

### Chapter 3 Foundational Theology and the RCIA

In chapter one I anatomized some cultural impulses which have helped generate the current crisis in Christology. I identified that crisis as widespread vagueness and confusion concerning key Christological terms: "humanity," "divinity," and "their relationship in the person of Jesus." Chapter two examined a different dimension of the same crisis: the failure of contemporary theology to develop an adequate method for coping with the current crisis.

In this chapter I shall explain the method which I shall employ in my own search for Christological foundations. The method which I shall propose builds on Bernard Lonergan's ground-breaking proposal for method in theology. I do not, however, endorse every aspect of Lonergan's theory of method.

In what follows, therefore, I shall first indicate which aspects of Lonergan's thought I endorse. I shall then indicate how my own pursuit of his method caused me to modify it. Third, I shall outline the operational procedures which will structure the argument which follows. Finally, I shall reflect on the pastoral relevance of a foundational Christology to the RCIA.

#### (I)

As I indicated in the preface to this volume, when I joined the faculty of the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley in 1973, I arrived with the express intention of testing Bernard Lonergan's account of theological method. That method, as I saw, claimed the ability to generate an inculturated theology. I wanted to see if it worked in a North American context.

I had decided to pursue Lonergan's method at the level of what he calls "foundational theology." Foundational thinking develops a strictly normative account of Christian conversion. **Strictly normative thinking measures personal behavior against norms and ideals which one has personally interiorized.**<sup>1</sup> As I have already indicated, the foundation which I lay for doing theology eschews all claims to *a priori* necessity and confesses a

1. Explanatory, rational thinking also claims a kind of normativity. Whenever I explain an event, I give an account of the kinds of laws, or conditioned tendencies, which govern its behavior. In other words, I can tell you the way reality ought to behave under specifiable conditions. The kind of "ought" with which explanatory thinking deals with differs, however, from the "ought" of strictly normative thinking. Strictly normative thinking adds to explanatory thinking self-conscious self-criticism

contrite fallibilism. **By "foundational theology" I mean a fallible, working hypothesis about how conversion ought to happen.**

As my investigations into foundational thinking advanced I realized that I was in fact creating a new theological discipline, since no one, to the best of my knowledge, had ever attempted to elaborate in a systematic way the kind of strictly normative, interdisciplinary account of conversion for which Lonergan's method called. The novelty of what I was doing helped me understand why much of the theological community seemed to respond to my work with a kind of detached bafflement. My own limitations as a theologian no doubt contributed to that befuddlement; but I did not think that they explained it entirely.

I found several of Lonergan's insights into theological method particularly attractive. First of all, Lonergan's definition of "method" in general as a set of recurrent and related operations which yields cumulative and progressive results made eminent good sense to me.<sup>2</sup> I liked its practical, operational focus; and I liked its pragmatic justification. A set of operations which works proves its legitimacy by the very cumulative and progressive answers which it generates.

I also found Lonergan's theory of functional theological specialties extremely suggestive.<sup>3</sup> The four specialties which Lonergan calls mediating theology—namely, research, interpretation, history, and dialectics—seemed to me to describe accurately the best thinking of more traditional theologians. Research theologians provide the resources which other theologians need in order to work: archeological evidence, critical editions of sacred texts, grammars and dictionaries of sacred languages. Theological interpretation offers explanations of what sacred texts and religious activity originally meant and what they might mean to contemporary readers. History tells the story of a particular religious community. Dialectics deliberates about the issues and frames of reference operative in religious disputes.

Mediated theology ambitions theological reconstruction. Lonergan calls theological reconstruction mediated because it builds on the results of the ongoing retrieval of a tradition which mediating theology provides. Mediated theology also divides into four functional specialties: foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. Foundations formulates a strictly normative account of the conversion experience which authenticates a religious tradition. Doctrinal theology uses the norms which foundational thinking formulates in order to re-interpret the results of dialectical theology. The doctrinal theologian must decide which controverted doctrines foster integral conversion and which do not. Once doctrinal theologians have authenticated sound religious doctrines, the sys-

2. Cf. Bernard Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 4-5.  
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-145.

tematic theologian shows how those doctrines relate to one another. Finally, the functional specialty of communications uses the insights of foundational theology in order to diagnose the breakdown of communications in a particular community; for that breakdown betrays a lack of initial or of ongoing conversion on the part of the community's members. Next, the communications theologian constructs a pastoral catechesis which summons hostile factions to the kind of integral conversion which will enable them re-enter into fruitful religious dialogue with others.

