

# Foreword

While the initial seeds for this work go back to my own doctoral thesis,<sup>1</sup> the more proximate cause for the project was a celebratory dinner in which I happened to be sitting next to the eminent Australian theologian, and recognized authority on fundamental theology, Gerald O'Collins. Though we were both aware of one another's work (who could not be aware of his work!), it was the first time we had met, and Gerald began talking about his recently published book on fundamental theology, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology*. He noted that in this book he mentions Lonergan at the beginning and end of the work, but nowhere in between.<sup>2</sup> Knowing my interest in Lonergan he looked me in the eye and said something like, "What we really need is a book on fundamental theology from a Lonergan perspective." This was enough to revive my enthusiasm for the project. My

1. Published in less than polished form as Neil Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation: the Meaning and Function of Revelation in Bernard Lonergan's Method in Theology* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000).

2. The two substantial mentions of Lonergan occur on pages 16–17 and 340–44.

thought turned to possible collaborators and I quickly identified Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, a young Lonergan scholar and colleague at Australian Catholic University, as my partner.

Writing a book on fundamental theology from a Lonergan perspective might seem like a redundant task. To some extent, the first four chapters of *Method in Theology* are themselves a short course in fundamental theology, and it is tempting to say to people, “Read *Method*.”<sup>3</sup> However, that work was not conceived as a work in fundamental theology but in theological method, and so the ordering of topics may not be optimal, and the lack of linkages to traditional topics in fundamental theology means that a reader needs to make the connections herself. So our project is not entirely redundant.

Moreover, it is not a matter of us simply repeating what Lonergan said, and certainly not saying everything that he said, in his book. *Method* is a rich and complex work and some of that complexity has been shorn from the present work so as not to overload the reader with all Lonergan’s distinctions. Also, there have been advances since Lonergan, in particular Robert Doran’s notion of psychic conversion and its relation to the aesthetic concerns of Hans Urs von Balthasar that needed our attention.<sup>4</sup> More generally, we have sought to make the needed connection between our discussion of theological foundations and various theological

3. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Dartman, Longman, and Todd, 1972).

4. See Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

debates that help illustrate the significance and usefulness of the foundations we develop. These debates are of course ongoing, with new theological positions being proposed on a regular basis. This only highlights the ongoing need for sound foundations in order to equip theologians with the means to navigate their way through the competing claims of various theological camps.

One such accommodation to the present climate was the decision to begin our discussion of foundations with the topic of religious experience and conversion. This decision helps locate our project within contemporary debates raised by Balthasar and Radical Orthodoxy of the primacy of religious foundations for theology. The theologian herself, as religiously converted, is the basic foundation for theology. Such conversion evokes further conversions, moral, intellectual, and psychic, which fill out that foundational reality, but a theologian without religious conversion is like an empty gong booming, full of sound and fury, but lacking the one thing that is essential. However, the road to theological authenticity does not end with religious conversion. A theologian who is unfamiliar with the issues of moral, intellectual, and, increasingly, psychic conversion, will not be adequate to the challenges theology currently faces.

The book has four sections. The first argues for the need of foundations in the light of ongoing and interminable theological disputation on a variety of fronts. Given these difficulties (which arise in what Lonergan refers to as “dialectics”) we argue for an approach that will assist the theologian in navigating the divergences through an appeal

to the various conversions, religious, moral, intellectual, and psychic, as a sound foundation for theological reflection. The second part spells out in more detail the meaning of these foundations and the categories that arise in relation to them. In each case, we then illustrate how these foundations relate to specific theological debates and provide a way forward toward their resolution. The third part relates our foundations to more traditional theological themes and concerns, God, revelation, apologetics, and our present context. Our aim has not been to be comprehensive, but more illustrative. And we have operated under the constraint, imposed by Lonergan, that foundations prescind from doctrinal and systematic engagement. A final section then seeks to locate the work of foundations within Lonergan's overall schema of theological method, as one of eight distinct functional specializations within the overall task of theology.

As with some other book projects I have undertaken, this one was conceived from the beginning as a collaborative project.<sup>5</sup> Christiaan is an accomplished Lonergan scholar in his own right.<sup>6</sup> We had initially planned a third collaborator, but that did not eventuate. Working collaboratively brings a different energy, a new set of insights, and a deeper set of background knowledge to a project such as this, leading, we hope, to a better text in the end. Lonergan always spoke of

5. Neil Ormerod and Shane Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*, ed. Gerard Mannion, Ecclesiological Investigations (London: T&T Clark, 2009); Neil Ormerod and Cynthia S. W. Crysdale, *Creator God, Evolving World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013).

6. His article Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, "Sanctifying Grace in a 'Methodical Theology,'" in *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 52–76 is highly regarded among Lonergan scholars. Subsequent papers have maintained this high standard.

theology as a collaborative venture, and it has been fruitful to see what it concretely entails. While each of us took responsibility to provide an initial draft of different chapters, multiple editing of one another's text should have smoothed out the stylistic differences between us. Hopefully the reader will find it a relatively seamless work.

We would like to thank friends, colleagues and students who commented on the book or individual chapters of this work: Gerald O'Collins, Dominic Doyle, Robert Doran, Cynthia Crysdale, Cristina Vanin, and Celeste Kumar. For whatever remaining faults and shortcomings, we take responsibility, but we are very grateful for their assistance. Both Christiaan and I have drunk deeply from the well of Bernard Lonergan's thought and we hope this present work contributes to the further dissemination of his ideas among the theological community. Finally we would like to thank Michael Gibson and the team at Fortress Press for their interest and support in bringing this work to a wider theological audience.

Neil Ormerod