

Theological Aspects of Bernard Lonergan's
"Method in Theology"*

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After my general presentation of Bernard Lonergan's Method in Theology, and after my study of some of its basic philosophical elements,[1] I would now like to examine this work as what it is specifically meant to be, a method of theology. Here I must recall what I emphasized earlier, that Lonergan intended to do a strictly methodological study, leaving all theological questions to the theologians who work in the various functional specializations. But even so, the methodological discussion is specifically directed toward theology. Earlier, on the basis of an objection by K. Rahner, I asked whether this work contains a specifically theological principle so that, while the proposed method is applicable in general, it can still be called a method for theology. I said that there is such a principle in the event that occurs at the highest level of the expansion of our consciousness, which we call religious conversion.

By conversion, Lonergan means what Fr. J. de Finance called the vertical exercise of freedom. This exercise consists in a set of judgments and decisions by virtue of which we pass from one horizon to another, in such a way that the new horizon represents not just a broadening or a deepening of the preceding one, but rather its overturning. Through this overturning, a radically new beginning, conversion, occurs in man's conscious life. There are three types or degrees of conversion.[2] First, intellectual conversion. This is a basic clarification about human knowledge and its objectivity, and about reality. This clarification involves the elimination of the spontaneous and deeply rooted myth that regards knowledge as a kind of intuition, and reality as an "already out there now" that corresponds to the animal movement of extroversion. Second, moral conversion. This consists in a change of our decisions and choices, from satisfactions to values. From a subject that makes itself the center of its aspirations, man becomes a principle of real self-transcendence, capable of real love and genuine collaboration. Third, religious conversion. With it, man overcomes pure humanism by placing the center of his love and his interest in the transcendent mystery we call God.

As we saw in my previous essay, Method recognizes an inversion of the order in which these degrees of conversion would ordinarily occur. From a logical point of view, religious conversion should come last, since it is the culmination of the human spirit's natural movement of self-transcendence. But in the real order God, as the author of our salvation, takes the initiative in starting this movement. This initiative produces religious conversion, which then gradually expands in different ways into all of human life—into free and responsible choices, and finally into the reordering of one's explicit criterion for knowledge and truth.

"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. On the contrary, from a causal viewpoint, one would say that first there is God's gift of his love. Next, the eye of this love reveals values in their splendor, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion. Finally, among the values discerned by the eye of love is the value of believing the truths taught by the religious tradition, and in such tradition and

belief are the seeds of intellectual conversion.”[3]

In this essay I will turn to the role that Lonergan assigns in Method to religious conversion, which I think is one of the most fecund ideas in the book. This will be only a first attempt to analyze and evaluate his proposal that method in theology be based on religious conversion.

The place of religious conversion in theology

Religious conversion is studied most extensively in Chap. 11, where the specialization of “foundations” is discussed. Foundations, that is, of a theology in which we not only recover the past, but take a position in the present on the basis of what the past has transmitted to us of the Christian message. Now according to Lonergan, a theology that aims to present, understand systematically, and communicate the Christian message must be based on the objectification of religious conversion. To be sure, the point of the task that Lonergan is proposing to his theological colleagues is strictly scientific: it is for the theologian qua theologian. Theology is not religion, but reflection on religion. It is not living the Gospel message, but reflecting on the community that lives on that message. Even so, a true and proper religious conversion is needed if one is to do this reflection appropriately. The Christian message then is grasped and expressed not only according to the categories of the culture in which that community lives, but in such a way that these categories transmit faithfully, even if imperfectly, the Christian reality.

The objectification of conversion provides the foundation for theology in *oratione recta*, i.e., for the subsequent specializations of “doctrines,” “systematics,” and “communications.” This means that a good theologian must be someone who believes and who sincerely tries to live the Christian values. A person who is not religiously converted may do an excellent job of editing religious texts and of interpreting them in terms of the cultural context in which they originated. He may collect and trace the historical development of certain Christian ideas. Confronted with the panorama of multiple interpretations, doctrines, and movements within Christianity, he may describe the sequence of opposing positions and reduce them to their authors’ various basic positions in epistemology, ethics, and religion. But sooner or later, he must make an ultimate evaluation in terms of true or false, value or disvalue, genuinely Christian or not Christian. Indeed, the very exposure of conflicts in “dialectics” makes a personal decision even more urgent, since these conflicts are due to evaluations made in absolute terms by past generations. In the face of the heritage of his religion, the believer cannot remain indifferent like an archeologist who is content to bring to light something from the past.