Among the functional specialties which concern themselves with the creative reformulation of a theological tradition, I found Lonergan's account of foundational thinking perhaps the most creative and suggestive. His attempt to ground revisionist theological thinking in a strictly normative account of conversion holds, in my judgment, great promise.

I realize that some people tend to bridle instinctively at the term "foundations." For many, foundational thinking connotes *a priori* reasoning which claims a fallacious universality. As a contrite fallibilist, I too reject such an understanding of foundational thinking. At the same time, I recognize that the work of theological reconstruction has to build on something. A fallible, working hypothesis about the normative demands of conversion offers the best foundation I have found for doing revisionist theology, since a working hypothesis beats one which does not work.

My fallibilism approved Lonergan's call for a healthy pluralism in thinking about conversion. I could well understand that one can legitimately approach an experience as complex as human conversion from a variety of points of view and with a variety of methods. I find, for example, that Lewis Rambo's study of conversion complements my own work.<sup>4</sup>

I especially appreciated the creativity of Lonergan's suggestion that conversion comes in many forms and need not occur exclusively in a religious context. Initially, Lonergan spoke of only three kinds of conversion: intellectual, moral, and religious.

Lonergan also correctly called for an interdisciplinary approach to conversion, one which draws simultaneously on philosophy, on theology, and on any other scientific and scholarly disciplines which shed light on the experience of conversion.<sup>5</sup> That too made sense. It appealed to my own endorsement of Peirce's fallibilism and confirmed Piaget's legitimate insights into the limitations of most classical and modern philosophical theories of knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

All these aspects of Lonergan's theory of method I heartily endorse. As my insight into the forms and dynamics of conversion has developed,

4. Cf. Lewis Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). Rambo offers a lucid analysis of the social dynamics of conversion.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 281-293.

6. Cf. Jean Piaget, *Insights and Illusions of Philosophy*, translated by Wolf Mays (New York, NY: World, 1971).

however, it has caused me to call into question other aspects of Lonergan's account of method in theology.

## (II)

The more I reflected on the complexity of conversion, the more I recognized some significant oversights in Lonergan's reflections on foundational theological method. Robert Doran and I came quite independently to the conclusion that in speaking about conversion Lonergan gives short shrift to affective forms of human knowing. Doran developed a theory of "psychic conversion," while I developed an account of "affective conversion." We seem to mean, as far as I can tell, different things by "psychic conversion" and by "affective conversion"; but we both agree that one needs to build a strong affective component into the conversion process. That affective component makes a fourth form of conversion inevitable.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, as I reflected on moral conversion, I saw the need to distinguish within it two forms of conversion: personal moral conversion and socio-political conversion.<sup>8</sup> These two forms of conversion relate to one another as do the two realms of personal and public morality to which they correspond. Personal morality judges human interpersonal relationships in the light of rights and duties, while public morality measures institutional justice or injustice by the norm of the common good.

The common good demands the creation of a social order 1) which allows all the members of the human community to benefit from the goods which make for humane living and 2) which allows all to contribute to the sum of those benefits. The two realms of personal and of public morality demand different kinds of commitment and invoke different, though interrelated, moral norms. They create, therefore, two distinct but interrelated realms of human moral consciousness and thus give rise to two distinct but interrelated kinds of moral conversion.

In addition, I recognized that one needs not only to explore each realm of conversion but also to give an account of how the different kinds of conversion mutually condition one another. I therefore began to reflect on what I called the dynamics and counterdynamics of conversion. By the dynamics of conversion I meant the ways in which different kinds of conversion transform one another positively by their presence. By the

7. Cf. Robert Doran, S.J., *Subject and Psyche: Ricoeur, Jung, and The Search for Foundations* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1977); *Psychic Conversion and Theological Foundations: Toward a Reorientation of the Human in Science* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981). Doran seems to mean by psychic conversion the clarification of disordered feelings by intellectual processes. While I concede that rational insight may contribute to both initial and ongoing affective conversion, I would see the evaluative processes involved as primarily intuitive, appreciative, and emotional. Affective conversion engages more judgments of feeling than inferential judgments.

8. Cf. Gelpi, *Grace as Transmuted Experience and Social Process*, pp. 97-139.

counterdynamics of conversion I meant the ways in which they distort one another negatively by their absence.

