Church and strengthen their conversion journey.

Lonergan insists that the aim of such integration of theology with other scholarly and scientific human studies "is to generate well-informed and continuously revised policies and plans for promoting good and undoing evil both in the Church and in human society generally."[53] For him, dialectics play a key role in fostering this dialogue. He discussed dialectics as one of the eight functional specialties. These include research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. These functional specialties are crucial in advancing dialogue between theology and other scholarly and scientific human studies. Lonergan distinguishes different aspects of dialectics: dialectics as sublation, complementarity, and contradiction. Each of these aspects of dialectics interpretatively functions to enhance interdisciplinary dialogue.

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[50] Mark C. Taylor, cited by Jenifer G. Jesse, "Reflections on the Benefits and Risks of Interdisciplinary Study in Theology, Philosophy, and Literature," in *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 32 (January 2011): 63.
[51] Jenifer G. Jesse, "Reflections on the Benefits and Risks of Interdisciplinary Study in Theology, Philosophy, and Literature," 64.
[52] Ibid., 67.
[53] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 337.

5.3.1 Dialectic as sublation

Dialectic as sublation "rests on the breakdown of efforts to attain coherence and organization at a given stage and consists in bringing to birth a new stage…"[54] Since sublation entails a dialogical process for which the sublate preserves the qualities of the sublated while at the same time complementing it and bringing out something new, Ronald McKinney observes that this "type of dialectic is the pure form of the process which leads to the emergence of higher viewpoints."[55] Therefore, the guiding principle for such interdisciplinary dialogue should be a process where the different disciplines preserve their identity and complement one another while striving and agreeing on higher outcomes. Consequently, dialectic conducted in the spirit of dialogue can help resolve inter-religious conflicts and foster unity among people of different belief systems.

5.3.2 Dialectics as Complementarity

Dialectics as complementarity equally involves the idea of sublation, but this time, while maintaining the preservation and complementation of the two principles, it adds something new to the original notions. That is, it is a dynamic system of "living together of disparate elements in which each part is enhanced by its dialectical give and take transactions with every other part." Lonergan describes this kind of dialectical interplay as: "functional interdependence," "reciprocal dependence," and most importantly; "symbiosis."[56] The important point to note here is that there is a mutual benefit as both sides retain their individual identity and gain something new to enrich themselves. Thus, while each preserves their uniqueness, the complementarity

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[54] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight,* 301.
[55] Ronald McKinney, "Lonergan's notion of Dialectics," in *A Speculative Quarterly Review,* 46 (1982): 225.
[56] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 122, and 134-135.

is such that each gains something new to enrich their disciplines, which can necessitate a change. Here, the fear of egoism or supremacy is allayed, as real value is sought over satisfaction.

5.3.3 Dialectics as Contradiction

This last type of dialectics featured prominently in Lonergan's *Insight* and *Method in Theology*. Lonergan sees dialectics of contradiction not necessarily as the result of human bias of preferring one thing over another but as a conflict that naturally exists between two extreme positions or systems within a larger and ongoing process. In this sense, we must acknowledge that in every dialogue, there exists that tension of not wanting to let go of one's ideas for the other. Lonergan believes this tension must be permitted as long as the process continues. It should be noted, however, that when dialectic is harmonious, it brings about an ideal and pure advancement in Christian life and liturgical practice. But when dialectic is distorted, the possible consequences are division, stagnation, rancor, and liturgical aberrations.

Lonergan believes that in the spirit of dialectics, the Church, as a structured process, should train her personnel, set down roles, and develop acceptable modes of operation that seek to enhance the spiritual and cultural development of her members as well as promote the good of the members of the Christian community and the society at large. To this end, the Church should always invite her members "to transform by Christian charity their personal and group relations."[57] By so doing, members of the wider society can be attracted by the transformation of the lives of the members of the Christian community, made possible by a continuous process of self-transformation engendered by the principle of conversion, and many will come to embrace the

[57] Ibid., 335.

Christian faith. The Church, more than being a place where Christians just gather to worship on Sundays, should be able to establish her presence so that she can actively impact society. As members of the wider society begin to find meaning in their lives through the Christian community, they too undergo the process of conversion; the result will be a spontaneous involvement in worship in order to fulfill the redemptive mission of the Church.

5.4 The Redemptive and Constructive Actions of the Church in Contemporary Society

The redemptive and constructive actions of the Church focus on the dynamics of undoing evil on the one hand and bringing about good on the other hand. They focus on helping the contemporary person avoid the temptation to do evil and positively influencing their actions. Lonergan observes that contemporary self-constituted and destructive ideologies often blind the human person. It takes only the religiously converted, self-sacrificing love to "reconcile alienated man to his true being" and undo "the mischief initiated by alienation and consolidated by ideology."[58] This is the task that can be accomplished by a Church that is constantly in a redemptive process and continuously self-constituting to impact the wider society. Undoubtedly, active liturgical participation will be determined by how far the Christian Church can impact the wider society and redeem it from destructive contemporary ideologies.

The redemptive and constructive actions of the Church are inextricably united and aimed at promoting the good of the Church and society. According to Lonergan, this can be achieved by "integrating theology with scholarly and scientific human

[58] Ibid.

studies."[59] Lonergan notes that contemporary society is rapidly changing due to the expansion and ready availability of knowledge. Therefore, the Church in modern society is faced with an enormous task of impacting society positively to ensure the constant eradication of evil and the promotion of good. He stresses that "to meet these contemporary exigencies will also set the Church on a course of continual renewal. It will remove from its action the widespread impression of complacent irrelevance and futility."[60] He stresses further that:

> This redemptive process has to be exercised in the Church and in human society generally. It will regard the Church as a whole and, again, each of its parts. Similarly, it will regard human society as a whole and, again, its many parts. In each case, ends have to be selected and priorities determined. Resources have to be surveyed, and plans for their increase must be made when they are inadequate. Conditions need to be investigated under which the resources will be deployed to attain the ends. Plans have to be drawn up for the optimal development of resources under the existing conditions to attain the ends. Finally, the plans in the several areas and the Church as a whole have to be coordinated.[61]

No doubt, this is a heavy and complex task. Therefore, it calls the Church to a collaborative relationship with experts in several other disciplines and to enhance intra-collaboration between the clergy and the laity to find new ways of meeting the enormous contemporary demands of the Church and society at large. To this end, Lonergan's triple conversion action should be at the foundation of whatever collaboration is needed if the Church is to fulfil her redemptive and constructive actions and ensure that liturgy enables the contemporary person to participate in God's love.

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[59] Ibid., 337.
[60] Ibid., 338.
[61] Ibid., 335.

5.5 The Possibility of Participating in God's Love Through Conversion.

Lonergan thinks that for the Church to meet the demands of contemporary times and remain relevant, there is a need to shift from theoretical theology to methodological theology. His emphasis on methodological theology gives priority to his concept of religious experience. Whereas *theoretical theology* focuses on the theology "developed in the Middle Ages"[62] (especially, the medieval theology of grace), *methodological theology* is "a theology explicitly grounded in the conscious operations and states of the existential subject."[63] It centres on *being in love unrestrictedly.*[64] According to Lonergan, in transiting "from theoretical to methodological theology one must start, not from a metaphysical psychology, but from intentionality analysis and, indeed, from transcendental method."[65] The implication here is that the liturgy should be able to reform and give meaning to those who engage in it, bring them to the understanding that they are transcendental beings, and ignite their search for God. In methodological theology, arising from a transcendental method, the focus should be on the human person who needs to self-transcend intellectually by achieving knowledge, self-transcend morally by seeking what is worthwhile and initiating oneself in the principle of beneficence and benevolence, and self-transcend religiously by affectively falling in love to the extent

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[62] Ibid., 270.
[63] Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, "Sanctifying Grace in a 'Methodical Theology" in *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 53.
[64] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 101.
[65] Ibid., 270. Lonergan sees the transcendental method as the conscious intending of the operator or subject continually striving to go beyond the known or given. He notes that the transcendental method unfolds as a complex series of operations that are both conscious and intentional, namely, experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. He stresses that "whenever these operations are performed, the subject is aware of himself operating, present to himself operating, experiencing himself operating" [See *Method in Theology,* 12.]

that one begins to “spontaneously function not just for himself but for others as well.”[66]

Here, one transits from lovelessness and love of intimacy,[67] to an otherworldly love that admits no “conditions, or qualifications or restrictions or reservations.”[68] This dynamic state, according to Lonergan, is manifested in three ways; “the purgative way, in which one withdraws from sinning and overcomes temptation; the illuminative way, in which one’s discernment of values is refined and one’s commitment to them is strengthened; the unitive way, in which the serenity of joy and peace reveals the love that hitherto had been struggling against sin and advancing in virtue.”[69] These explain intellectual, moral, and religious conversion in line with St. John of the Cross' three stages of the spiritual life. The dynamic state of Lonergan's methodological theology, characterized by a state of otherworldly love, is "God's gift of love and man's consent."[70]