But to make a decision means to make a choice. Based on what criterion? In conditions of spontaneity, in the lived Christian life, the criterion can remain at the stage of the operative reality of the subject. It is provided by the genuineness of one’s conversion, of one’s response to the inner action of the Holy Spirit. One thus is able to recognize the Christian truth and adhere to it to the extent that the primary source of truth concretely demands it of him. “Conversion results in a transvaluation of values, in a new efficacy in one’s response to values, in a new openness to belief, in a new outlook upon mankind and upon the universe.”[4] This is what spontaneously

makes everyone faithful who is faithful. But in reflective conditions, those of the theologian working in the second phase of theology, the criterion must be formulated and recognized as such. Conversion is the criterion for distinguishing among the various beliefs or doctrines and for recognizing the truth of each. Hence the functional specialization of “foundations” consists in expressing in words this conversion itself. “Foundations” thus explicates and formulates the horizon that conversion entails, so that against that horizon we can measure the truth of the many opposing interpretations of the single Christian truth.

“[R]eflection on conversion can supply theology with its foundation and, indeed, with a foundation that is concrete, dynamic, personal, communal, and historical. Just as reflection on the operations of the scientist brings to light the real foundation of the science, so too reflection on the ongoing process of conversion may bring to light the real foundation of a renewed theology.”[5]

Religious conversion is the gift of God that establishes an interpersonal relationship of love with us. It is thus a radical change in our consciousness at the highest level of its expansion. It adds a new meaningful reality that broadens the meaning of the intelligible, the true, and the value that are innate to our spirit. And where a new dimension of meaning is created on the side of the subject, a new horizon is also established, a new principle of knowledge and decision. By virtue of this new horizon, the Christian message becomes understandable and true for the believer, and Christian values seem worth devoting one’s life to. What is happening in every believer is objectified and stated in human categories by the theologian. It thus becomes the foundation for the subsequent phases of theology, i.e., for formulating and affirming the true Christian doctrine, understanding its content in some way, and communicating it in an appropriate and effective way to various kinds of people.

The place Lonergan assigns to religious conversion in theology is in continuity with what was well known and affirmed in fundamental theology: The Church as institution, the Church as safeguarding Scripture, administering the sacraments, possessing a magisterium, pronouncing dogmas, etc., is not the first foundation of our religious existence. That foundation, rather, is constituted by grace on God’s side and by the response of faith on ours. The foundation thus consists in an immediate relationship with God and with his Christ. By reason of this relationship, we adhere to the Church as the place where foundational religious experience finds its authentic interpretation and is translated into a Christian religious life conforming to the divine plan of salvation. In addition, this foundation is something that must constantly be realized, since it constantly must be the basis of our religious life and must be carried out in it. Otherwise, belonging to the Church declines from being a condition for salvation into a socio-cultural status. If this is the relation of the believer to the Church as an institution of salvation, it is not surprising that theological reflection ultimately has the same foundation. It is founded on a decision of faith prior to every locus theologicus available to the church as an institution; such a decision of faith by its nature refers to the Church as the location of Christian truth. And again, this decision of faith, which initiates our justification, must always be translated anew into a life of faith that accompanies, sustains, and directs the strictly intellectual work of the theologian.

Making the objectification of conversion the basis of doctrinal, systematic, and pastoral theology might seem at first sight to confuse the Christian life with our reflection on it, but it does not. The specialization of “foundations,” which Lonergan thinks ought to replace what has been called “fundamental theology,” is not meant to bring back *kniende Theologie* in some ambiguous way, nor does it confuse the saint with the theologian. What Lonergan says about conversion as a basic feature of theology in *oratione recta* is only an instance of the “precomprehension” that modern hermeneutics insists on. And again, with more direct reference to Christianity, “foundations” highlights in an exquisitely systematic context the significance of a phenomenon widely noted in history: In various epochs the saints have been the authentic interpreters of the Gospel. They have been the ones who understood it correctly and who expressed the requirements of the Gospel message, for themselves and for the Church in that historical situation. It is true, to be sure, that their interpretation of revealed truth was generally about practical aspects of Christian life. But it is also true that their existential interpretation implied very precise doctrinal positions. “Foundations” has a similar task, to be pursued as an end in itself and in all its intrinsic possibilities.

