Religious Experience according to Bernard Lonergan

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In this lecture I would like to situate Bernard Lonergan's understanding of religious experience with respect to other approaches to that topic. I will proceed according to five steps. First, I will signal the emphasis placed on doctrine rather than on experience by ancient Christian doctors during premodern times, which cover the long period lasting from the first to the fifteenth century; this premodern prominence of doctrine will be contrasted with the typically modern way of highlighting religious experience. Second, I will show how Lonergan locates religious experience within the broad functioning of the human mind, with its ascending and descending movements towards and from religious experience. Third, since he characterizes religious experience as a ‘realm of meaning,’ I will introduce his four basic realms of meaning. During the fourth section, I will report the three senses he ascribes to the term ‘experience,’ including of course religious experience. In the fifth section, in order to demonstrate that religious experience does not amount to subjectivism, I will explain how, in his view, authentic subjectivity tends towards objectivity. Lastly, in the sixth section, I will suggest an interpretation of his project as an integration of faith and reason.

1. Premodern Times Contrasted with Modern Times

Prior to modern times, the significance of religious experience lay in its content, not in the form or characteristics of the experience as such. The conceptualization of religious experience is a modern phenomenon.

In biblical concordances, we learn that the few Hebrew and Greek words for ‘experience’ are used to describe aspects of non-religious experience, instead of aspects of religious experience. Nevertheless, the idea of religious experience was nascent in biblical revelation, with the accent that this revelation increasingly placed upon the individual conscience. This is clear for example in Ezekiel, chapter 18, and throughout the New Testament, particularly in the free decision to believe in Jesus and be baptized. Moreover, equivalent words were employed that clearly point to a religious experience, for instance when God says “a new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the
heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26), or when Paul points to the spiritual state of “with the eyes of your heart enlightened” (Eph 1:18), or when John and his disciples proclaim “what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life” (1 Jn 1:1).

Over the first fifteen centuries of Christianity, the initial proclamation of the Gospel, almost constantly meditated upon, led to the standard patristic presentation of the Christian message. Clearly the biblical texts as well as the writings of the Church Fathers include depictions of religious experience, but they are not composed from the perspective of religious experience. Instead, their authors 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.

In addition to the kerygmatic concern of the patristic writers, their other principal interest can be said to be dogmatic. Their doctrinal teaching is central. They tell the great story of humankind’s redemption and they draw out its implications in terms of beliefs and of principles of conduct. So far as I know, the reflections of the Desert Fathers, typically expressed in short maxims, were the only exception to the standard dogmatic ensemble. Commenting on their “very practical and unassuming wisdom,” Thomas Merton stated: “Our time is in desperate need of this kind of simplicity. It needs to recapture something of the experience reflected in these lines. The word to emphasize is experience.”

Nonetheless, during that extended period between the time of the New Testament and the Renaissance, the general non-experiential preoccupation of the premodern Christians never reduced their ability to convey a deep religious experience. One finds that rich experiential substratum not only in Paul’s letters and in John’s epistle, as we have just observed, but also in the profound doctors Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Pope Gregory the Great, Bernard and Bonaventure, to mention but a few. As evidence, Gregory of Nyssa praises “the experience (peira) of those who have been judged worthy of enjoying what is beyond conception.” In addition, Dom Pierre Miquel refers to the widespread vocabulary of experientia in the Middle Ages.

Even in objective thinkers such as Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite and Thomas Aquinas we notice the expression “experiencing the divine
realities.” Undoubtedly Dionysius and Thomas teach that there is an experience of the divine realities. Thomas states that besides speculative knowledge, there is another one, which is “an affective or experiential knowledge, whereby a person experiences in oneself the taste of divine sweetness and the delight in divine will.” However, while using the patristic and medieval vocabulary of the ‘spiritual senses,’ Thomas stresses their analogical character by adding – often but not always – qualifying clauses, as in the phrases “as it were experiential” and “in a certain way experiential.”

Subsequently, in the sixteenth century, namely in the Renaissance, which was an epoch of humanism, the significance of human individuality emerged decisively. For instance, despite his disapproval of several philosophical opinions held by the great humanist Erasmus, Martin Luther relied on his own, rather idiosyncratic, experience of grace. That very experience caused a total reversal in his religious attitude and ushered in a vibrant act of faith and trust in Jesus.