Lonergan’s idea of methodological theology has been criticized on the grounds that it contradicts or undermines the achievements of medieval theology, particularly with its "advancement into the third stage of meaning - where the realm of interiority grounds the realms of theory and common sense."[71] But Lonergan did not depart from medieval theology; he merely stressed the importance of understanding the conscious, intentional activities that control metaphysical activities. He reveals in *Method* his consistency with Medieval thought. For instance, in emphasizing love as God’s gratuitous gift, he writes: “this gift we have been describing really is sanctifying grace

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[66] Ibid.
[67] By love of intimacy, Lonergan meant a love between husband and wife, parents and children, or a love aimed at pursuing human welfare on the local, national, or global scale.
[68] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 270.
[69] Ibid., 271.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, “Sanctifying Grace in a ‘Methodical Theology,” 55.

but notionally differs from it."[72] Hence, in *Method,* Lonergan's methodological theology maintains consistency with medieval theology. His alignment with Aquinas ' position is a proper example of his consistency with medieval theology. In his own words:

> I have done two studies of the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. One on *Grace and Freedom,* the other on *Verbum.* Were I to write on these topics today, the method I am proposing would lead to several significant differences from the presentation by Aquinas. But there also would exist profound affinities. Aquinas' thoughts on grace and freedom and his thoughts on cognitional theory and the Trinity were genuine achievements of the human spirit. Such achievement has a permanence of its own. It can be improved upon. It can be inserted in larger and richer contexts. But unless its substance is incorporated in subsequent work, the subsequent work will be a substantially poorer affair.[73]

The criticisms not withstanding, at the dynamic and methodological level, humanity sees itself as a product of God's benevolence brought to being out of love. To be Christian is to love, and to love is to be like God. In the words of Jon Jones, "to discuss love, therefore, is to discuss the essential characteristic for what it means to be a Christian, to become like God."[74] Authentic human existence is found in our ability to be like God by constantly self-transcending, alienating ourselves from worldly ideologies orchestrated by sin, and journeying towards God. At this point, we realize that we are created in God's image and likeness and can only find our authentic existence in becoming like God. It is in love that human consciousness is established, not just the consciousness of individuality, but the consciousness of the human person as strictly interpersonal - a being with others. That is, individuality and isolation is broken by being in love, and a sense of community is ignited. Robert Doran stresses

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[72] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 103.
[73] Ibid., 325.
[74] Jon Jones, "Worship as the Christian Life: The Theological virtues in Augustine's Enchiridion" in Worship, 91 (2017): 458.

this interpersonal dimension of human consciousness which love establishes when he writes:

> Those whom you love are constitutive of your self-presence. Your very conscious being is a being in love. You are no longer alone. What breaks the isolation of the individual is falling in love and being in love. If you are really in love, the one with whom you are in love enters into the very constitution of your consciousness, even if you are in love in an unqualified fashion, you are, whether you know it or not, in love with God, who dwells in you through the gift of the Holy Spirit.[75]

What establishes us as being in love unconditionally is religious conversion. So, to love without qualification, made possible by religious conversion, entails being in love with God whose Spirit dwells in us and with others who exist because we exist. This realization ignites a sense of worship, since "love is the very heartbeat of true worship."[76] Similarly, it is love that ultimately draws together other members of the community to actively engage in the liturgy. At this level, liturgy translates to life, practice, and active faith.

5.6 Translating Liturgy to Life, Practice, and Active Faith Through Conversion

Jette Ronkilde notes that "any experience of God is irreversibly bound to the bodily existence of human beings; an experience that bypasses this basic aspect of human existence is unthinkable."[77] Even the sacraments, Chauvet admits, "accordingly teach us that the truest things in our faith occur in no other way than through the concreteness of the 'body.'"[78] The implication is that as transcendental as worship may be, it cannot be stripped of immanence. Hence, liturgy ought to impact the

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[75] Robert Doran, "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by Conversion"? 11-12.
[76] Jon Jones, "Worship as the Christian Life: The Theological Virtues in Augustine's Enchiridion," 458.
[77] Jette Bendixen Ronkilde, "To Transcend This World While Remaining in it: An Aesthetic Trinitarian Liturgical Theology of the Post-Pentecostal Reality" in *Worship,* 92 (2018): 41
[78] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence,* 140-141. Emphasis original.

practical life of people and communicate "Christian faith to those assembled to enable them to encounter God."[79] Those who gather to worship should have "the firm belief that the triune God is present in the midst of the assembly."[80] The Christian community comes to this awareness only when they have gone through Lonergan's process of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. At this level, worship becomes an encounter that flows from a religious experience that leads to active and practical faith.

Here, the faithful who gather in worship see themselves as one family drawn together by love under the one Godhead who first initiated that love. In this way, the faithful are brought:

> To that full, conscious, and active liturgical celebration which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people' (1Peter 2:9), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else, for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.[81]

The Council Fathers place specific importance on the faith and life of the worshiping community. Every liturgical assembly, therefore, must aim at strengthening the faith of its members and helping them find meaning in their lives in the larger society. This being the case, it will ultimately become clear to them that they are transcendental beings whose authenticity depends on their ability to self-transcend.[82]

The point to stress here is the view of Yves Congar:

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[79] Jette Bendixen Ronkilde, "To Transcend This World While Remaining in it: An Aesthetic Trinitarian Liturgical Theology of the Post-Pentecostal Reality," 28.
[80] Ibid., 29.
[81] *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* 14.
[82] Here, I echo the position of Lonergan, who insists that we are all called to authenticity. For him, to live an authentic life is not an option for a few but a necessity for all who want to realize their humanity fully. More so, human authenticity is not a once-off thing; it is a continuous process of constant self-discovery. See Bernard Lonergan, *A Third Collection,* 151.

> It is necessary to restore fully to the mystery of the Church its human and divine dimensions. Its whole divine dimension by showing and stressing its inner connection with Christ, the decisive and ever present role of the Holy Spirit, and the primacy of grace; its entire human dimension by showing to advantage the activity of the entire community of believers, its liturgical and apostolic role, its reality as fully ecclesial.[83]

Congar's point is clear; while recognizing the centrality of Christ and the Holy Spirit, we must not neglect the human dimension of the Church because, as Gabriel Flynn notes: "the Church, on its human side, is a cooperative participation in divine activity."[84] Stressing the importance of this human dimension of the Church, Gordon Lathrop holds that the assembly is "the most basic symbol of Christian worship. All other symbols and symbolic actions of liturgy depend upon this gathering being there in the first place."[85] Robert Taft corroborates this point by stating, "liturgy is quite simply the mystery of Christ operative in our midst."[86] To this end, contemporary liturgical theologians must pay attention to what actually takes place when the Christian community gathers to worship.

Despite these noble intentions, Martin Connell has decried the little attention given to the presence of God in the lived actions of the Church in prayer. He notes:

> In spite of the constant refrain of *lex orandi lex credendi* since the Second Vatican Council, there has been little attention given by theologians to putting words on the reality and experience of God's presence in the lived actions of the Church at prayer. When most theologians think of "pastoral theology," they think of an exercise in bringing textbook theology down to the pews, of making Thomas Aquinas or Martin Luther, Karl Rahner or Edward Schillebeecx, Catherine LaCugna or Elizabeth Johnson accessible to the folks. Nevertheless, God's presence is realized more in the flesh of the assembly in the pews rather than in the

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[83] Yves Congar, *Sainte Eglise: etudes et approches ecclesiologiques,* cited by Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in the World of Unbelief* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 25-26.
[84] Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in the World of Unbelief,* 26.
[85] Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology (Minneapolis: Augsburg, Fortress Press, 1999),* 19.
[86] Robert F. Taft, "Liturgy in the Life and Mission of the Society of Jesus," in *Liturgy in a Postmodern World,* edited by Keith Pecklers SJ (London: Continuum, 2003), 37.

> crania of theologians; theology can be read in the community at worship and in the experiences that flow from the sacraments.[87]

Connell argues for a sacramental or liturgical theology that finds fulfilment in the practical life and active faith of the people at prayer. Louis-Marie Chauvet supports this position when he writes: "Sacramental theology is the theory of a practice. Its object is the Church's celebration itself. It has nothing relevant to say that does not stem from the way the Church confers the sacraments."[88] Consequently, Cooke notes that "there is a particular need to state that the emphasis for so long has been placed on some mysterious conferring of grace and removal of original sin that, as a result, there has been little, if any, grasp of the way the ritual action itself was Christianizing the individual."[89] The point of contention here is the question of the relationship between sacramental practice and the religious experience of Christians. Our aim is not to extol religious experience over dogma but to highlight Lonergan's position of a possibility of integrating the former with the latter to achieve, in the words of Aidan Kavanagh, "right worship" and not just doctrinal accuracy.[90] Lonergan's idea of religious experience is an integration of faith and reason, a kind of synthesis where intellectuality and affectivity find a meeting point to engender active faith that makes worship a lived experience. To achieve this, Lonergan insists that the Christian community (the Church) must continuously reconstitute herself.[91] Therefore, liturgy should be capable of shaping the faith of those who engage in it, giving meaning to their lives, opening them up to a better understanding and appreciation of themselves

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[87] Martin F. Connell, "On the U.S. Aversion to Ritual Behaviour and the Vocation of the Liturgical Theologian," in *Worship* 78 (2004): 399.
[88] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 48.
[89] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments & Sacramentality,* 135.
[90] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 3. Here, Kavanagh believes it is not the belief that enables worship; rather, worship conceived broadly is what gives rise to theological reflections rather than the other way around.
[91] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 335.

as human beings, and broadening their perspective on God, hence, the need to give more consideration to an *anabatic* theology (liturgy).