It seems to me that one of the principal merits of Lonergan’s methodology is that it recognizes the basic function of conversion in theology. It affirms that only authentic religious conversion can establish a horizon of precomprehension that is adequate to the Christian reality. It thereby indicates the point of connection between life and theory, between practice and reflection, the point at which a sincere Christian life translates into a correct theology.[6] Conversion is an event that occurs at the fourth level of consciousness. It is our decision about who and what we want to be.[7] Only the obedience of faith recognizes as true and understands from within the Christian event, at whose center stand the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ.[8]

Here we have something that profoundly touches our situation today. According to Lonergan, the present-day crisis in Catholic theology is essentially a crisis of cultural context. In this century, and especially in this last decade since the impulse of Vatican Council II, it has become impossible to delay further the shift from a theology based on a single and normative classical culture to a theology that takes into account the modern notion of culture as empirical, pluralist, in process of becoming. Lonergan has returned to this idea many times in recent years, and it plays an important part in the work we are considering.[9] But in the present condition of crisis in doctrines, systematics, and communications, we are led to wonder whether this crisis is not based, even in a decisive way, on a crisis of religious conversion. The crisis in our theological science signals a crisis in our faith, in our conversion to the truth of the Gospel. Making conversion the basis of theology—conversion as a reality, not a theory—amounts to saying that the Christian reality cannot be studied from a neutral position, much less from an antagonistic one. It reminds the theologian that what divine Revelation has communicated is addressed to him as an appeal to his existence, even before it is a cultural datum for his scientific reflection. The one of whom Revelation speaks is he himself before God, so that he unavoidably finds himself in the situation of having to make a decision that involves his whole existence. *De te fabula narratur*.[10]

What has been said about conversion and its place in theological science spontaneously connects with the Gospel logion: *abscondisti haec a sapientibus et prudentibus et revelasti ea parvulis*.[11]

Religious conversion is about the radicalness of taking a position before God, the seriousness and unequivocality of an answer given and lived in one's heart of hearts. There falsity, frills, and the biases in our judgments of fact and value that weigh so heavily when we pose for others in our society and culture, have no meaning and no seductive or obscuring attractiveness.

David Tracy, of the University of Chicago, has objected that the functional specialization of "foundations" lacks critical justification. In reply, Lonergan observes that the theologian's choice of one horizon in preference to others is illuminated and motivated by a sufficiently broad comprehension of the truth and the errors, the values and the disvalues, that each horizon involves. The resources for this comprehension are made available by the four preceding specializations. But the theologian who makes this choice must be not only "duly enlightened" in this way, but also "truly virtuous," where this virtue refers to all the means necessary for an enlightened judgment. Through these two elements, and with the subsequent approval of a "good conscience," Lonergan believes that the judgments of value the theologian makes in "foundations" will be correct. Now, he continues, a good conscience is the key element here. Its use by "humble men" certainly will not encourage dogmatism in the pejorative sense of that word.[12]

From what we have said about "foundations" we see that, if theology is to treat religion systematically, it has requirements and conditions that distinguish it from any other human science structured according to the same functional specializations. This fact allows us to respond to two difficulties that have been advanced against Lonergan's theological method. Consideration of these difficulties will help us understand more deeply the subject of religious conversion as a foundation for theology and, thus, as a key moment in theological method.

A critical foundation for theological discourse?

The first difficulty is the one I just noted: Lonergan's proposed method does not offer a critical foundation for theology. By basing theology on a strictly personal and deeply intimate event, it seems to give up on any justification for a theological discourse that pronounces on truths or develops some understanding of them or seeks means and forms for their communication.