I also came to regard Lonergan's definition of conversion as inadequate. Lonergan defines the term "conversion" as a decision which creates an intentional horizon within human self-consciousness.<sup>9</sup> The definition accurately describes one dimension of conversion: namely, that every conversion creates a whole new evaluative frame of reference which transforms the way one perceives and relates to one's world. In my judgment, however, Lonergan's definition of conversion fails to express adequately the most fundamental dimension of every conversion experience, namely, that it involves a turning from and a turning to.

#### *The Analogy of Conversion*

The recognition of different kinds of conversion forces one think of conversion in analogous terms. Analogous realities simultaneously resemble one another and differ from one another. If all five experiences of turning qualify as conversions, in what do they resemble one another and in what do they differ?

It seemed to me that in every conversion experience one turns from irresponsible to responsible behavior in some realm of experience. Realms of experience differ in the kinds of habits which govern them.

Responsibility means accountability. Because conversion requires self-conscious, strictly normative thinking, converts stand accountable first of all to themselves because after conversion they measure their subsequent behavior by principles, norms, and ideals which they have interiorized as personally binding. I therefore define conversion as a decision to move from irresponsible to responsible living in some realm of human life and experience.

Converts also live accountable to others. Lonergan's endorsement of the Kantian turn to the subject prevented him from defining conversion in a manner which made clear its inherently social character. Lonergan defines a conversion as a decision which creates a horizon.<sup>10</sup> This definition correctly calls attention to the fact that conversion restructures individual intentionality; but conversion does more than that. Conversion has social as well as personal, individual consequences. Conversion never occurs in a vacuum. It occurs in community and in social dialogue with others. **The notion of responsibility underscores conversion's inherently social character.**

In religious conversion one also accounts responsibly to God. One can respond to the historical self-revelation of God authentically only on the terms which God sets. That means that one must respond to a self-revealing God in faith.

9. Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 130-132.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

If conversions resemble one another by embodying a turn from irresponsible to responsible behavior, how do they differ? Conversions differ from one another by focusing on different realms of experience and by invoking different norms in measuring human behavior. Realms of experience, as I have already suggested, differ according to the kinds of **habits** which govern them. The **norms** differ from one conversion to another because they correspond to the different kinds of habitual tendencies which shape the conversion in question.

Affective conversion deals with human intuitive responses. We respond intuitively with image and affect. Affective conversion also concerns itself with the unconscious, which also obeys the laws of intuitive thinking. Hence, affective conversion invokes two kinds of norms. It invokes norms of mental health in dealing with emotional dysfunction and with life-giving affective development; and affective conversion invokes aesthetic norms in the conscious cultivation of imaginative thinking.

Intellectual conversion deals with the truth or falsity of particular judgments and with the adequacy or inadequacy of the frames of reference in which one thinks. We humans grasp reality inferentially; but we also judge reality with our feelings. As a consequence, intellectual conversion concerns itself with both intuitive, imaginative perceptions of the real and with rational, inferential perceptions.

Both forms of moral conversion engage in deliberative thinking about decisions. Deliberation employs a disjunctive logic. It weighs the pros and cons of mutually exclusive concrete decisions. One can deliberate about adopting attitudes and beliefs, or one can deliberate about how best to respond to social and environmental impulses. Moral deliberation weighs such decisions in the light of realities, ideals, principles, and values which claim one ultimately and absolutely. An ultimate claim requires one not only to live for it but also, if necessary, to die for it. An absolute claim binds one in any circumstance.

Personal moral conversion focuses on interpersonal human interaction. Because personal moral conversion transforms the human conscience, it invokes prudential, ethical thinking. In judging human behavior, the personally converted measure conduct by human rights and duties. Rights and duties flow from the social character of human experience. They reflect the fact that finite and vulnerable humans can only live truly humane lives in mutual dependence and in community. Mutual interdependence in community creates the interpersonal claims which moralists call rights and duties. Properly understood, then, rights and duties free one to assess one's social and communal responsibilities realistically. Rights do not, as a bankrupt individualistic ethos claims, simply insulate one's subjective, personal preferences from interference by other persons or by social institutions.

Like personal moral conversion, socio-political conversion engages the human conscience. It, however, looks to public morality and to the search for a just human society. It therefore measures public policy and the institutions which public policy defines by the common good. The common good, as we have already seen, demands that every member of society have reasonable access to benefiting from the goods of a society and to contributing to those same shared goods.

Religious conversion responds to an historical self-disclosure of God. It therefore invokes norms of faith. Christian conversion exemplifies a particular kind of religious conversion.