5.6.1 Integrating anabatic (ascending) liturgy and katabatic (descending) Liturgy.

Michael Joncas observes that:

> Christian Liturgy, by its very nature, has a double thrust. On the one hand, it is an act of God in Christ enabling human beings to live in union with God through the Spirit. This might be termed the *descending* nature of worship… On the other hand, liturgy is an act of the Church in Christ offering God complete devotion and interceding for the needs of the world through the Spirit. This might be termed the *ascending* nature of worship: redeemed humanity's desire to acknowledge wholeheartedly God's fundamental importance as the source of life, goodness and being itself.[92]

Lonergan, in his view of self-transcendence, advocates for special consideration to be given to an upward liturgy - a kind of liturgy that gives special consideration to the experience of the people gathered in prayer. Connell supports this position as he maintains that "liturgical theologians are called to be media of this upward theology."[93] However, one may argue that Lonergan's position of an upward liturgy (as supported by Connell) stands contrary to traditional liturgical theology, which focuses on the scholarly, historical, and systematic aspects of the discipline. But Timothy Brunk's response, in his analysis of the dialogue between Martin Connell and Louis-Marie Chauvet, actually supports the view that Lonergan's "upward liturgy," centred on the religious experience of the worshiping community, is simply an invitation to "liturgical theologians to help people understand what they are

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[92] Jan Michael Joncas, *Forum Essays: Preaching the Rites of Christian Initiation* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 9-10.
[93] Martin F. Connell, "On the U.S. Aversion to Ritual Behaviour and the Vocation of the Liturgical Theologian," 399.

actually doing when they engage in sacramental worship."[94] The point here is for the possibility of allowing a proper interaction between pastoral and theological disciplines, an integration of "praxis and belief."[95] Consequently, the emphasis of contemporary liturgical theologians should be on how to build that link that connects liturgical symbols and the day-to-day human experience to engender active faith and ensure full and conscious liturgical participation. More so, the link becomes very necessary because "liturgical symbolism also includes, among other things, the fact of assembling."[96] Every act of religious worship undertaken by the assembly is, in the words of Edward Kilmartin:

> The celebration of the transcendent good of the collective life of the community. It formulates the communal experience of overcoming the negativity of daily life and being able to affirm the good. It is a means of social integration and authorization of the social order. It links the insecure constructs of the realities of the earthly society to an external and higher reality, the divine order.[97]

This supports the view that worship is primarily the affair of the Christian community moving towards union with the divine order. Lathrop supports this view when he stresses that the Christian assembly is "the most basic symbol of Christian worship."[98] Hence, Lonergan's clarion call is for contemporary liturgical theologians to pay more attention to the effect of the rites on the human person who worships.

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[94] Timothy M. Brunk, *Liturgy and Life: The Unity of Sacrament and Ethics in the Theology of Louise-Marie Chauvet* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), 234.
[95] Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology,* 82.
[96] Timothy M. Brunk, *Liturgy and Life: The Unity of Sacrament and Ethics in the Theology of Louise-Marie Chauvet,* 235.
[97] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice* (Kansas City, USA: Sheed & Ward, 1988), 36.
[98] Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999), 19.

5.7 The Effect of the Rite on the Human Person: Lonergan in Dialogue with RCIA and Contemporary Liturgical Theology

Lawrence Mick notes that RCIA reminds us that "good catechesis is always linked to the actual experience of God that people have in their lives."[99] But for traditional scholastic theology, the efficacy of the sacrament is, first and foremost, a divine activity. The activities of the Church are meant to align with this sacramental grace event. As an official act of the Church, said Kilmartin, "the sacramental rite is the event of the offer of grace in favour of the participants."[100] However, he posed a fundamental question: "What concept of causality can be used to shed light on the mode of communication of the new sacramental grace that is offered in the celebration?"[101] In other words, how can this sacramental grace event be celebrated such that the contemporary person makes the needed response intended by the sacramental rite by establishing a personal, loving relationship with God that manifests in active daily Christian living?

No doubt, the scholastic theology of the sacraments "is orientated by a descending Christology."[102] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger stressed this *katabatic* dimension of the liturgy when he wrote: "The life of the liturgy does not come from what dawns upon the minds of individuals and planning groups. On the contrary, it is God's descent upon our world…the more priests and faithful humbly surrender themselves to this descent of God, the more "new" the liturgy will constantly be and the more true and personal it becomes."[103] But Bernard Cooke believes that "while these mystery

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[99] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 92.
[100] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice,* 364.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., 365.
[103] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 182-183.

celebrations were intended to worship and acknowledge God, they were also meant to benefit the humans who performed them."[104] More so, as Louis Bouyer notes:

> The more perfectly we know the human aspects of Christianity, the more perfectly we shall understand the part of it which is the result of divine intervention. This is not to say that the human and the divine should be found in it separated from one another. It is rather that the divine reveals itself in the transformation it effects in what is human.[105]

Sadly, very often, less attention is paid to the human benefits. This descending liturgy "tends to neglect the ecclesiological dimension and the role of the faith of the Church in the accomplishment of the sacraments."[106] This research believes that while acknowledging the sacramental efficacy of the *katabatic* (descending) liturgy, there should be a proper integration with an *anabatic (*ascending) dimension of the liturgy; by so doing, a new understanding of the sacramental effect surfaces, enabling the human person to understand that the Church's sacramental action is a gift from God that draws one to a personal relationship with God the Father in the Holy Spirit. A relationship, which Lonergan says, makes the human person respond to God's love unrestrictedly. It is this kind of relationship that RCIA envisioned but did not express as clearly and convincingly as possible.

RCIA is appropriately designed to bring the catechumen into new life through the rites of initiation. But to fulfill the promise of that new life, we need the conscious and deliberate assent of the individual Christian. He/she ought to make a personal commitment to following the way of Christ through the help of the community of faith. Both the Christian community and the individual Christian must show commitment to follow the path leading to the fulfillment of God's kingdom. It is this

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[104] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), 7.
[105] Louis Bouyer, *The Rite and Man,* Trans. M. Joseph Costelloe (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 2.
[106] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice,* 366.

conscious and continuous effort to follow the way of Christ that Lonergan calls conversion. Thus, Mick notes: "The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults calls each of us to a deeper conversion, to a constant conversion, to a fuller conversion."[107] Lonergan supports this deeper level of conversion as advanced by RCIA by drawing more attention to the effect of the rites on the human person who worships.

Cooke observes that in contemporary times:

> There has been a noticeable increase in attention to the presence of God in people's lives. This is more than an awareness of God's creative power sustaining the whole of the universe and especially humans in existence; it is an awakening to the *personal* dimension of Christian faith, to the fact that grace given humans is God's self-gift in friendship. All of this has touched the way in which people think about sacraments. It has begun to change their attitude toward sacraments and their expectations of what gain comes to them from sacraments. How can participation in sacramental liturgies have any real effect on a person? What real difference do sacraments make in people's lives?…What difference do sacraments make in the whole business of being truly Christian, in the intimacy of one's relationship to God?[108]

These pertinent questions should occupy the minds of contemporary liturgical and sacramental theologians. The contemporary person needs to be brought to the understanding that liturgy functions in a special way to give direction for an active daily life of faith. The rite of baptism, for instance, does more than just clean us of original and actual sins; it initiates us into a body of believers who gather as humans to share each other's practical life experiences of pain, suffering, and servitude. Thus, liturgical space should create an opportunity for the faithful to express themselves and experience, even in this present life, the freeing effects that the rites provide. In this way, liturgy can become "the place where the hope of true life, promised by the gospel, is awakened. Through the enlightenment furnished by this kind of liturgy, a freeing existence can be nourished which, by way of anticipation, becomes a living

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[107] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 101.
[108] Bernard Cooke, *Sacraments and Sacramentality,* 9.

symbol of universal redemption yet to come."[109] This position captures the fundamental law guiding Christian liturgical symbolism, as aptly summarized by Thomas Aquinas: "The sacrament is both a commemorative sign of that which preceded, namely the passion of Christ; and demonstrative of that which is effected in us by the passion of Christ, namely grace; and prognostic, that is foretelling of future glory."[110] The liturgy should be able to connect us with the events of the past by which we acknowledge the passion of Christ; link us with the present by which we unite our life experiences (our sufferings and pains) to the passion of Christ; and open us to the future by which we enjoy in its fullness, the redemption won by Christ's passion and death. The hope that lies in the future ignites in us the desire for what Lonergan calls self-transcendence.