First of all, we must observe that the meaning of expressions like "critical foundation" or "critical justification" is anything but clear, no matter how often they are used. Let us consider human knowledge, an activity that, at least since Kant, requires critical justification. According to Insight, if we seek a rigorous and verifiable answer to this question, in one way or another we will arrive at the conclusion that the ultimate foundation or justification of our cognitive activity, of our capacity to know, is not outside the contingent fact of knowing, which occurs in us with statistical regularity. It is not possible to "demonstrate" that we are able to know, if by demonstration we mean a proof based on premises different from the cognitive fact itself, which is contingent. We cannot show with logical necessity from such premises that we can know, or that our knowledge has objective value. Indeed, under that assumption the question would arise, What are these premises? And how can we trust our knowledge of them when it is precisely our

knowledge that is in question? The real and feasible task of epistemology is to understand correctly the situation that we find ourselves in because of our intelligence and rationality. We thus can free ourselves from mistaken interpretations, whether spontaneous or scientific, that obscure that situation. And this has no other basis than our factual identification with intelligence and rationality. The intelligence and rationality that constitute our intentionality are themselves the foundation or justification of all our knowledge, and not vice-versa.[13]

Something similar must be said about Prof. Tracy's requirement of a critical justification for moral, religious, and Christian conversion. He thus requires justification for the horizon established by conversion that enables us to build a properly theological discourse on the data of Revelation. According to Tracy, from a thinker who has written a book like *Insight* one would expect critical grounds "for the truth-value of the claims to ultimacy of religious and explicitly theological language." [14]

What is the fundamental reality that is the man converted to Christianity? It is the man who, through God's gift, finds himself in the state of loving God above everything. Now, it is a common experience in our interpersonal relations, and especially in the unique relationship between spouses, that love does not refer to any other grounding reality. It does not ask for or need justification. But this point must be well understood through a rigorous analysis of intentionality and of reality, if we are not to fall into a cliché or make excuses for ourselves because of a phrase that is easily accepted today. Love is the supreme value, the pinnacle of meaning. Here meaning is not only intelligent and rational, but also matured to the peak of transcendence, which is moral transcendence. This will include the task of assessing from within the genuineness of this transcendence, which is difficult because of the obscurities, deviations, and rationalizations that are possible not only when we know but also when we will.

"While there is no need to justify critically the charity described by St. Paul in the thirteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, there is always a great need to eye very critically any religious individual or group and to discern beyond the real charity they may well have been granted the various types of bias that may distort or block their exercise of it." [15] But real love, and especially the love of God, is a reality that carries its validation in itself. "Being in love in an unrestricted manner... one has only to experience it in oneself or witness it in others, to find in it its own justification." [16]

It would not make sense to derive the validity of love from something else, i.e., from something at a lower level of meaning. Genuine love cannot conflict with the proper use of intentionality, since honest intentionality is intelligent and rational intentionality.

Religious conversion is the summit of conversion, the place where man fully accepts, at least implicitly, the intrinsic requirements of his intelligent, rational, and moral intentionality. This conversion thus becomes a principle of real good and genuine love, a love that goes beyond the scope of pure humanism. Therefore, religious conversion by its nature is not something arbitrary. The arbitrary is the unreasonable. Now, one could call the inauthenticity that is lack of conversion unreasonable, but not the authenticity that comes about in conversion. The decision involved in conversion, a decision that involves one's own horizon, one's own way of living,

one's own view of the world, is anything but arbitrary. "Arbitrariness is just inauthenticity, while conversion is from inauthenticity to authenticity. It is total surrender to the demands of the human spirit: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love." [17] On the basis of Insight, one must say that objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity. Now, honest love is the supreme realization of our subjectivity. Therefore, the judgment and the choice that take place in conversion cannot help but be objective and thus valid.

The real task of the theologian who devotes himself to the specialization of "foundations" is therefore to find verbal expression for conversion, which is God's gratuitous and anticipatory love, in order to bring out the judgments and choices that it involves. He does this with that fear and trembling with which we are invited to work out our salvation. The certainty of salvation is never that of a logical deduction, but of a free choice and a response that implicates one's entire life. And again, the expression of conversion must occur within the community of believers from which we have received the Christian message, so that we can be sustained, exhorted, and corrected in our faith. Christian conversion, indeed, is essentially communitarian. It is entering and sharing in the community of salvation composed of those who recognize one another through the same faith in the Lord Jesus.

The foundations of theology in the light of the present-day theological situation

To understand the basic role that Lonergan assigns to religious conversion, I believe it is useful to try to show how his proposal fits in with facts we know from the history of religion, and with some principles stated by Catholic theology.