#### *Clarifying Foundational Method*

As I pondered the five forms of conversion, I realized that one's construct of conversion will determine the kinds of operational procedures one employs in articulating a theology of conversion. Clearly both aesthetics and psychology have much to teach the contemporary student of affective conversion. In dealing with the intuitive perception of truth, the student of intellectual conversion will find illumination in aesthetics and in rhetorical, artistic, and literary criticism. Those same students will find considerable help in logic and in theories of method in dealing with the rational, inferential mind. Personal and social ethics will assist the student of the two forms of moral conversion. Finally, critical reflections on theological method will assist the student of religious conversion.

The strictly normative character of foundational thought determines, moreover, the way in which one asks foundational theological questions. Foundational questions always contain an "ought": How, for example, ought the gracing of experience to transform the conversion process? How ought the fully converted Christian to worship? How ought the fully converted Christian to relate to the triune God? A foundational Christology asks: How ought converted commitment to Jesus Christ in faith to transform every other aspect of conversion? As my work advanced, moreover, I realized that in developing a theology of conversion one can ask any theological question in a manner which engages strictly normative thinking.

Finally, I found Lonergan's method attractive for another reason. Of all the theological methods I had studied, it alone deliberately set out to promote inculturated theological thinking. Inculturated theological thinking attempts to examine the complex relationship between a religion and the culture in which that religion roots itself.<sup>11</sup> That means that besides the systematic historical retrieval of the religion in question, inculturated theological reflection must also retrieve the culture it attempts to assess

11. Cf. Lonergan, *Method*, pp. xi-xii. See also: Carl F. Starkloff, S.J., "Inculturation and Cultural Systems (Part One)," *Theological Studies*, 55(1994), pp. 66-81; "Inculturation and Cultural Systems (Part Two)," *Theological Studies*, 55(1994), pp. 274-294.

theologically. Moreover, I also realized that any theology of conversion has to deal with the impact of a given culture on religion.

#### (III)

As I attempted to wrestle with foundational method as Lonergan had described it, I realized that he had failed to give a clear or adequate account of the kinds of operations which must guide this kind of thinking. It made sense to say that an adequate theology of conversion must use categories derived from philosophy, from theology, and from other human disciplines which illumine the conversion experience. Lonergan, however, left one in the dark finally about how to coordinate the results of three very different ways of thinking about human life and reality.

As I indicated in the preface to this volume, I first made an initial assault on the complex question of interdisciplinary thinking in writing *Experiencing God*. I prolonged my experiment in interdisciplinary thinking in other volumes. In both *Inculturating North American Theology* and *The Turn to Experience in Contemporary Theology* I tried to articulate what I had learned from that earlier experiment about the coordination and interplay of categories in foundational thinking.<sup>12</sup>

#### *The Coordination and Interplay of Categories*

The coordination of categories deals with the way in which categories which derive from different disciplines interpret the realities to which they refer. One can legitimately employ four techniques for coordinating categories: agreement, complementarity, convergence, and dialectical reversal.

Categories agree when they say the same thing about the same reality. They complement one another when they say different but true things about the same reality. They converge when they say true things about two distinct but interrelated realities. When categories contradict one another they demand dialectical reversal, or the resolution of the contradiction.

Dialectical reversal can employ a variety of methods. It can endorse one set of categories as true and reject another as false. It can reject both as false and seek for another solution. It can endorse one set of categories as more adequate and reject another as less adequate. Finally, it can discover a partial truth in contradictory positions and seek for a more comprehensive frame of reference which reconciles all relevant counter-positions. The coordination of categories integrates insights achieved in diverse frames of reference into a unified theory of the whole.

12. Cf. Donald L. Gelpi, S.J., *Experiencing God: A Theology of Human Emergence* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987); *Inculturating North American Theology: An Experiment in Foundational Method* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 147-176.

The interplay of categories engages the way different categories deriving from different disciplines interpret one another. Foundational thinking, as we have seen, requires the interplay of three kinds of categories: philosophical, theological, and scientific.

Philosophy uses language in order to reflect on lived experience as lived. Within foundational thinking *philosophical categories* seek to criticize, interpret, and contextualize the categories of theology and of the non-philosophical sciences which deal with human religious experience. Critical philosophy passes judgement on the truth or falsity, adequacy or inadequacy of the more or less tacit philosophical presuppositions which shape theological and scientific thinking. Philosophical categories interpret the results of theology and of the other sciences when they apply to them in the sense in which philosophy defines them. Constructive philosophy seeks to create a theory of the whole which contextualizes the results of detailed scientific and theological investigations into reality. This constructive philosophy does first by specifying the realms of experience which different theological and scientific disciplines address and then by showing their relationship to one another.