Since Christian liturgy is a communicative activity brought to life by the active involvement and participation of the faithful, it ought to be transformative. It should ignite in the worshippers a conscious life of faith, which brings them to the realization that God is with them. In uniting with one another, they are united with Christ (the Head of the Church) by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Christian people gathered in worship must constantly appreciate and celebrate their life of faith by acknowledging themselves as humans in search of the God whose love draws them to self-transcendence. Lonergan maintains that it is in this awareness of our transcendental nature that we authenticate our existence as human beings. Liturgy, therefore, should be able to deepen our Christian journey and enhance the Christian community's self-understanding. Kilmartin believes that "the loss of correspondence

[109] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice,* 81.
[110] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae III. q.60, art.3.*

between the Christian community's self-understanding and its liturgical expression endangers the existence of the community."[111]

The expression of the lived, active, and practical faith of the Christian community constitutes the forms of expression of the liturgy. The practical witnessing of the Church to the events of the saving revelation (the intimate relationship between God and the believer) truly constitutes the liturgical expression. The liturgical forms of expression should not “be construed as a direct address of God, or Christ, to the community,”[112] but the lived faith of the Church by which the believer comes to a new relationship with God. This new relationship is established when God allows the believer, through the special gift of grace and faith, to recognize the offering of God's gift of love that invites us to enter into a special relationship with Him. Our response to this invitation from God ignites the conversion journey.

Every liturgical activity, comprised of doxological and rhetorical language and symbolic actions, should allow Christians to express their special needs and particular religious experiences as they interact with God through Christ. Every liturgical celebration is a response of faith by which the faithful communicate with God through prayer and song, together with Christ, who is present as the head of the assembly and in union with the Holy Spirit. This way "of looking at the structural foundation of the liturgy in general, and the sacraments in particular, offers a new way of understanding the peculiar efficacy of all forms of Christian liturgy."[113] Therefore, RCIA, in the words of Mick, leads us to "a vision of a Church that is a caring faith community, a Church that reaches out to others with the Good News of Jesus Christ, a Church constantly living in the Spirit and discerning the action of that

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[111] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice, 41–42.*
[112] Ibid.*,* 45.
[113] Ibid., 47.

Spirit of God, a Church whose life revolves around the initiation of new members and the continual conversion of all its members."[114] To achieve this, the link between liturgy and the daily life of members of the Christian community must be strengthened.

It is because of the need for the inter-connectedness between liturgy and daily life that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council advocated for proper liturgical reforms. Robert Taft adds that "any renewal will simply, necessarily, be a renewed theology of liturgy as common prayer, which can only result from a renewed grasp of the liturgical teaching of Vatican II in the context of our community prayer-life and our sacramental ministry *ad extra.*"[115] Nevertheless, one wonders how much progress has been made in liturgical reforms.[116] One way to make progress is to heed the call of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to allow the liturgy to take root within the cultural milieu of the people and their cultural heritage in order to engender active faith.[117] Cultural adaptation of the liturgy remains an important tool for improving the participation of the faithful in the liturgy. Otto Spulbeck insists, "Adaptation of the liturgy and active participation... is a matter of life and death."[118] To this end, Lonergan calls for the Church to continuously self-constitute herself by considering the changing times to make her worship meaningful to the contemporary person. As the Church evolves to meet new challenges posed by the changing times, so also does her liturgy encounter development in the light of liturgical reforms.

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[114] Lawrence E. Mick, *RCIA: Renewing the Church as an Initiation Assembly,* 95.
[115] Robert F. Taft, "Liturgy in the Life and Mission of the Society of Jesus," 48.
[116] It is important to note that liturgical reforms, as intended by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, were not intended, in the words of Rita Ferrone, "to sweep away the past and begin with a blank slate." See Rita Ferrone, *Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2007), 39
[117] Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* 37-40.
[118] Otto Spulbeck, quoted by Rita Ferrone, *All Together Now? Catholic Unity and the Liturgy (*Collegeville MN: Diekmann Lecture, April 8, 2013), 9.

5.7.1 The Role of Lonergan's Triple Conversion at the Heart of Liturgical Reforms

Lonergan stressed how intellectual, moral, and religious conversions support one another to ensure a more active and renewed religious living. He notes that "the conjunction of religious, moral, and intellectual conversion can once more begin the renewal of the religious living."[119] This renewal will be based on, firstly, the renewed theology of the Word of God, which will reshape our understanding of the dynamics of the liturgy. Secondly, a new insight into an ecclesiological understanding that liturgy is the "self-expression of the Church," wherein the Church identifies herself as a body of human beings united in worship in a bid to understand themselves as humans in search of God who interrupts human history by the incarnation of Christ. Thirdly, a Christological understanding of the liturgy as a channel through which we encounter Christ as the "sacrament of God."[120] Lonergan notes further that the conjunction of the triple conversion ensures concrete liturgical reforms that lead us to inquire into the other world. For instance, as religious and intellectual conversion support one another, "the mystery to which religious experience is orientated stimulates human inquiry and directs it to the otherworldly."[121] That is, intellectual conversion makes religious experience understandable and appreciated. Without intellectual conversion, the transcendence of the mystery may be presented in such a way that will make the divine vague and irrelevant "so that religious symbols, rituals, institutions lose their point."[122]

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[119] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 394.
[120] Edward J. Kilmartin shares this position in his analysis of human communication and liturgy. He believes that this understanding will help create the possibility of rethinking the question of the sacramental dimension of Christian worship. See Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice,* 44.
[121] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 394.
[122] Ibid.

Lonergan's idea of reform differs from the popular *Ecclesia semper reformanda* that the 16th-century Reformers propagated. Unlike the 16th-century reformation, which focuses on the search for purity, the renewal that Lonergan advocates, supported by Yves Congar, centres first on "the purity of the Principle; and second, the necessity of promoting its fullness."[123] The Principle, for Congar, is Christ and the Gospel; hence, whatever is contrary to this Principle in the Church needs to be reformed. Fullness points to the eschatological nature of the Church. Now, because Catholicism is characteristically viewed as both a search for purity and a search for fullness (plenitude), the reform that this study supports is that which flows from St. Augustine's idea of *Christus integer, Christus totus; Christus et Ecclesia, unus homo;* that is, that which emphasizes that the Church as spouse of Christ is pure by virtue of its union with Christ, yet always in need of purification in its sinful members.[124] Hence, it is the life of the Church that is called to reform. The life of the Church focuses on the practice of the worshipping community as they engage in the transcendental journey towards eschatology. Lonergan stresses the need for any reform of the life of the Church to be conversion-oriented in order to engender active faith and fruitful participation.

5.8 Fostering Active and Fruitful Participation through the Celebration of the Rites

The phrase *Participatio actuosa,* the "active participation" of the faithful in the liturgy, was one of the key phrases used by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to emphasize the need to shape the liturgy. Bugnini observes that "the full and active participation of all the people has been a special concern in the reform and promotion

[123] Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in the World of Unbelief,* 156.
[124] Cf. Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church in the World of Unbelief,* 158.

of the liturgy, for the liturgy is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful can derive the true Christian spirit."[125] But what does active participation really imply? Ratzinger decried that "the word was very quickly misunderstood to mean something external, entailing a need for general activity, as if as many people as possible, as often as possible, should be visibly engaged in action."[126] He believes that external actions like reading, singing, carrying the gifts, and so on are essential to the liturgical action. However, they are pretty secondary when it comes to the intent of the Council Fathers on what constitutes active participation. He notes that what constitutes the real liturgical action, the true liturgical act, in the minds of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, is the *oratio* - "the great prayer that forms the core of the Eucharistic celebration, the whole of which was, therefore, called *oratio* by the Fathers."[127] In this *oratio,* human action steps back and makes way for the action of God. Thus:

> This action of God, which takes place through human speech, is the real "action" for which all of creation is in expectation. The elements of the earth are transubstantiated, pulled, so to speak, from their creaturely anchorage, grasped at the deepest ground of their being, and changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord. The New Heaven and the New Earth are anticipated. The real "action" in the liturgy in which we are all supposed to participate is the action of God himself. This is what is new and distinctive about the Christian liturgy: God himself acts and does what is essential. He inaugurates the new creation and makes himself accessible to us so that, through the things of earth and our gifts, we can communicate with him personally.[128]

Ratzinger's point here is obvious; in the Eucharistic liturgy, the action of Christ and our own action are united by virtue of the whole event of the incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, and second, coming of Christ. Hence, "there is only *one action,* which is at the same time his and ours - ours because we have become "one body and

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[125] Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975*, 41
[126] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy,* 185.
[127] Ibid., 186.
[128] Ibid., 187.

one spirit" with him. The uniqueness of the Eucharistic liturgy lies precisely in the fact that God himself is acting and that we are drawn into that action of God. Everything else is, therefore, secondary."[129] So, active and conscious participation primarily means accepting the invitation to be drawn by God to be part of the paschal mystery. It is, Timothy O'Malley adds, "a participation that culminates in our being taken up into the paschal mystery of Christ, one in which as we give our humanity over to the Father, we become divine."[130] There is a major concern here; this looks like a total spiritualization of the liturgical action. If we are talking about the liturgy of the Word made flesh, who gives us himself in a corporeal way, then what about the place of the body in the celebration of the rites? `

Undoubtedly, "the chief rites of the Church are an objectively high point of the expression of the life of faith in its essentially dialogical structure."[131] That is, here, the life of God is revealed in a purely human manner through the sacraments. Through these sacramental celebrations, Christians receive the assurance of God's presence with them in the ecclesial community and freely accept the gift of grace made available by the rite. However, the personal involvement and consciousness of the individual in the celebration of the sacrament must be supported. Hence, "care must be taken to prepare the community and the individual for participation, and the celebration itself should be conducted in a way that is calculated to foster personal involvement."[132] Therefore, RCIA should be structured to emphasize the personal involvement of the candidates preparing for Christian initiation and the importance of conversion. When conversion is seen mainly as a product of a ritual action, it can