(a) A first principle stated by theology is that a "logical" demonstration of the truth of Christian doctrine is not possible. This is true, in a certain sense, even for our natural knowledge of God, which does not occur without moral judgments and existential decisions that are a fruit of grace. It is true a fortiori for the mysteries hidden in God, which are manifested in Revelation and received by faith. A logical demonstration would mean that the hearer must recognize something as true if he does not want to obviously give up his intelligence and reasonableness. [18]

(b) Man's recognition of the truth of Christian doctrine and his success in developing some suitable understanding of it depend on the position he takes on the question of God. More specifically, they depend on the Christian conversion that is God's gift and, at the same time, man's free assent.

(c) If religious conversion is subjectively sincere, then according to Catholic theology itself it must be said to accomplish supernatural salvation. But this does not mean that it leads "logically," and thus necessarily and universally, to Christianity. On the contrary, Christian conversion itself does not necessarily lead to joining the one true Christian confession. [19]

What should we conclude from these facts and theological doctrines? The conclusion is not that Catholic theology lacks a foundation, as if it reduced ultimately to an arbitrary choice of

doctrines. Nor is it that the foundation of theology is more “convincing” than it really is.

In his most recent writings, Lonergan speaks repeatedly of religious conversion and its fundamental role in theology. But he has not given us an exhaustive study of conversion. Even in this latest work that we are examining, he confines himself to the methodological issue, to indicating the proper task of the theologian in the specialization of “foundations.” It belongs to the theologian, he says, to actually develop the foundations, to objectify in appropriate categories the horizon established by conversion. This will provide the criterion by which the Christian doctrines are shown to make sense, are recognized as true, and can be understood, formulated, and communicated correctly.

Nevertheless, from the scattered hints that Lonergan has given us it is possible to say something more about conversion as a fundamental element. What does it mean to reflect on conversion? It is not a matter of studying the conversion of others empirically, or of studying one’s own conversion transcendently.[20] But before attempting a positive answer, I would like to recall that the problem arises only in a context of faith. It is by faith that we recognize as real the gift of God’s personal love. It is by that faith that we interpret this gift as a meaningful reality, superior to every meaningful natural reality. As such, it establishes its own horizon in our spirit, beyond the horizon of our intelligence, rationality, and morality.

In this context of faith, Lonergan speaks of a twofold objectification of conversion. There is an implicit objectification that occurs when we make a consistent choice among the opposing positions brought out by “dialectics,” which in turn draws on “interpretations” and “history.” There is an explicit objectification in the specializations of “doctrines,” “systematics,” and “communications.” These make manifest the personal or collective choices we have made concerning the disputed questions in implicit objectification.[21] In other words, the truths and values to which the individual and the community adhere, the understanding of these truths and values that they have reached, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of their evangelizing action testify to the extent of Christian conversion in the faithful individual and in the Church.

To perform this objectification, the theologian draws on two different sources, his own religious experience and the doctrinal tradition of the Christian community. This is expressed, in different degrees, by Revelation, Scripture, Tradition, the Magisterium, certain doctrines recognized by the Church as true, others rejected as false, etc. The theologian does not draw only on the doctrinal tradition, because that tradition without the horizon of precomprehension does not say anything. Nor does he draw only on his own religious experience, because the horizon established by religious conversion does not by itself have objective content. Moreover, the communitarian and historical nature of the Christian event relates it to the doctrinal tradition of the Christian community.

Lonergan’s “foundations” is not a new analysis of religious feeling à la Schleiermacher, but neither is it the perfectly “objective” apologetic seen in the Catholic theology of the last three centuries. Rather, it tells us not to forget the decisive role of the theologian himself, as a believer, in any theology he might develop. At the same time, it fully accepts his relation to the objective believing community. But neither of these sources carries the promise that Lonergan’s

“foundations” can operate automatically and produce results that are absolutely correct. Not personal religious experience, since we are not given absolute certainty about our religious conversion. And even when it is actually present, it is never a complete and definitive accomplishment, but an ever-precarious possession and a never-completed task. Not the doctrinal tradition, since Christian communities and doctrinal traditions diverge even on primary issues. Not to mention that the process of understanding and articulating the Christian mystery is a continuing process that will last as long as the history of the Church.