*Theological categories* verify or falsify philosophical or scientific categories which speak about God. Theological categories judge the truth or falsity of such categories by their ability to interpret the historical self-revelation of God we have in fact received. Theological categories also transvalue philosophical and scientific categories by demanding that one re-interpret their connotations in the light of faith.

One transvalues an interpretation of reality when one transposes it from one frame of reference to another. When one does that, the new frame of reference endows one's interpretation with new connotations. The faith-motivated response to God's historical self-revelation creates a novel frame of reference which forces one to re-evaluate any merely natural perception of reality.

Both nature and grace designate processes. Natural processes advance in complete abstraction of the historical self-revelation of God. Graced processes respond to God's historical self-revelation on the terms God sets. Such processes qualify as graced because they put one into an unmerited, life-giving relationship with God.

Detailed *scientific investigations* verify or falsify philosophical and theological assertions about the nature of created reality. They also have the capacity to amplify philosophical and theological assertions about creation by expanding human insight into the way created things develop.

The coordination and interplay of categories will structure the foundational Christology developed in these pages. More specifically, the coordination and interplay of categories will validate in the results of positive science the metaphysics of experience which I shall employ in interpret-

ing how divinity and humanity unite in Jesus Christ. Accordingly, in the second section of this volume, I shall show how a scientifically verified triadic construct of experience does in fact interpret Jesus' humanity. The Christology of hope and the narrative Christology which I shall present in subsequent volumes will explore the kinds of religious experience which doctrinal theology seeks to interpret. In volume three, I shall show that the same scientifically validated metaphysics of experience which interprets Jesus' humanity also interprets the religious experiences which give normative structure to Christological faith. That same metaphysics will, as a result, also correctly interpret how divinity and humanity unite in Jesus' person.

Here I note in passing that the capacity of a metaphysical theory to interpret ordinary lived experience, the results of focused, scientific and scholarly investigations of created reality, and the historical self-revelation of God constitutes that metaphysical theory's pragmatic meaning. Pragmatic logic asserts that the total number of operational consequences deducible from any given hypothesis constitutes the whole of that hypothesis's inferential meaning. Predictable operations include logical operations. In the case of a metaphysical hypothesis, logical operations constitute the whole of its pragmatic meaning. A metaphysical hypothesis predicts that a particular set of philosophical categories will have the capacity to interpret any reality whatever. One deduces the operational consequences of such an hypothesis by explicating its philosophical meaning. One then validates it by actually using it to interpret the results of ordinary, lived experience, scientific and scholarly investigations of created reality, and the events of divine self-revelation. The ongoing interpretative validation of a metaphysical theory turns it into a working hypothesis. A working metaphysical hypothesis certainly interprets some realities and could conceivably interpret any reality.

As I have already indicated, the formulation of a theology of conversion demands inculturated theological thinking. The more I attempted to pursue foundational thinking in a North American context, however, the more I saw that the kinds of issues raised by classical American philosophical thinkers demand a systematic revision of the epistemological presuppositions which lie at the basis of Lonergan's own theory of method.<sup>13</sup>

Logical fallibilism flows necessarily from Peirce's theory of inference, and logical fallibilism calls into question Lonergan's claim to have discovered an unrevisable starting place for philosophical thinking. So too does the distinction between explanatory and strictly normative thinking. Let us try to understand why.

13. Cf. Gelpi, *Grace as Transmuted Experience and Social Process*, pp. 1-40.

As I have argued above, Peirce's theory of inference, which makes eminent good sense to me, shows that at the precise point at which the human mind touches reality—namely, in hypothetical, abductive thinking and in verifying, inductive thinking—it remains radically fallible. In any question of complexity, one can never know with absolute certainty whether one has taken into account all the relevant data or that one has adopted the best possible frame of reference for dealing with the problem one faces. One can only judge whether or not one has done the best one can under limiting circumstances. As Peirce also saw both clearly and correctly, the human mind begins thinking about everything *in medias res*. It confronts the world with two kinds of beliefs: those it holds critically and those it holds uncritically.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, as I have already indicated, one does not begin philosophical thinking with critical reflection on one's own cognitive operations. Rather, one begins phenomenologically by describing whatever appears in experience. Then one invokes the normative sciences to build a bridge between phenomenology and metaphysics.