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[129] Ibid., 188.
[130] Timothy O'Malley, *Liturgy and the New Evangelization: Practicing the Art of Self-Giving Love* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 32.
[131] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice,* 356.
[132] Ibid., 358.

result in what Richard Peace calls “nominal faith.”[133] That is, a case when people become Christians simply because they were baptized and confirmed as Catholics. Consequently, Lonergan stressed the need for personal appropriation of the ritual process. This, for him, is being in love. When the individual appropriates the ritual process, he/she is transformed “into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love.”[134]

The point to note here is that the sacramental rites are efficacious and meaningful in themselves. However, they truly become relevant if they promote the process of conversion and personal engagement. Kilmartin argues that "the importance of personal engagement in sacramental celebrations must be continually stressed" if a more effective liturgical celebration is to be achieved. [135] Priests as pastors have a huge role to play in this regard: "Care must be taken to prepare the community and the individual for participation, and the celebration itself should be conducted in a way that is calculated to foster personal involvement."[136] To achieve this, several factors must be taken into consideration:

(a) Love-Centred Catechetical Instructions

St. Augustine notes that true worship occurs when love is at the centre of every dimension of the Christian life. While noting the importance of the other theological virtues of faith and hope to the Christian journey, he maintains that love gives meaning to both. In his words: "Now what shall I say of love? Without it, faith profits nothing: and in its absence, hope cannot exist."[137] Commenting on Augustine's

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[133] Richard Peace, “Conflicting Understanding of Conversion: A Missiological Challenge,” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 28 (2004): 10.
[134] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 228.
[135] Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice,* 358.
[136] Ibid.*,* 358.
[137] Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1996), 9.

position of the centrality of love to the Christian life and worship, Jon Jones notes: "Love fulfills worship's faithful posture and hopeful living in the Christian life as it is the essence of God-likeness."[138] This shows that love is a major characteristic of what makes a person a Christian. To this end, efforts should be made to situate love at the heart of the RCIA program. Those who are being prepared for the rites of initiation should be instructed in such a way as to help them fall in love with God and, by extension, with their neighbour. For, the level of one's commitment to worship depends on the extent of one's love.

According to Jones, "love requires that righteous acts be consistent with one's inner disposition toward God."[139] When Christian love guides our disposition to obey God, we cultivate new virtues that ultimately deepen our relationship with God and draw us ever closer to Him. This is why Lonergan insists that "being in love with God is being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations."[140] For him, a person in love in an unrestricted fashion is fundamentally moved to seek the object of his love, and this search draws him/her to conversion.[141] Since the human person is ultimately oriented towards self-transcendence, love draws him/her to that journey towards God. In Lonergan's terms, this lifelong process of moving towards God is appropriately called religious conversion.

(b) **Church-Based Catechetical Preparation for the Sacraments:**

Suppose those who receive the sacraments of initiation are to be baptized into the Church, participate in the Eucharist that guarantees their union with the body of Christ, and be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in defending the faith. In that case, the

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[138] Jon Jones, "Worship as the Christian Life: The Theological Virtues in Augustine's Enchiridion," in *Worship,* 91 (2017): 458.
[139] Ibid., 459.
[140] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 101-102.
[141] Cf. Ibid.*,* 103.

Church must be actively involved in their preparation and design programmes that focus on the conversion and transformation of the individuals. Signs of understanding of the mysteries to be received should be visibly seen, and readiness to commit to a lifelong conversion journey should be evident before the sacrament is administered. Thus, the position of RCIA on the centrality of conversion to the catechumenate program should be given more attention. It states: “the rite of Christian initiation present here is designed for adults who, after hearing the mystery of Christ proclaimed, consciously and freely seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion as the Holy Spirit opens their hearts.”[142]

As long as the Church continues to pay less attention to this aspect of conversion, the result will be poor liturgical participation. To this end, Lonergan advocates that the Church must continually train members who would then be tasked with helping Christians shun various contemporary ideologies that tend to lure them away from the faith. With such training, they can teach and guide the people through intellectual conversion to help them in "the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge.”[143] The need for the Church to train members who will take up a transformative RCIA programme opens the call for training and forming catechists with the requisite knowledge and skills to prepare the contemporary person for the sacraments. Jane Regan stressed the importance of this training for catechists since; "catechists and others engaged in the catechetical enterprise cannot give expression to what they have not experienced."[144]

To speak of the formation of the catechists presupposes that their growth and development “occurs across a variety of dimensions: physical, psychological, spiritual,

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[142] RCIA, no.1
[143] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 223
[144] Jane E. Regan, *Towards an Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 171.

intellectual."[145] This implies that those to be entrusted with the responsibility of running a conversion-oriented RCIA process must have, first, in Lonergan's view, been converted intellectually by acquiring knowledge, converted morally by pursuing value, and converted religiously by falling in love with God without qualification. Thus, the formation envisaged here must be holistic, multifaceted, and interdisciplinary. Jane Regan stressed that it should bring together two complementary perspectives: the developmental and the artistic. The developmental emphasizes the acquisition of more insight and more information, while the artistic focuses on the "recognition that formation is about embracing our experiences as people of faith and allowing them to form and transform us."[146] Lonergan's treatment of religious experience summarizes this position. For him, religious experience is an integration of faith and reason, a sort of synthesis where intellectuality and affectivity find a meeting point. Thus, the formation of catechists for preparing a conversion-based RCIA process should be such that they not only acquire knowledge but also grow in affectivity, which makes them desire God over everything else.

(c) Post-Baptismal Catechesis to Strengthen the Conversion Journey

Post-baptismal catechesis or Mystagogy is the final period of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. RCIA situates it to span through the entire Easter season, ending with Pentecost. It is a time for consolidating the faith received at Easter, for deeper spiritual advancement, and for integrating more fully into the spirit and life of the Christian community. The process is intended to be life-changing, but there is doubt if this intention has been achieved over the years. Given the complexities of contemporary society, more than this periodic structure of mystagogy, as prescribed

[145] Ibid., 173.
[146] Ibid., 174.

by RCIA, is needed to sustain a person's conversion journey. More attention should be paid to expanding the position of RCIA to cover the entire life journey of the individual as manifested in a daily lived experience of the person. However, RCIA has the entire lived experience and active faith of the new Christian at heart in its consideration of the intended benefit of mystagogy. It states:

> The neophytes are, as the term mystagogy suggests, introduced into a fuller and more effective understanding of mysteries through the Gospel message they have learned and above all through their experience of the sacraments they have received...they have been renewed in mind, tasted more deeply the sweetness of God's word, received the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and grown to know the goodness of the Lord. Out of this experience, which belongs to Christians and increases as it is lived, they derive a new perception of the faith, of the Church and of the world.[147]

To this effect, attention should be given to organizing time of quiet and retreat. Such programs should create opportunities for faith-sharing and group discussions where members can be enriched and encouraged by the shared experience of other members of the Christian community. By this continuous catechesis, the faithful are initiated into the mystery of Christ, thereby proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the "sacraments" to the "mysteries."[148]

(d) **Inculturating Liturgical Celebrations**

Regis Duffy notes that "the ongoing influence of Lonergan's treatment of conversion is acknowledged by the importance also given to a theology of inculturation, as well as to liturgical and liberation theology."[149] According to Gelpi, "candidates for initiation in the post-Vatican II Church have a right to inculturated evangelization. In

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[147] RCIA., 245
[148] Cf. CCC., 1075
[149] Regis Duffy, "Book Review of Donald L. Gelpi's Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians" in *Theological Studies* (January 1991): 173.

other words, candidates need to enact Christian faith within their own cultures."[150] The view here is that inculturation can help enhance liturgical participation. However, many people today look at the word "rite" in sharp contrast to inculturation. In fact, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger notes that for many people today, rite "is set in opposition to that creativity and dynamism of inculturation by which, so people say, we get a really living liturgy, in which each community can express itself."[151] Those who hold this view suggest that inculturation is not practically possible since the liturgical rites are rigid and uncompromisingly defined. But this was not the intention of the Council Fathers. They were very clear about one of the key goals that they wanted to achieve: *"to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change;* to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of mankind into the household of the Church."[152]

In line with the intention of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, Lonergan insists that in communicating the Christian message to all nations:

> Such communication presupposes that preachers and teachers enlarge their horizons to include an accurate and intimate understanding of the culture and the language of the people they address. They must grasp the virtual resources of that culture and that language, and they must use those virtual resources creatively so that the Christian message becomes, not disruptive of the culture, not an alien patch superimposed upon it, but a line of development within the culture.[153]

This study, therefore, advocates for an inculturation of liturgical rites that make worship more meaningful to the people in their local context.

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[150] Donald Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience: A Reflective Process for RCIA Participants and Others,* 145.
[151] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 173.
[152] *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* 1.
[153] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology, 334.*

The Council Fathers stressed the need to reform the liturgy to accommodate modern and contemporary thought patterns on how worship can best be carried out. This was by no means a move to undermine the essence and intention of the rites.