This legitimatization of a person’s lively and spirited faith recurs among the German Pietists of the seventeenth century and among the Methodists and the Shakers of the eighteenth century. At about the same time, among spiritual writers of the Grand Siècle, the French noun la mystique is coined to designate the private sphere of mysticism, which is often exalted to a degree that suggests a divorce from the rest of church life. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that most Catholic bishops at that time frowned on the appeal to private experience, the word experience continues to be used, for instance by the late-eighteenth-century Jesuit Jean Grou, who wrote, “the great master of the interior life is experience” (“le grand maître de la vie intérieure, c’est l’expérience”).

It is in the nineteenth century that the concept of religious experience becomes preponderant in theology, namely with Friedrich Schleiermacher, who has exercised an enormous influence upon what has been called liberal Protestantism. His longest work, *The Christian Faith*, is composed from the epistemological perspective of an experiential component, namely the “inward experience.” In this magnum opus, religion is divided between an outward and an inward side. He writes: “the organization of the communicative expressions of piety in a community is usually called *Outward Religion*, while the total content of the religious emotions, as they actually occur in individuals, is called *Inward Religion*.”
An all-important difference between Schleiermacher and Lonergan is the fact that the former extols religious experience at the expense of dogma. Inward religion, also called piety, amounts to the consciousness that is shared in the Church; outward religion, or belief, simply conveys this consciousness in the conceptions entertained by a particular epoch and consequently does not possess a permanent, cross-cultural value. These brief observations are meant to help us realize how dissimilar Lonergan’s interpretation of religious experience is from the father of liberal Protestantism, despite the highly significant points they have in common, namely first the difference between inward consciousness and its outward objectification, and second the very important role of religious consciousness for the understanding of church doctrines.

In the early-twentieth-century a subjectivistic construal of religious experience came to predominate in the writings of prominent Catholic authors such as the modernists in France and in England, and in the writings of Protestant authors such as William James in the United States as well as Ernst Troeltsch and Rudolf Otto in Germany. Interestingly, in the second half of the twentieth century both Karl Rahner and Lonergan have been reproached for a subjectivistic stance (presumably akin to Schleiermacher’s stance). Unfortunately Rahner is not faultless in this respect, as I showed in an essay published in an issue of the Lonergan Workshop. By contrast, this criticism is undeserved in Lonergan’s case; we shall see why in the course of this lecture.

2. The Functioning of the Human Mind

Lonergan offers a conception of the human mind, which he calls intentionality. This is key: without a clear grasp of the basic structure of human agency, it is virtually impossible to understand his concept of religious experience.

The word ‘intentionality’ refers to a ‘tension towards’ reality – a tension that constitutes the life of the person. Lonergan lays out how intentionality, as a dynamism, unfolds on four levels. A principal activity characterizes each level: experience, understanding, judgment, and decision. Each of these levels requires many other operations, which I don’t have the time to explicate this evening.
In the years following the publication of *Method in Theology* Lonergan identified two movements in intentionality: from below upwards and from above downwards. In the first case, from lower to higher, one starts by taking in data from the senses (sight, hearing, etc.), which in today’s world may often be mediated electronically. While we share this first level with animals, the other levels are specifically human since they are rooted in acts of questioning. One is able to move from one level to the next by means of questions. Thus, one moves from level one (experience) to level two (understanding) by asking questions, related to the data, such as: What is that? What does that mean? How does that work? Why does that happen this way? The answers to these questions are insights, which are acts of understanding, and are expressed in interrelated concepts that form hypotheses.

In turn, the hypotheses of this second level spontaneously lead us to ask questions of another kind, which allow a critical detachment with respect to our hypotheses. One thus progresses to the third level (judgment) when one asks: Is that really the case? Is that true? Which hypothesis best reflects reality? The answers given are for the most part only probable: they are judgments about reality, which is known in a manner that is probably correct yet imperfect and open to revision, as the history of science amply illustrates.

Finally, questions of yet another kind again lead us to progress to the fourth level (decision): What needs to be done in a particular situation? Is there a good that emerges as a thing to be accomplished? Which action is worthy of being undertaken? And, once a relevant value has been identified, must I be consistent and commit myself to it as well as to the people for whom this value makes a difference?

The movement between levels that I have just described is from lower to higher. Yet human intentionality also operates from higher to lower. So a second movement starts at the fourth level, the level of values, of love, of commitment to others. Here one lives within a horizon, that is, a set of interests, a particular sensitivity to aspects of one’s life.