Let me emphasize once again, however, that fallibilism promotes measured optimism about the human mind's ability to understand reality truly. Fallibilism endorses both an epistemological and a metaphysical realism. In a realistic context, fallibilism measures the mind's likelihood of judging reality truly by its ability to admit that it might have erred when confronted with evidence which unmasks erroneous beliefs. Evidence would include overlooked, salient facts which call one's position into question, contradiction in one's stated position, or the emergence of a frame of reference which promises more fruitful results than the one which has heretofore guided one's inquiry.

Moreover, Peirce's notion of belief also prevents his fallibilism from degenerating into a skeptical relativism. By a belief, Peirce means, a proposition for whose consequences one is willing to take responsibility. This definition accords well with my own definition of conversion. Responsibility implies commitment. One stands committed to a belief until one has a sound reason for questioning it: some fact which contradicts it, contradiction between it and other personally held beliefs, or the emergence of a more adequate frame of reference for thinking about reality than the one to which one stands currently committed.<sup>15</sup>

Two other factors in Peirce's philosophy also precluded philosophical relativism: his critical common sensism and his conviction that, if the mind takes the time to think clearly about reality and if it tests out operationally the consequences of its hypotheses, then reality will teach us what it is by the way it behaves.

14. Cf. Gelpi, *Inculturing North American Theology*, pp.14-20.

15. Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.358-376, 388-410.

Critical common sensism holds that, if one takes doubt seriously, then, even if one subjects one's spontaneous beliefs to critical question, one discovers a certain number of them which one cannot seriously doubt. These critically held beliefs endow the rational mind with speculative stability. As Dewey saw, they help provide the means for resolving the truly problematic beliefs which perplex one.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, Peirce also saw correctly that the clarification of one's rational ideas demands the systematic use of all three forms of inference. Clear thinking, in other words, requires the formulation of a hypothesis, the deductive clarification of its operational consequence, and its verification or falsification in events. An inductively verified hypothesis reveals the laws which ground the way events transpire. Falsified hypotheses fail to explain events.

In complex questions, of course, often one may verify a given proposition only within a range of probability. That fact tells one that one's thinking, while moving in the right direction, has yet to take into account all the factors which finally explain the realities one seeks to understand.

If, then, one takes the trouble to clarify the practical, operational consequences of one's hypothetical beliefs and if one subsequently tests them out against the actual behavior of the realities one is trying to understand, then the realities one confronts will disclose to one the laws, the tendencies, which they exemplify by the way in which they behave. By their behavior things will, then, teach one to think truly about them.

The distinction between strictly normative and explanatory thinking also calls into question any speculative claim to have found an unrevisable starting point for thinking, for the claim illegitimately blurs the distinction between the two forms of discourse. In contrast to description, explanation makes a kind of normative claim to the extent that an explanation articulates the laws which cause realities to behave in the ways in which they do. Strictly normative thinking, however, makes a different kind of normative claim. Strictly normative thinking enjoys self-conscious normativity because it measures one's own behavior against realities, principles, and ideals which one has interiorized as making binding claims on one's choices.

Lonergan invokes hypothetico-deductive logic in explaining perceived events, which he calls the "data of sense"; but he invokes Kantian, transcendental logic in dealing with strictly normative self-conscious thinking. He calls self-conscious thinking prior to its elucidation through transcendental logic "the data of consciousness." Kantian transcendental logic, as we have already seen, fallaciously treats unverified hypotheses as verified conclusions. In Lonergan's case this fallacy betrays him into treating his own fallible hypothesis about how one ought to think into a univer-

16. *Ibid.*, 5.438-463, 502-537.

sally valid explanation of how the mind works. Lonergan and all card-carrying Lonerganians assume as a consequence that anyone who reflects on his or her cognitive operations will find the very operations which Lonergan's hypothetical epistemology describes and in the very terms and relations in which he describes them. This logically questionable assumption ultimately grounds Lonergan's specious claim to have found an unrevisable starting point for all thinking. In fact, Lonergan's fallible account of human thinking needs significant revision at several points.

#### *Expanding "Experience"*

First of all, Lonergan uses the term "experience" far too restrictively. In explanatory thinking, it corresponds pretty much to Kant's sense manifold by providing the raw materials of knowledge. In self-critical thinking, it functions analogously, although, as we have seen, for Lonergan the "data of consciousness" differs from the "data of sense."