However, the challenge that inculturation faces in contemporary times is the question of what culture really means. Peter Phan notes that postmodernism, as the hallmark of contemporary culture, "affects the nature and process of inculturation itself."[154] It raises the question: can the liturgy be inculturated into the contemporary culture of postmodernism? This question falls outside the scope of this study but is one to which advocates of inculturation theology need to pay attention. However, it is our view that since all liturgies are local, and, in the words of Anscar Chpungco, "all liturgical rites are vested in culture, … no liturgy is celebrated in a cultural vacuum,"[155] liturgical inculturation remains a veritable tool for making worship relevant to the practical and active life of people of particular cultures. Liturgical inculturation goes beyond sacred texts and rituals to include gestures, songs, music, and musical instruments. Incorporating these aspects of the people's lives into their worship creates an opportunity for them to respond to God as truly humans seeking self-transcendence. As the liturgy finds expression in the culture of the people with the use of the vernacular, their understanding deepens, and their participation increases. Bugnini corroborates this position when he notes that without the vernacular: “there can be no adequate expression of the people’s participation, of their joyous entering into the paschal mystery of Christ, or of their sense of communion with one another.”[156] To

[154] Peter C. Phan, “Liturgical Inculturation: Unity in Diversity in the Postmodern Age,” in *liturgy in a Postmodern World,* edited by Keith Pecklers SJ (London: Continuum, 2003), 55.
[155] Anscar Chupungco, “Liturgy and the Component of Culture,” in *Worship and Culture in Dialogue,* ed. Anita S. Stauffer (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1994), 153.
[156] Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948-1975* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 885

this end, liturgy should not be seen as something static but something that grows "and whose laws of growth determine the possibilities of further development."[157]

(e) Fostering Festivity that Enhances the Community Spirit

Joseph Gelineau believes that "the end proper to the liturgy is not the progress of human arts but the sanctification of the baptized for the glory of God."[158] This could mean that the Church does not have a festive, cultural, or artistic mission but primarily a "salvific mission." However, as Ruff observes, the Church's "mission of salvation encompasses the entire person as body-soul unity, the cultural mission is necessarily derived from the mission of salvation."[159] Hence, in sanctifying the soul, we cannot undermine the body. Lonergan argues that while the liturgy primarily focuses on the sanctification of the soul, care must be taken to pay attention to what happens to the body of these human persons who need to find meaning in their lives as they engage in the journey towards self-transcendence. Fostering festivity may not be an end in itself, but it can enhance the Church's mission of salvation and sanctification and foster the cultural integration of a people's peculiar giftedness that enhances the community spirit. More so, as Ruff noticed, "the liturgy is the shared activity of a people gathered together."[160] And:

> No other sign brings out this communal dimension so well as singing. Bodily movements can be synchronized but remain juxtaposed. Many individual voices, however, can actually be fused together, so that when they blend and follow the same rhythm, only one voice is heard – that of the group. This brings out a very strong feeling of unity and belonging. It even touches on the essential mystery of the Church as *koinonia.*[161]

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[157]Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy,* 179.
[158] Joseph Gelineau, *Voices and Instruments in Christian Worship: Principles, Laws, Applications,* translated by Clifford Howell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1964), 141
[159] Anthony Ruff, *Sacred Music and Liturgical Reform: Treasures and Transformations,* 16
[160] Ibid., 13.
[161] Ibid.

Liturgical music plays a key role in fostering this festive dimension, and it can strengthen the bonds of community. “Music should assist the assembled believers to express and share the gift of faith that is within them and to nourish and strengthen their interior commitment of faith.”[162]

5.9 Conclusion

So far, we have examined how Lonergan's framework on conversion is employed to strengthen the importance of conversion in the liturgy as intended by RCIA. We established that Lonergan’s thought fosters a deeper level of conversion by drawing more attention to the effect of the rites on the human person who worships. Lonergan maintains that because of the complexities of the human person and the precarious nature of conversion itself, conversion cannot be automatically achieved permanently; it needs to be constantly renewed. Therefore, there must be a continuous collaboration among the three levels of conversion, and liturgy must help deepen the conversion process initiated by RCIA.

Since Lonergan is of the view that RCIA should help us become a Church whose central dynamic is conversion, he makes an indispensable link between conversion and the community. While admitting that conversion involves personal experience, he believes that conversion does not happen in isolation; it actively involves religious collectivity. It is the Christian community that authenticates and gives value to personal conversion. Therefore, the Church ought to reconstitute herself continuously, so that through her liturgy, she can deepen conversion by means of the symbolic. The Church (the Sacrament of Christ) ought to constantly transform herself, be drawn daily to the person of Christ (its Head), and provide opportunities for her members to

[162] The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Music in Catholic Worship,* no. 23.

be brought into sacramental celebration with Christ. Consequently, Lonergan stresses the need to pay more attention to what actually happens when the sacraments are celebrated and how they practically affect the lives of those who receive them.

We also saw Lonergan's admonition that for the Church to meet the demands of contemporary times and remain relevant, there is a need to shift from theoretical theology to methodological theology. This shift enables us to pay more attention to how *anabatic* (ascending) and *katabatic* (descending) liturgy can be appropriately integrated. This integration would enable us to develop a sacramental or liturgical theology that translates to life, practice, and active faith through conversion because, as transcendental as worship may be, it cannot be stripped of immanence. Liturgy should be capable of shaping the faith of those who engage in it, giving meaning to their lives, opening them up to a better understanding and appreciation of themselves as human beings, and broadening their perspective of God. To achieve this, Lonergan stressed the need for liturgical reforms.

Lonergan emphasizes that contemporary liturgical theologians should build the link that connects liturgical symbols to the day-to-day human experience to engender active faith and ensure full and conscious liturgical participation. Hence, he insists that we pay more attention to the effect of the rites on the human person who worships. By so doing, religious conversion would make the sacramental practice of bath, word, and table more meaningful to the worshipping person and make our religious rituals more fruitful and participatory. To ensure a more fruitful and participatory liturgical celebration, we have proposed the following suggestions: love-centred catechetical instructions; Church based catechetical preparation for the sacraments; post-baptismal catechetics to strengthen the conversion journey; inculturating liturgical celebrations; and fostering festivity that enhances community

spirit. Next, we shall make final evaluative comments and a conclusion that wraps up this research.

CHAPTER SIX

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This final chapter summarizes the research. It responds to the key questions raised at the beginning of this study, outlines key findings, makes recommendations, and a conclusion.

At the beginning of this research, we set out to examine how Lonergan's framework on conversion could be applied to the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and liturgy generally. The aim was to draw out implications for contemporary liturgical praxis. We proposed to do so by considering the following questions:

1. How has the tradition understood conversion, particularly writers reflecting on the liturgy and ecclesial practices?
2. What have been the theological reflections on the role of conversion in RCIA since its introduction?
3. What is Lonergan's framework? How has it been received? How may it be evaluated and implored to strengthen the importance of conversion in the liturgy as intended by RCIA?

Tradition understands that conversion is complex and multifaceted. It argues that it goes beyond the sudden, one-time experience. It is more an event of grace actualized by the power of the rituals. However, our study submits that while it could be argued that conversion is undoubtedly both an experience and an event of grace actualized by the power of ritual, too much emphasis on ritual without corresponding attention to the effect of ritual on the human person would end up producing ceremonial Christians; the consequence being poor liturgical participation.

Theological reflections on the role of conversion in RCIA reveal that RCIA situates conversion at the heart of the processes leading to the sacraments of initiation. It stresses that the ability to advance in this journey is made possible by certain rituals that help broaden the catechumen's understanding of the path he/she has been enrolled in to follow. Thus, RCIA supports the position that conversion is both an experience and an event of grace actualized by the power of the rituals. Our study shows, through the lens of William Harmless, that eight distinctive but interrelated things take place during the catechumenate process that show the centrality of conversion; these include radical transformation, journey, times and seasons, covenantal, Christocentric, ecclesial, sacramental, and comprehensive.[1] However, we stressed that whereas RCIA emphasizes the role of ritual in enhancing the conversion journey, less emphasis has been placed on ensuring that people who approach the sacraments of initiation consciously aspire to abandon their old way of life in order to embrace a new way of life in Christ and be incorporated into the paschal mystery. Therefore, we recommended that the dynamics of RCIA provide the template for a conversion-centred pastoral renewal programme. These can generate renewed interest, leading to genuine spiritual transformation for individuals and the community.

Our study of Lonergan's framework on conversion reveals that conversion is at the heart of Lonergan's *Method in Theology.* For him, reflection on conversion is the foundation for a new theology. He maintained that a conversion-oriented theology would lead us to encounter God through an unconditional falling in love (religious conversion). He stressed the need for a holistic understanding of conversion that considers the intellectual, moral, and affective domain of the human person. For him,

[1] Cf. William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate,* 15-16. These eight aspects have also been analyzed in Team RCIA News Letter titled: "The RCIA is our Definitive Statement on Conversion," see https://teamrcia.com/2019/08/the-rcia-is-our-definitive-statement-on-conversion/

conversion is an ongoing journey anchored on the religious experience of the person. Therefore, this research submits that Lonergan's framework expands RCIA's position on post-baptismal catechesis *(mystagogy)* by advancing an *ongoing mystagogy* whose focus is the transformation of the individual and the community. Consequently, Lonergan's framework establishes the point that when the human person, illuminated by grace and nurtured by experience, accepts the truth of faith and responds to God in love, then worship will become a lived experience.