This horizon enables us to more easily accept, at the third level, truths that agree with what we value, at the fourth level. Next, as we progressively accept these truths, we gain a deeper understanding of their significance, at the second level. Our horizon also influences the first level, making us more attentive to some data and experiences, and less attentive to others.
Moreover, still at the first level, we express that which we hold dear (fourth level), consider true (third level) and find meaningful (second level). We become both creators and communicators of data, which we hope are intelligible, true and value-laden, through the use of the many forms of language at our disposal: scientific, technical, artistic, everyday language, etc.

3. Realms of Meaning

Since Lonergan considers religious experience as a realm of meaning, let us now lay out his unique position on realms of meaning. He differentiates several realms of meaning, which are basic kinds of human activity: common sense, theory, interiority, and transcendence (see Method in Theology, 81-85 and 271-76). In each of those realms or domains, human beings handle meaning in a specific manner. Later in the book, he adds two other domains of meaning: scholarship and art. And he explains: “Any realm becomes differentiated from the others when it develops its own language, its own distinct mode of apprehension, and its own cultural, social, or professional group speaking in that fashion and apprehending in that manner” (272). Let us characterize each of the four basic types.

Fundamentally practical, common sense deals with things as concrete and in relation to us; that is, from the point of view of agents interested in achieving particular goals. In contradistinction to common sense, theory observes and inspects things in order to find their general characteristics and to fashion abstract definitions; it aims at comprehending features of reality in the interrelations they have among themselves, in their connections, independently of the distinctive perspective of this or that observer. Interiority concerns the whole of the human subject, as practical, theoretical, religious, scholarly or artistic, that is, as it consciously experiences its psychical, cognitive and affective intentionality. Finally, in addition to this first kind of interiority, Lonergan identifies a second kind of interiority, transcendence (also called ‘religion’), which underlies the first kind and about which I shall have much to say presently.

Forms of common sense are innumerable, because every community – village, city, region, country – possesses a particular brand of common sense. Beyond common sense, people may become adept at theory. Theory began in the West with Socrates, who asked for definitions – neither too narrow
nor too broad – of virtue, for instance. Socrates’ demanding, intellectual requests baffled his fellow Athenians because their horizon was bounded by common sense. Plato and Aristotle considerably developed the field of theory, which at that time comprised both philosophy and science. It is only with Descartes that philosophy and science were distinguished.

Moreover, because physics was systematically figuring out its method in the seventeenth century, it became desirable to differentiate the worlds of meaning, especially science from common sense, as well as science from religion. Lack of differentiation accounted for the crisis that ended up with the condemnation of Galileo. From the standpoint of things related to common-sense observers, and for religious authorities who invoked the Bible, the sun moved around the earth, whereas the distinguished Italian scientist argued the opposite, basing himself not on common sense or on Scripture but on the standpoint of things interrelated among themselves, involving empirical measurements and theoretical reasons, which were appropriate in the sphere of physics.

Given the heritage of Plato in patristic times, Justin Martyr, followed by Clement of Alexandria and most other church fathers, soon realized that they their teaching could no longer utilize exclusively scriptural categories, most of which belong in the realm of common sense; they would also require the assistance of philosophical categories. Had they been unwilling to discuss doctrinal matters theoretically, they would have been unable to meet the challenge of Greek and Roman non-Christian thinking; they would have been reputed intellectually inferior, incapable of using reason as competently as their adversaries or competitors – principally the Platonists, the Stoics and the Gnostics.

Lonergan perceived a similar contest for the Church after the Second Vatican Council. That council had distanced itself from the traditional scholastic categories, derived from the world of theory, and it had preferred to talk with biblical words, which belong in the world of common sense. Although Lonergan greatly admired the intellectual feat of Thomas Aquinas and incorporated several Thomist elements into his own theology, he did not think one should cling to scholasticism. Likewise, he did not agree with those who remained content with a biblical approach that reflects representations going back as far as two thousand years (see the chapter of Method entitled “Systematics”). However central and fecund the word of God proves to be, it must be inculturated, that is, rephrased in terms of
present-day numerous brands of common sense (see the chapter of *Method* entitled “Communications”).

So he argued that Christian theologians should accept the modern turn to the subject – anticipated by St. Paul, St. Augustine and others –, try to fathom its potential, and adapt it to the design and purposes of theology. Solely the appropriation of a transcendental, that is, of a universal understanding of the human person’s realms of meaning could allow theologians to transpose the common-sense idioms of the Bible into today’s various sorts of common sense. Only a theology that is subject-centred but still respectful of the revelatory character of Christianity could mediate between ancient and contemporary forms of common sense, in which the divine message has been, is and will be couched. Consequently, it is incumbent on theologians to become skilful at transiting from any realm of meaning to another. This requires being at home in all of the four basic realms, thanks to the acquaintance with one’s operations and states in each of those spheres.

