

# INTRODUCTION. LONERGAN, ETHICS AND THE BIBLE INTRODUCTION. LONERGAN, L'ÉTHIQUE ET LA BIBLE

Marie-France Dion

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## INTRODUCTION

### LONERGAN, ETHICS AND THE BIBLE LONERGAN, L'ÉTHIQUE ET LA BIBLE

MARIE-FRANCE DION

In 2017, Concordia University celebrated 100 years of the existence of Loyola Campus (originally Loyola College prior to the 1974 merger with Sir George Williams University to become Concordia University) in Montreal. On this occasion, and as part of the *Theology in the City* event, the Department of Theological Studies also celebrated Bernard Lonergan's heritage and hosted a conference on 'Lonergan, Ethics and the Bible.'

Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), a brilliant and distinguished Jesuit Scholar, was an alumnus of Loyola College. After the establishment of Concordia University in 1974, Lonergan's influence continued via Lonergan College founded in 1978 by Sean McEventue (whose name recurs in almost every article of this series). Lonergan College closed in 2005 but the Department of Theological Studies inherited and maintains its library and archives, and of note the journals of Lonergan College (*The Lonergan Review*). These are housed in the Lonergan Center for Ethical Reflection which the Department opened when Lonergan College closed. Today, Lonergan Centers and Institutes are found across North America, in Latin and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. The series of papers presented in this journal are from the 'Lonergan, Ethics and the Bible' conference. The call for papers and the invited speakers were asked to discuss ethics and/or biblical studies drawing on Lonergan's thought. When one mentions Lonergan in a call for papers, a diversity of specialties beyond Theology are included such as Philosophy, History, Religious Studies and more. The purpose was to bring together scholars from diverse areas to propose a way forward in doing theology as a 'collaborative wonder' that is meaningful to a contemporary audience.

Each article is accompanied by an abstract written in both French and English. Rather than repeating these, we will draw attention to some of the projects already undertaken by these scholars or proposals of possible research approaches that could contribute to the areas of ethics and/or biblical studies.

We begin with Ian Henderson, Associate Professor in the School of Religious Studies at McGill University in Montreal. Henderson was introduced to Lonergan via Ben F. Meyer of whom he writes, “[Meyer] used Lonergan effectively to mediate to me and to many others a deeper knowledge and understanding of Jesus and a more disciplined awareness of myself as a thinker and believer.” Henderson’s article discusses the impasse of the historical Jesus research and the need for a different angle to approach the subject. Influenced by Meyer, Henderson proposes using Lonergan’s understanding of intentionality to formulate a “verifiable and falsifiable” hypothesis about Jesus’ aims.

Patrick H. Byrne’s article complements Henderson’s. Byrne is Professor of Philosophy at Boston College where he was also Director of the Lonergan Center. In this article, Byrne brings together the Jewish understanding of Torah, Ignatius of Loyola’s ‘composition of place’, critical scholarship and Lonergan’s eight functional specialties. Following Sean McEventue, Byrne agrees that critical scholarship is necessary for interpretation but remains incomplete without the other functional specialties proposed by Lonergan in his book, *Method in Theology*. The method, Byrne explains, is designed to foster encounter and conversion to which critical scholarship can contribute, but in and of itself, may not be capable of achieving. If the aim is “to truly come to terms with the meanings and values offered by texts,” then it requires that scholars go beyond critical scholarship.

A third paper in this series is presented by Kenneth R. Melchin, Professor Emeritus at Saint Paul’s University in Ottawa. Melchin’s paper also discusses the influence of both Sean McEventue and Ben Meyer in doing theology, ethics and biblical studies. Melchin proposes an approach to ethics and the Bible that calls upon the existential and personal as well as the intellectual and methodological. The former (existential and personal) refers to a transformative encounter through Scripture that changes a person and influences values and actions. The latter (intellectual and methodological) is the appropriation of the former which seeks a deeper understanding of Scripture. Ethics, he argues, has to do with this proper appropriation of a transformative encounter.

The fourth article is written by Jim Kanaris, Assistant Professor in the School of Religious Studies at McGill University. Kanaris was initially introduced to Lonergan by Sean McEventue when doing a BA degree at Concordia University. His interests lie mainly in Philosophy, more specifically in the areas of theory, method, and philosophy of religion. In his article, Kanaris argues for an approach to religious studies, similar to what Sean McEventue argued for in the task of biblical interpretation, namely, to consider the functions of subjectivity in academic inquiry. His project is to ‘develop a philosophy of religion for religious studies’ that integrates interiority as defined by Lonergan and proposed by McEventue in approaching Scripture. To designate his approach, Kanaris coins the term ‘necstasis.’

The fifth article is written by Jeremy D. Wilkins who is the new Director of the Lonergan Center at Boston College, where he is Associate Professor in Systematic Theology. In his article, Wilkins discusses the traditional theological or doctrinal claims pertaining to the role of faith and revelation to salvation. In doing so he draws attention to the inevitable conflicting arguments that ensue. As a possible solution to the dilemma, he proposes rethinking the relationship of 'knowledge to love' and shifting from a metaphysical analysis to an analysis of intentionality as described by Lonergan.

Finally, the last article is written by Marie-France Dion and Christine Jamieson, both associate professors at Concordia University. Jamieson is an ethicist and Dion an Old Testament scholar. The article considers Lonergan's transcendental precepts in relation to ethical deliberation and, in Joshua, chapter one for a deeper understanding of 'the law' and its actualization.

I would like to end this introduction to the series of articles with a citation from Jeremy Wilkin's paper for two main reasons. First, all of the articles propose either a shift in methodology or a deeper, more substantial, analysis of texts. They have in common the significant contribution of experience and intentionality to ethics, the Bible, systematic theology, philosophy and historical studies. Second, because the texts, whether they be biblical or traditional, and although their composition may be the end product of a long process of transmission, all aim towards an encounter leading hopefully to a 'conversion' and a real apprehension of the good.

The new law is docility to the Spirit. Its wisdom is a wisdom of listening and recovery.

Its praxis is redemptive. It is the Law of the Cross, and the Law of the Cross is Christ's.

*Chair, Department of Theological Studies  
Concordia University  
Montreal*