Our research shows that Lonergan's framework on conversion can be evaluated and utilized to strengthen the importance of conversion in the liturgy as intended by RCIA. We established that Lonergan's thought fosters a deeper level of conversion by drawing more attention to ongoing conversion. Hence, liturgy should be about deepening conversion. Consequently, we presented key practical ways in which Lonergan's framework on conversion can be utilized to deepen conversion and foster full, active, and conscious liturgical participation:

Firstly, Church-based catechetical preparation for the sacraments. Parishes must take full responsibility for the enrolment and preparation of candidates for the sacrament of initiation within the parish structure. Hence, parishes must recruit and adequately train those who will take up this responsibility.

Secondly, love-centred catechetical instructions. Just as St. Augustine notes that true worship occurs when love is at the centre of every dimension of the Christian life,"[2] the focus of the catechetical preparations for the sacraments of initiation should centre on how the candidates can grow in their love for God. Their preparations should emphasize the importance of religious experience and personal involvement.

[2] Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, 9.

Thirdly, *ongoing mystagogy* to strengthen the conversion journey. Beyond the periodic structure of mystagogy prescribed by RCIA, Lonergan's framework advocates for an *ongoing mystagogy* to cover the entire life journey of the individual as manifested in a daily lived experience of the person. To this effect, attention should be given to organizing times of quiet and retreat in every local Christian community. Such programs should create opportunities for faith-sharing and group discussions where members can be enriched and encouraged by the shared experience of fellow members of the Christian community.

Fourthly, inculturating liturgical celebrations. Lonergan's framework strengthens the position that candidates preparing for the sacraments of initiation "need to enact Christian faith within their own cultures."[3] Therefore, this study advocates for an inculturation of liturgical practices that make worship more meaningful to the people in their local context.

Fifthly, fostering festivity that enhances the community spirit. Lonergan argues that while the liturgy primarily focuses on the sanctification of the soul, care must be taken to pay attention to what happens to the body of these human persons who need to find meaning in their lives as they engage in the journey towards self-transcendence. Hence, preparation for the sacraments should emphasize building a community spirit where people feel loved and welcomed. This will enhance personal involvement and appropriation of the ritual process, which, in turn, can lead to the integration of a people's peculiar giftedness that enhances the community spirit.

This research has made key findings that have led to some recommendations and a conclusion.

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[3] Donald Gelpi, *The Conversion Experience: A Reflective Process for RCIA Participants and Others,* 145.

Key Findings

Our study reveals the following:

1. *The human person is a being unto self-transcendence:* Lonergan's analysis of the human subject from the standpoint of intentionality, consciousness, and authenticity, with particular emphasis on the idea of understanding, judgment, and decision, establishes the view that the human person is a being unto self-transcendence, and consequently, a worshiping being. Self-transcendence means rising beyond the self, broadening one's consciousness beyond oneself, and acknowledging a higher reality. Lonergan's theological method via the cognitive theory, which he treated in *Insight* and developed in *Method in Theology,* gives supporting argument for this assertion. For him, intentionality and consciousness reveal a sense of going beyond, moving from the known to the unknown, striving for a better and fuller understanding of the yet unknown, thus revealing a sense of continuous self-transcendence and search for the ultimate truth - God. He insists that since the human person is ultimately oriented towards self-transcendence, love draws him/her to that journey toward God. Hence, this lifelong process of moving towards God is called religious conversion. Therefore, the study submits that the journey of the human person unto self-transcendence is made possible by a continuous process of conversion. So, conversion stands at the centre of Lonergan's *Method in Theology.*

2. *Conversion is a conscious personal choice with communal implications:* By situating the operations and goals of the human person on the fourth level of the cognitive theory, Lonergan explains why the human person can deliberate about the possible courses of his/her actions, evaluate them, and decide on how to execute his/her decisions. To this end, our study affirms that while recognizing that God is the

initiator of conversion and the role of grace in actualizing it, conversion is a personal choice that a person must consciously and deliberately make. However, Lonergan's idea of "authentic subjectivity," which recognizes the importance of the "other," creates a sense of community, allowing for a communal dimension of conversion. Therefore, there is an indispensable link between conversion and the community. While admitting that conversion involves personal experience, Lonergan believes it does not happen in isolation; it actively involves religious collectivity. It is the Christian community that authenticates and gives value to personal conversion. Therefore, the Church ought continuously to reconstitute herself so that through her liturgy, she can deepen conversion by means of the symbolic. The Church (the Sacrament of Christ) should constantly transform herself, be drawn daily to the person of Christ (its Head), and provide opportunities for her members to be brought into sacramental celebration with Christ.

3. *Conversion is both an experience and an event of grace actualized by the power of the rituals:* From our review of how the tradition understood conversion, especially contemporary figures who are reflecting on the liturgy and ecclesial practices (like Lewis Rambo, Robert Duggan, John Louis, Michael Dick, Edward Braxton, and Donald Gelpi), this research established that conversion goes beyond the sudden, one-time event. Rather, it is complex and multifaceted. Therefore, while emphasizing the necessity of the rites to facilitate the conversion process, we must not undermine the place of the individual's religious experience. Too much emphasis on conversion as a product of the ritual process and less attention on the effect of the ritual on the human person can be counterproductive. Hence, the challenge for the Church today "is to maintain a sacramental view of theology while emphasizing the

experiential side of conversion."[4] Consequently, there is a need for a correlation between the ritual and experiential dimensions of conversion.

4. *The Centrality of Conversion in the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adult (RCIA) and the Limitations therein:* A careful examination of RCIA reveals that it situates conversion at the heart of the processes leading to the sacraments of initiation. However, the study observed that whereas it prescribes the process of conversion as the basis for coming into the sacraments of initiation, less emphasis has been placed on ensuring that people who approach the sacraments of initiation consciously aspire to abandon their old way of life in order to embrace a new way of life in Christ and be incorporated into the paschal mystery. The result is that we continue to witness less commitment to the life of the Church and poor liturgical participation of the faithful after initiation.

Similarly, while we noticed that RCIA emphasizes the role of ritual in enhancing the conversion journey, this study shows that RCIA places much emphasis on pre-initiation conversion but is less emphatic about ongoing conversion. We stress that conversion should be an ongoing process, and liturgy should always be about strengthening conversion. Although the final section of RCIA made provision for *Post-Baptismal Catechesis* or *Mystagogy,* which was intended to strengthen the conversion process of the neophytes, our study reveals that the emphasis is placed more on how the neophyte can be more fully integrated into the Christian community. As a result, it focuses more on the validity of the rites rather than on the effect of the rites on the individual, which should lead to personal transformation and conviction.

5. *Lonergan's model of conversion expands the view of conversion in RCIA:* This research establishes that by emphasizing the need for ongoing conversion

[4] Richard Peace, "Conflicting Understanding of Conversion: A Missiological Challenge," 11.

anchored on the religious experience of the person, Lonergan's systematic treatment of the triple conversion builds upon and expands the notion of conversion in RCIA. For Lonergan, reflection on conversion is the foundation for a new theology that could lead us to “knowledge of God” and not just “knowledge about God.” A person who has been led to the "knowledge of God" moves from the level of appearance to grasp the reality of particular situations (intellectual conversion), which propels him/her to begin to pursue value (moral conversion). With the right values, the person counts everything else as less important than God (religious conversion). At this level, the desire to respond to God’s love that floods our hearts leads us to worship.

The study shows that Lonergan expands the idea of conversion in RCIA by focusing on a holistic dimension of the human person. For him, any effective treatment of conversion must consider the intellectual, moral, and religious dimensions. Intellectual conversion enables one to take possession of one’s own mind, understand the workings of the mind and all the activities that take place there, identify them, compare them, distinguish them, name them, relate them to one another, grasp their dynamic structure, and in the midst of all these, have an opinion of one's own on larger issues. Moral conversion helps the human person to opt for the truly good, which results in the deliberate desire for value over satisfaction. It is when we consciously begin to desire value that self-transcendence and self-transformation of our lives begin. Hence, moral conversion reshapes how one perceives moral realities and alters one's vision of the world. It plays a dialectical role in theology, gives dogmatic theology its practicability, and provides a foundation for theology in general. On its path, religious conversion enables one to enter into a deeper realm of transcendence. It occurs when the human person, illuminated by grace and nurtured by experience, accepts the truth of faith and responds to God in love. Religious

conversion is at the centre of Lonergan's treatment of conversion. For him, without religious conversion, reflection on God is impossible, and if reflection on God is not possible, theology and worship are not possible. Therefore, authentic religious conviction guarantees religious conversion and ignites in the human person the desire for worship. Thus, this study stresses that Lonergan's position fosters a deeper level of conversion, as advanced by RCIA, by drawing more attention to the effect of the rites on the human person who worships.