If we follow Lonergan’s lead, religious phenomena will no longer be interpreted common-sensically or theoretically, namely from the standpoint of the first or of the second realm of meaning, but interiorly, namely from the standpoint of the third realm of meaning. Theological practice done from this standpoint will be more and more helpful in a worldwide mentality that is being vastly influenced by twentieth-century psychology. Still, the third realm of meaning, which employs psychological tools, must accord itself to the discoveries made in the fourth realm, called ‘transcendence’ or ‘religion.’ Hence the significance of religious experience.

4. The Three Senses of ‘Experience’ in Lonergan

In *Method in Theology* as well as in Lonergan’s subsequent writings, the concept of religious experience plays a key role. This section will trace his specific understanding of religious experience vis-à-vis his two other acceptations of the word ‘experience.’

When Lonergan speaks of ‘experience,’ he uses a term that has meant a good number of things throughout Western history. In his usage, the term ‘experience’ designates what happens on the first level of intentionality, where the data of sense are perceived and recorded.
However, it also designates the religious component of the fourth level, namely the awareness of an otherworldly love, felt in oneself as a mysterious gift. And half-way between these two senses, we have a fourfold experience as four degrees of self-presence, each of which corresponds with a particular level of conscious intentionality.\(^{15}\)

In all three cases, there is a direct contact with a certain presence – physical or spiritual – which has yet to be understood (on the second level), while this understanding still has to be pronounced true (on the third level) and to be deemed valuable as a basis for worthwhile action (on the fourth level). However, the experience of data, on the first level of intentionality, is outward, that is, aiming at reaching reality as sensible, whereas the fourfold self-experience (on all four levels) and religious experience (on the fourth level) are both inward, that is, becoming aware either as being oneself consciously operating, or as enjoying a unique, non-worldly state, not mediated by sense data or by ordinary knowledge.

For Lonergan, the intentionality that transcends itself can be fulfilled when one lives in an unrestricted state of love, called ‘religious experience.’ Let us note that in his usage ‘religious experience’ is a synonym for ‘religious conversion,’ a term that is introduced at the end of chapter 4 (123).\(^{16}\) This term is fully explained only in chapter 10, on “Dialectic” (242-43).\(^{17}\) Let us try to lay out the several elements contained in this concept.

It is on the fourth level that he positions religious experience. Here one is attracted not only to limited values but, rather, one apprehends ultimate value. This experience amounts to the religious aspect of the fourth level, namely the aspect concerned not with finite values, but with infinite value. A unique affective state establishes itself: being in love in an unrestricted fashion. He avers that this affective state consists not in knowledge, but in consciousness. However, when one becomes aware of this consciousness, there begins the knowledge of it, which Lonergan calls ‘faith.’ Faith is “the eye of religious love, an eye that can discern God’s self-disclosures” (119).

In the passage from level to level, it is easy to observe a succession of mutual influences between the cognitive and the affective in the human person. At every level of intentionality, a combination of the cognitive and the affective is present. It is mostly at the lower three levels that cognitive operations predominate, and mostly at the fourth level that affective states predominate.
Incidentally, the primacy of love permits us to place Lonergan’s idea of religious experience within one of the medieval spiritual traditions, which culminates in the wonderful classic entitled *The Cloud of Unknowing*. He brings up the theme of the cloud a few times in *Method in Theology*. He refers twice to a fellow Jesuit’s study on that little jewel, about which he avows: “I have found extremely helpful William Johnston’s *The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing* . . . . Readers wishing to fill out my remarks will find in his book a position very largely coherent with my own” (342, note 7; see 29, note 1, 266, and 278, note 4). Lonergan’s description of religious experience equates it with mysticism; it has the advantage of situating mysticism with respect to the whole of human experience and, more precisely, with respect to the complete intentionality.18

5. A Subjectivity Open to Objectivity

It is obvious, then, that Lonergan is a modern thinker by virtue of having accepted the turn to the human subject, which we can observe in Luther, Descartes and countless others in their wake.