In fact, however, images, feelings, and the symbols which express them do more than provide the raw material for concrete and abstract judgments. Feelings judge reality in their own right, as accurately and as fallibly as the rational mind. That means that any sound epistemology needs to recognize two principles of judgment, not one, as Lonergan's does. We judge reality with our feelings; we also judge it rationally and inferentially. Moreover, any sound epistemology must also concern itself with the coordination of judgements of feeling and inferential judgments.

Second, Lonergan's theory of knowledge acquiesces, as I have already indicated, in Joseph Maréchal's theory of the virtual infinity of the human intellect. Close empirical studies of how human knowledge grows and develops fail, however, to verify belief in that virtual infinity.<sup>17</sup> Instead, they suggest that the human mind is born finite and remains finite throughout life.<sup>18</sup> Finite needs and interests motivate human cognitive activity, not some fictive insatiable desire to know. I shall return to this point in a later chapter.

Third, study of liberation theology has convinced me that one cannot ground an adequate account of conversion in the way in which Lonergan suggests. Like Rahner and Maréchal, Lonergan endorsed the Kantian "turn to subject." Narrow focus on the subject of conversion, however, blurred Lonergan's perception of a fundamental dimension of the experience of conversion. Lonergan, as we have seen, defined a conversion as a decision which creates a horizon, a wholly new frame of reference for self-critical

17. Cf. Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 271-316.

18. Cf. Gelpi, *Inculturating North American Theology*, pp. 20-22; *Grace as Transmuted Experience and Social Process*, pp. 76-78.

thinking.<sup>19</sup> While this definition grasps an important dimension of conversion, it focuses too narrowly on the converting subject. The experience of conversion does more than expand the structure of subjective intentionality. It not only involves a turning from and a turning to; but that turning also requires social transformation in a social context. Moreover, as liberation theology has insisted, socio-political conversion especially involves a turning to the Others, to the marginal, the poor, the outcasts of society.<sup>20</sup> As a consequence, the systematic pursuit of foundational theology demands broader social and experiential grounding than the exploration of the intentional structures of individual human consciousness which the Kantian "turn to the subject" allows.

In other words, had Lonergan studied the philosophy of C.S. Peirce and of Josiah Royce, he would have realized that the pragmatic "turn to community" provides a better grounding for a theology of conversion than does the "turn to the subject." Pragmatic fallibilism requires the turn to community; for, if one grants the finitude and fallibility of the human mind, then in one's personal search for truth one requires the corrective of experiences and insights other than one's own. The search for truth has, then, a fundamentally dialogic character and requires commitment to a community of truth seekers who investigate the nature of reality in a shared and systematic way.<sup>21</sup>

As I reflected on the legitimate criticisms which the classical North American philosophical tradition makes of Lonergan's theory of knowledge, I realized that the pursuit of foundational theology, in Lonergan's sense of that term had forced me to distinguish his theory of method from his theory of knowledge. The fact, however, that a systematic pursuit of the method had forced me to criticize the theory of knowledge on which it rests only confirmed me in my conviction that Lonergan's theory of method was moving in the right direction; for any method worth its salt forces the one who uses it to criticize the presuppositions on which it rests.<sup>22</sup>

#### *The Scope of Foundational Christology*

In the course of pursuing foundational theology in a systematic way, I had, as I have indicated, learned to distinguish five forms of conversion and to articulate at least seven dynamics and seven counterdynamics within the conversion process as a whole. The more I reflected on the current Christological crisis in the light of that construct, the more it seemed to promise a fruitful methodological context for laying new, systematic foundations for contemporary Christological thinking.

19. Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 237-238.

20. Cf. Gelpi, *Inculturating North American Theology*, pp. 99-146.

21. Cf. Gelpi, *Experiencing God*, pp. 205-258.

22. Cf. Gelpi, *Inculturating North American Theology*, pp. 205-258.

I found myself sympathetic to Van Breeck's suggestion that theologians need to de-objectify Christology;<sup>23</sup> but, as I have already indicated, I found myself unconvinced that rhetorical analysis alone provides an adequate tool for effecting that de-objectification.

Two factors in the historical development of Christology had led to its objectification: the metaphysical claims of classical philosophical thought and the historicism of the modern mind. As we have seen, classical metaphysics promises the human mind something it cannot deliver: namely, a necessary, universal insight into the nature of the real. A necessary, universal insight resists revision. It claims to have grasped Being-as-such. By refusing to acknowledge the fallibility of metaphysical hypotheses, classical metaphysics naively objectifies its fallible theories as the fixed and unchangeable nature of the real. A Christology based on classical philosophical assumptions similarly objectifies its account of humanity, divinity, and their relationship in Jesus.