6. *Religious conversion makes sacramental practice more meaningful:* Religious conversion arising from religious experience makes sacramental practices find fulfilment in the practical life and active faith of the people at prayer. Consequently, our study stresses the need to pay more attention to the relationship between sacramental practice and the religious experience of Christians. The thesis envisions a synthesis where intellectuality and affectivity can find a meeting point to engender active faith that makes worship a lived experience. To achieve this, Lonergan insists that the Christian community (the Church) must continuously reconstitute herself,[5] so that her liturgy could shape the faith of those who engage in it, give meaning to their lives, open them up to a better understanding and appreciation of themselves as human beings, and broaden their perspective on God. To this end, we emphasize the need to pay more attention to an *anabatic* liturgy that gives special consideration to the experience of the people gathered in prayer. Therefore, this study submits that contemporary liturgical theologians should emphasize building the crucial link that connects liturgical symbols to the day-to-day human experience to engender active faith and ensure full and conscious liturgical participation. Hence, every liturgical

[5] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 335.

assembly must aim to strengthen her members' faith and help them find meaning in their lives within the larger society.

This research submits that while acknowledging the sacramental efficacy of the *katabatic* (descending) liturgy, there should be a proper integration with an *anabatic (*ascending) dimension of the liturgy. By so doing, a new understanding of the sacramental effect surfaces, one which enables the human person to understand that the Church's sacramental action is a gift from God that draws one to a personal relationship with God the Father in the Holy Spirit, a relationship which Lonergan says makes the human person respond to God's love in an unrestricted fashion. It is this kind of relationship that RCIA envisioned but did not explicitly express.

7. *How Lonergan's framework on conversion has been received and applied in the field of liturgical theology:* It is true that Lonergan was not a liturgist and did not write any explicit work on the liturgy. However, our study reveals that his framework can be interpreted to emphasize the importance and value of conversion for full and active liturgical participation. Firstly, his idea of *methodological theology,* which is "a theology explicitly grounded in the conscious operations and states of the existential subject,"[6] and centres on *being in love unrestrictedly,*[7] is a model for effective liturgical participation in contemporary society. His *methodological theology* stresses the view that liturgy should be able to reform and give meaning to those who engage in it, bring them to the understanding that they are transcendental beings, and ignite their search for God since it focuses on the human person who needs to self-transcend intellectually by achieving knowledge, self-transcend morally by seeking what is worthwhile, and self-transcend religiously by affectively falling in love with God

[6] Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, "Sanctifying Grace in a 'Methodical Theology," 53.
[7] Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 101.

which enables him/her for worship. Even though Lonergan's idea of a *methodological theology* has been criticized on the grounds that it contradicts or undermines the achievements of medieval theology, our study submits that Lonergan did not depart from medieval theology; he merely stressed the importance of understanding the conscious, intentional activities that control metaphysical activities. By so doing, the liturgy will translate to life, practice, and active faith through conversion.

Secondly, Lonergan's emphasis on the need for an *anabatic liturgy* centred on the religious experience of the worshiping community provides an invitation, in the words of Timothy Brunk, to "liturgical theologians to help people understand what they are actually doing when they engage in sacramental worship."[8] In this way, a perfect link that connects liturgical symbols and the day-to-day human experience would be established, and it is this link that engenders active faith and ensures full and conscious liturgical participation. Lonergan's framework, therefore, challenges contemporary liturgical theologians to pay more attention to the personal appropriation of the rites.

Thirdly, Lonergan's framework on conversion stresses the importance of the sacramental grace event to be celebrated in such a way that the contemporary person makes the needed response intended by the sacramental rite by establishing a personal, loving relationship with God that manifests itself in an active daily Christian living. Our study reveals that this part of Lonergan's idea has yet to be effectively received and applied. No doubt, RCIA is properly designed to bring the catechumen into new life through the rites of initiation. But this study reveals that to fulfil the promise of that new life, we need the conscious and deliberate assent of the individual Christian.

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[8] Timothy M. Brunk, *Liturgy and Life: The Unity of Sacrament and Ethics in the Theology of Louise-Marie Chauvet* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), 234.

He/she ought to make a personal commitment to following the way of Christ through the help of the community of faith. Thus, liturgy should also broaden and deepen the lifelong conversion journey of the individual.

8. *Limitations to Lonergan's Triple Conversion:* Our findings also reveal that Lonergan's intellectual, moral, and religious conversions have their limitations. Intellectual conversion risks confining the framework or structure of theological reality within the confined world of the individual, thereby locating God somewhere in a particular spot, in one corner or the other, in an imaginatively conceived and personalized framework. Equally, moral conversion does not guarantee the desired optimal moral standard. A morally converted person still has to learn continuously in order to overcome certain biases and strive to be a morally good man or woman. Similarly, religious conversion places so much emphasis on the transcendent life that it runs the risk of undermining the place of the body. Meanwhile, we established that as transcendental as worship may be, it cannot be stripped of immanence. To this end, this study makes some necessary recommendations.

Recommendations

In order to enhance full and active liturgical participation in our contemporary society, this study recommends the following:

1. RCIA should be strengthened to take serious steps to deepen the conversion of those who are preparing for Christian initiation by emphasizing the holistic dimensions of conversion and the personal involvement of candidates. When conversion is seen mainly as a product of a ritual action, it can result in what Richard

Peace calls “nominal faith.”[9] That is the case when people become Christians simply because they were baptized and confirmed as Catholics. Therefore, we stress, in line with Lonergan, that there is a need for personal appropriation of the ritual process - this is being in love. When the individual appropriates the ritual process, he/she is transformed “into a subject in love, a subject held, grasped, possessed, owned through a total and so an other-worldly love.”[10]

2. RCIA should be expanded to cater for an ongoing renewal process for all Catholics. For instance, the process of evangelization could then focus on the demands of the "new evangelization"; conversion should focus on the totality of the human person, which takes into consideration a person’s intellect, will, and affective domain; and rituals should find expression in the concrete life of the individual. We advocate for an ongoing *mystagogy* and stress that the focus of this ongoing *mystagogy* should allow the newly initiated members, their sponsors, and the community to speak about their experiences in practical terms to effect both individual and communal transformation.

3. The same dynamics of RCIA should provide the template for a pastoral renewal programme that considers the particular needs of every local Church. Liturgy should take root within the cultural milieu of the people so that their existential realities can be considered in advancing their transformation. These can be achieved through a fruitful engagement of the community, together with the catechumens, in a deeper commitment to the observance of Lent, renewed catechesis on the Sacred Paschal Triduum, and community-based celebration of the Easter experience in line

[9] Richard Peace, “Conflicting Understanding of Conversion: A Missiological Challenge,” 10.
[10] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology,* 228.

with the principles of inculturation. These can generate renewed interest, which can lead to genuine spiritual transformation of the individuals and the community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to note that in an attempt to explain the notion of sacramental efficacy, Thomas Aquinas opted for an *ontological method* which seems to emphasize the principle of the "sanctifying cause." This principle suggests that grace is the product of the sacraments. However, our study reveals that this view may need to be revised to sustain the Christian faith and enhance worship in our contemporary society, given the complexities of the human person. Therefore, Lonergan's view stands out as a critique of the theory of causality as he tries to understand the whole idea of grace offered in the sacraments by beginning with human experiences. Although he chose an anthropological method, he remains theological as long as he admits that the human person is utterly incomprehensible apart from God and, therefore, a being unto self-transcendence. More so, from the point of view of liturgical and sacramental theology, Lonergan reveals that the human person is the symbol of God. Hence, like Edward Schillebeeckx, he advocates for a liturgical and sacramental theology that focuses largely on the notion of "encounter." He insists that reflection on conversion is the foundation for that new theology that will help the human person encounter God. As stated earlier, this encounter enables a person to move from the level of appearance to grasp the reality of particular situations (intellectual conversion), which propels him/her to pursue value (moral conversion). With the right values, the person begins to count everything other than God as less important (religious conversion).

To this end, we suspect that the traditional categories and framework used to express the human person's experience of God may be inadequate to enhance worship in contemporary times. In a way, it makes knowledge of God excessively abstract and thus ineffectual in properly engaging the individual to achieve a total commitment. Therefore, while acknowledging the place and importance of sanctifying grace in sacramental practice, this study stresses the need for personal appropriation of the ritual process because the sacrament is that point where God and man meet in mutual availability. Hence, liturgy should be about deepening conversion. Therefore, this study submits that Lonergan's framework on conversion expands the view of conversion in RCIA and calls on contemporary liturgical theologians to pay more attention to what really happens when the Christian community gathers to worship.

However, this research admits that Lonergan's notion of conversion based on religious experience risks undermining the place of doctrine. Although we had argued that Lonergan was calling for a correlation between dogmatic theology and existential theology, it is essential to state that this is an area that this research has opened up for further consideration as it does not claim to have exhausted the discussions in this area of scholarship. Be that as it may, this study submits that while acknowledging the importance of rituals in enhancing the conversion journey, it is the individual who consciously takes steps through the instruction received during the period of catechumenate to abandon his/her old ways and embrace a new way of life in Christ. Active liturgical participation is guaranteed, once this personal appropriation of the rite is achieved. Therefore, this research affirms that the Church's sacraments are efficacious in themselves, but they become relevant when they promote the process of conversion and personal involvement. So, RCIA should help us become a Church whose central dynamic is conversion.

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