Nonetheless, he knew that adopting this stance had its risks. Since the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church’s authorities have been wary of theologies based on religious experience.19 Given that the brilliant Schleiermacher, whose theology stems from religious experience, did not manage to avoid relativism, and that most systems of thought whose foundation is religious experience have been incapable of providing for the possibility of reaching truth, we can say that, by comparison, Lonergan’s contribution is remarkably sound both philosophically and theologically. Philosophically, it is grounded in a detailed epistemology, articulated in *Insight* and summed up in the first chapter of *Method*; theologically, it is grounded in the gifts of love and light granted by the Holy Spirit.

Like Schleiermacher and so many other Christian thinkers, Lonergan situates religious experience at the core of theology.20 However, unlike Schleiermacher, he thinks that a Christian community is not necessarily confined within the viewpoint of an epoch. For him, far from being subjectivistic, a person’s authentic subjectivity reaches objectivity. He writes that “objectivity is simply the consequence of authentic subjectivity, of genuine attention, genuine intelligence, genuine reasonableness, genuine responsibility” (265; see 292).
Given divine grace, the human person is capable of self-transcendence, and this attitude implies that one is open to what is said by other people and, indeed, by the Other. Consequently Lonergan sees the authentic subject not only as endowed with a receptivity to the wisdom of a religious tradition – a receptivity obviously qualified by what the individual or the group happens to understand –, but as willing to embrace the doctrinal corpus of a religious tradition. This doctrinal corpus, which is the natural development of the outer word, confirms and helps the believers deepen the inner word that has been experienced inside their heart. In this way, objectivity, both philosophical and theological, is highlighted more by Lonergan than by most modern authors. Moreover, by synthesizing the several components of human intentionality and by differentiating the realms of meaning, he manages to provide an account of the subjective side of Christianity that is admirably balanced and fair.

He also elucidates the interrelations between affectivity and intellectuality. Man’s loving impulse and questioning thrust are two dynamisms that work in tandem. Both are connected with the dogmatic side of Christianity, which is presented as an answer to the affective yearning and to the intellectual quest of humanity.

6. An Integration of Faith and Reason

Let us now pay some attention to another of Lonergan’s accomplishments, which consists in clarifying how faith and reason work hand in hand – something he does from the vantage point of the human subject.

After Luther, numerous theologians, spiritual writers and catechists downplayed human reason and extolled personal experience. They reacted against the late Medieval Ages’ extreme preoccupation with logic that is noticeable in Henry of Ghent, Scotus, Ockham and the nominalists, as well as against the modern rationalism that is evident in Descartes. They turned their back on the intellect. They took away from the intellect a good portion of what belongs to it and they transferred that portion to the heart. Other theologians adopted – probably unwittingly – the conceptualism that Henry of Ghent had initiated, and this kind of thinking resulted in the narrow, static and dogmatic neo-scholasticism that dominated the Catholic agenda until the Second Vatican Council.
By contrast, we find in *Method in Theology* a remarkable integration of faith and reason. Let us examine how Lonergan has achieved a synthesis that brings together intellectuality and affectivity.

For one thing, religious experience is situated within the overall dynamism of human intentionality. It is definitely not isolated from the rest of human life. Lonergan locates it in the domain of transcendence. This domain is reached on the top floor of intentionality, namely on the fourth level, which for him is the level of affectivity par excellence, even though feelings are present at all levels. We can easily observe that, as he sees it, religious affectivity is not divorced from religious intellectuality. In fact, the vector that is ‘questioning’ and the state of being in love are parallel: “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” (106).

The second noteworthy thing is that, in chapter 11, entitled “Foundations,” the author places religious experience at the very centre of theology, which is, after all, an intellectual enterprise. And yet this enterprise requires that the person of the theologian be transformed, according to three conversions. Such a construal of theology applies not only to Christianity but to any religion that carries with it a belief in God (for instance, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism) and even to a non-theistic religion (such as Buddhism). Lonergan’s ecumenism is broader than the dialogue between the Christian churches. It extends to all world religions, even though he himself did not engage in specific analyses of non-Christian religions. His contribution is methodological, elaborating the principles of a cross-cultural theology.21

Third, by paying attention to chapter 5 of *Method* entitled, “Functional Specialties,” we find that Lonergan does not make of religious experience the sole basis of the theological enterprise. As is well known, there are eight functional specialties, grouped into two phases. The first phase consists of research (assembling the relevant documents), interpretation (expounding the meaning of the texts), history (discerning the evolution of authors or of periods) and dialectic (sorting out the oppositions between theological propositions and positions). The second phase consists of foundations (explicating the three conversions), doctrines (establishing what dogmas are to be accepted), systematics (arriving at a modest understanding of the contents of the dogmas) and communications
(transmitting the religious message in a way that is at once respectful and
critical of the common sense of the people addressed).