But then, what can provide the foundation we are looking for? From what I have been able to understand of Lonergan’s thought, I would answer: no more, but also no less, than the three points I indicated at the beginning of this section. No more and no less than what is historically verifiable and is required by Catholic doctrine. But, in accordance with what Lonergan says about religious conversion, I would add that the more intense conversion is in the individual and the more widespread it is in the Christian community, and in particular in the community of theologians, the more it will tend to eliminate from the doctrinal tradition what is not authentic Christian truth. This will occur in so far as God’s mercy wills, and in so far as the Christian community freely responds to the God of truth.

Such is the specialization of “foundations.” What it can tell us is only hinted at here. But still, it seems to me that “foundations” can provide the basis for the further specializations of “doctrines,” “systematics,” and “communications” without ignoring the fact that there is human and religious inauthenticity at the level of the individual, the group, the Church, and even in general.

The specifically theological principle of “Method in Theology”

The second difficulty I intend to consider comes from Karl Rahner. According to that thinker (who, however, addresses only Chap. 5 of Method), Lonergan’s proposed theological method is so generic that it applies to any science. Therefore, he concludes, what we have here is not a method of theology as such, but a more general methodology of science itself, illustrated with examples taken from theology.

In response to this difficulty, Lonergan has pointed out that certainly the eight functional specializations apply to any human science that investigates a cultural past in order to guide that tradition’s future. This is because theology, as distinguished from divine Revelation and the Christian life, is a cultural reality. It thus is subject to the same conditions as every part of the human world that includes meaning as a constitutive element. It is carried forward in a communitarian and historical tradition. It is subject to developments and, no less, to aberrations. Theology fixes the horizon within which particular generations can make that tradition their own, express it, and communicate it, in order to make the life for which they are responsible conform to it. It is one of the merits of Lonergan’s study that it has clearly established this structural commonality of theology with the other human sciences, a commonality that, in any case, is evident from the history of theology.

Nevertheless, Method does not lack a principle that exclusively belongs to theology and makes it a discourse by the Christian, in the light of faith, about the religious reality to which he adheres. From what we have said, it seems clear that this principle is religious conversion.

A principle that “is not placed in authoritative pronouncements but in the religious conversion that turns men to transcendent mystery; and while I believe such a turn always to be God’s gift of grace, still it becomes specifically a Christian conversion when the gift of the Spirit within us is intersubjective with the revelation of the Father in Christ Jesus.”[22]

Conversion provides the horizon within which it is possible to grasp the meaning of Christian doctrines. And again, “foundations” occurs at the fourth level of consciousness, the existential level, since it is

“a fully conscious decision about one’s horizon, one’s outlook, one’s world-view. It deliberately selects the frame-work, in which doctrines have their meaning, in which systematics reconciles, in which communications are effective.”[23]

By speaking of the horizon within which the Christian message has its meaning, and therefore is known to be the Christian message, Lonergan is pointing out the formal object of theology that Rahner complains he cannot find. But he does it by making a specification to which he seems to attach particular importance, here and regarding similar questions elsewhere. The formal object of theology is the very reality of the theologian who has been converted to the Gospel. It is he who expresses in words the new and absolutely transcendent meaning through which his consciousness has been broadened by God’s gift. Being himself the first principle of theology, he is able to keep under control the continuous and cumulative process of theology.[24] By expressing man in his authenticity, the theologian in “foundations” develops the general categories, and by expressing the Christian in his authenticity, this theologian develops the special categories, that will be employed in “doctrines,” “systematics,” and “communications.”[25]

In the functional specialization of “foundations,” strictly methodological discourse becomes theological also.[26] Judgments of fact and value are produced, not only about the structure of human intentionality, but also about a reality, the gratuitous love of God that is given to man and that makes him more than man. Man becomes capable of grasping divine things because he has become connatural with God’s nature. Only the theologian enlightened by faith can assert the possibility and the fact of this new horizon of understanding and choosing.

But while we recognize the specific horizon of the Christian theologian, we must not forget that it is inserted into a human spirit. Hence it is not surprising that the theologian’s systematic reflection occurs according to functional specializations that he shares with every human science. The structure of conscious and intentional operations is the same in the theologian, the philosopher, the historian, the political scientist, etc. It is the structure of consciousness that is found whenever man operates intelligently, rationally, and responsibly.