As a result, alluding to the experience of otherworldly love, he makes
bold to write: “religious conversion is the event that gives the name, God, its
primary and fundamental meaning” (350). Nevertheless, we would err if we
were to single out religious experience – here called ‘religious conversion’ –
as the exclusive and sufficient source of religious objectivity. The age-old
temptation of illuminism, that is, of relying only on one’s own inner light,
precisely consists in segregating one’s personal experience from the other
levels of intentionality and setting it aside so as to consider its felt
immediacy as an incontrovertible proof of its veracity.

Conclusion

We have noted the centrality of religious experience in Lonergan’s theology.
Although the biblical, patristic and medieval writers fathomed religious
experience in marvellous fashions, they did not rely on it as much as the
moderns do.

In Lonergan’s works, reason and faith are united in a way that differs
from premodern accounts, even from the one we find in Thomas Aquinas,
although it is obvious that Lonergan has been greatly inspired by his
medieval mentor. In fact, his vision is a transposition of Aquinas’s thought
into a conceptuality that is governed, not by theory (as in Aquinas), but by
an intentionality analysis that has objectified the domain of interiority. In
this, Lonergan is confirmed as a modern thinker who refused to jettison
tradition.

2 Gregory of Nyssa, Ad Thalassium, Prologue, §9, translated from the bilingual edition of
Questions à Thalassios (Paris: Cerf, 2010), Series “SourcesChrétienes,” no. 529).
3 Pierre Miquel, Le vocabulaire latin de l’expérience spirituelle dans la tradition monastique
et canoniale de 1050 à 1250 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1989) and Le vocabulaire de l’expérience
spirituelle dans la tradition patristique grecque du IVe au XVIIe siècle (Paris: Beauchesne,
1989).
4 See Dionysius, The Divine Names, 2.9, 648B, and 3.2-3, 681A-684D; Thomas Aquinas,
Summa Theologiae, I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3; II-II, q. 45, a. 1, ad 2, and a. 2.
5 *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 97, a. 2, ad 2.


9 *The Christian Faith*, §6, Postscript.


11 On Rahner’s and Lonergan’s approaches to religious experience, see Louis Roy, *Transcendent Experiences: Phenomenology and Critique* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 128-41 and 177-78.


13 All the references given in brackets are from Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, reprint, 2003).


16 In *Transcendent Experiences* (8-9, 139-40 and 151) I distinguished the broader concept of ‘transcendent experience,’ which takes place on any of the four levels of intentionality, from Lonergan’s narrower concept of ‘religious experience,’ which takes place solely on the fourth level. I also argued that religious conversion is only the sixth component of a transcendent experience, namely its fruit, and that it often does not occur. As a result of those distinctions, I disagreed with his identification of religious experience with religious conversion, the former amounting to Aquinas’s operative grace and the latter amounting to cooperative grace – a distinction Lonergan accepts at 107 and 241, although he wants – rightly so – to transpose it into interiority’s categories.

17 The term ‘conversion’ occurs before chapter 10, albeit in the singular, without yet being differentiated into the three basic kinds of conversion (see 48, 52, 107, 118, 130-32, 142, 144, 155, 168, 224). At 150, 161 and 217 the three conversions are mentioned, although not characterized.

18 In a book I am currently writing on Christian mysticism, I present the medieval debate about the priority of knowing or loving in mystical consciousness.

19 On the Protestant side, Karl Barth and other Neo-orthodox theologians have vehemently opposed Schleiermacher and his liberal epigones. Like the Catholic authorities, they have been concerned about the subjectivism of the proponents of religious experience. However, in contradistinction to Catholics, who have defended the normativity of a Tradition safeguarded by the Holy Spirit, those Protestants have defended the paramount significance of a Revelation imparted by the Word of God.
See Louis Roy, *Le sentiment de transcendance, expérience de Dieu?* (Paris : Cerf, 2000), where Lonergan’s concept of religious experience is differentiated into four main types and an effort is made to show the pastoral implications of a theology that takes seriously the transcendent experiences.

See Lonergan’s remarks on Wilfred Cantwell Smith and on Raimon Pannikar, in *A Third Collection, passim*; see also Index of Names.