* Originally published in Italian as “Aspetti teologici del ‘Metodo in teologia’ di B. Lonergan,” in *La civiltà cattolica*, March 17, 1973, pp. 553-567.

[1] Cf. *Civ. Catt.* 1972 pp. 468-477; 1973 pp. 329-341. [Translations previously published on lonergan.org.]

[2] Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology*, 2nd ed., University of Toronto Press, 1990, pp. 237-243.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

[4] Lonergan Responds, in *Foundations of Theology*. Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970. Ed. Philip McShane, S.J., Dublin, Gill and MacMillan, p. 227.

[5] Bernard Lonergan, “Theology in Its New Context,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. William F.J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell, University of Toronto Press, 1996, p. 67.

[6] “I consider religious conversion a presupposition of moving from the first phase to the second but I hold that conversion occurs, not in the context of doing theology, but in the context of becoming religious.” (*Method in Theology*, p. 170.)

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 268.

[8] This is the place to recall the words of Jesus to the judges who were demanding of him a justification of what he was teaching: “Si quis voluerit voluntatem eius facere, cognoscat de doctrina, utrum ex Deo sit, an ego a me ipso loquar” (John 7:17).

[9] *Method in Theology*, p. 353, Introduction, xi.

[10] Horace, *Satires*, I, 1, 69f.

[11] Matt. 11:25. Lonergan cites I Cor. 2:14. Cf. *Method in Theology*, p. 131.

[12] Lonergan Responds, in *Foundations of Theology*, *ibid.*, pp. 230f.

[13] Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*. London-New York, Longman, Green, and Co. 1957 and 1958, pp. 329-332. Republished in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, University of Toronto Press, 1992, pp. 353-357.

[14] David Tracy, *Lonergan’s Foundational Theology, an Interpretation and a Critique*, in *Foundations of Theology*, p. 214.

[15] *Method in Theology*, p. 284.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 283f.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 268.

[18] A broad description of what is commonly meant by logical demonstration or cogent argumentation is sufficient here. A more exact assessment would call for a more subtle examination. The result, I think, would be that in morals and religion there are no necessary proofs in the proper sense, i.e., proofs that work without the personal participation of the subject. Such participation always involves the inescapable responsibility of the one who judges (cf. *Insight*, p. 272 | 297). This means, negatively, that it is always possible to be stupid and unreasonable.

[19] “While this decision [the fundamental option involved in religious conversion] may lead to a change of ecclesiastical allegiance, it need do no more than make one a better member of the religion or non-religion one has inherited.” Lonergan Responds, in *Foundations of Theology*, p. 226.

[20] I am referring to two hypotheses advanced by Prof. Gilkey, where he asks whether “fundamental theological principles (essential doctrines) are derivable from [an] analysis of the experience of conversion” *Empirical Science and Theological Knowing*, in *Foundations of Theology*, p. 90. A transcendental inquiry is an introspective examination of one’s intentional performance in order to bring out whether there is something normative in it, and what it is.

[21] Lonergan Responds, in *Foundations of Theology*, pp. 229, 257 note 10.

[22] Lonergan Responds, *ibid.*, p. 233.

[23] *Method in Theology*, p. 268.

[24] “The threefold conversion is, not a set of propositions that a theologian utters, but a fundamental and momentous change in the human reality that a theologian is. It operates, not by the simple process of drawing inferences from premisses, but by changing the reality (his own) that the interpreter has to understand if he is going to understand others, by changing the horizon within which the historian attempts to make the past intelligible, by changing the basic judgments of fact and of value that are found to be not positions but counterpositions.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 270f) But we may observe that our speaking of a formal object is based on an Aristotelian analysis that defines conscious and intentional operations in terms of their objects. It does this within a perspective and through categories that are valid also for entities that lack intentionality. Lonergan does not speak of a formal object when he analyzes intentionality in its own terms. The reality of the converted theologian, with a new horizon, new criteria, and new norms for his intentional operations, is indeed the basic reality for theology in *oratione recta*, but it is not a formal object. *Method* does not speak of objects, but of normative sets of operations. Cf. Lonergan Responds, in *Foundations of Theology*, p. 224.

[25] Method in Theology, p. 292.

[26] Lonergan Responds, in Foundations of Theology, p. 232.