The collapse of classical forms of Christological thinking in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did not produce a relational restatement of the Christological question. Rather, it replaced one objectification of Jesus Christ with another. It substituted for the objectifications of classic metaphysics the objectifications of history. Perhaps a story will illustrate my point.

In the early stages of research for this study, I was conducting a seminar in contemporary Christology and had assigned Schillebeeckx's *Jesus* as a text. Three quarters of the way through Schillebeeckx's summary of the new (or second) quest for the historical Jesus, one of my students asked: "Why do I find the gospels so interesting and this stuff so dull." "Because," I responded, "the gospels seek to tell the story of Jesus in a way which evokes your personal commitment to Him in faith, while this book attempts only to summarize 'objective,' historically verified assertions, the 'bare facts' about Jesus."

The regrounding of Christology in a relational account of an experience of conversion overcomes the objectifying tendencies of both classical metaphysics and of historical-critical method. A relational, experiential approach to Christology demands that one formulate a relational account of Jesus Christ from the beginning; for foundational thinking in the modest, fallibilistic sense in which I employ the term "foundational" must explore the way in which commitment to Jesus Christ in faith transforms every aspect of the human experience of conversion within community.

Relational thinking differs from relativistic thinking. Relativism questions the human mind's capacity to verify its beliefs in reality. A relational, social construct of experience, as we shall see in greater detail in a

23. Cf. Van Breeck, *Christ Proclaimed*, pp. 5-63.

later chapter, not only recognizes that one can understand nothing without interacting with it; but it also asserts that, if one takes the time to think clearly about reality, it will disclose its true identity to the inquiring mind by the way it behaves. In other words, the relational character of reality grounds epistemological realism rather than excludes it. It also advances theological thinking beyond all forms of relativism by grounding it in a defensible philosophical realism.

The regrounding of Christology in a theology of conversion demands that one ask the following strictly normative question: *How should commitment to Jesus Christ transform all the other non-religious, or secular, forms of conversion?* What does this reformulation of the Christological question imply? In order to understand its implications, one needs to reflect more in detail on the analogy of conversion and on the dynamics which structure an authentic conversion experience.

### *Conversion Dynamics*

Loneragan had taught me to think of conversion analogously. In the preceding section I explained briefly what the analogy of conversion implies for the investigation of each form of conversion. As I reflected on the complexities of conversion, however, I came to realize that the existence of more than one kind of conversion had other important methodological consequences for the systematic pursuit of foundational thinking. Besides understanding human development within each kind of conversion, the foundational theologian also needs to ponder the dynamics and counterdynamics of conversion. *The dynamics and counterdynamics of conversion name the ways in which the different forms of conversion condition one another.* As I have already noted, by a dynamic of conversion, I mean the way in which one form of conversion strengthens and re-enforces another. By a counter-dynamic of conversion I mean the way in which the absence of one form of conversion tends to undermine and subvert another form of conversion.

Let us then begin to name some of the basic dynamics which give a positive structure to the total process of conversion. As we shall see, the two dynamics which Christian conversion contributes to the total process of conversion hold an important methodological key to the development of a foundational Christology.

The three dynamics which follow describe how three of the secular, or natural, forms of conversion re-enforce the other forms of conversion.

1) *Affective conversion animates the other forms of conversion by promoting the ongoing healing of disordered affections and by sensitizing the human heart to the perception of beauty. The perception of beauty yields an affective, intuitive grasp of the simultaneous goodness and truth*

of some reality. Affective conversion suffuses the other forms of conversion with hope, zest, and imaginative flexibility.

2) Intellectual conversion *informs* the other kinds of conversions by providing them with the means of distinguishing true from false beliefs and adequate from inadequate frames of reference for thinking about reality. Intellectual conversion therefore enables one to think more clearly and accurately about the practical exigencies of every form of conversion, including intellectual conversion itself.

3) The two forms of moral conversion *help orient* the other forms of conversion toward strictly ethical values and realities. A reality or value takes on a strictly ethical character when it makes ultimate or absolute claims. As we have seen, something claims one ultimately, when one stands willing not only to live for it but if necessary to die for it. Something claims one absolutely, when it requires one's commitment in all circumstances.

Affective, intellectual, moral, and theistic religious conversion all qualify as "personal conversion" in the sense that each requires converts to take adult responsibility for themselves and for the personal decisions which shape their subsequent human development.

"Personal conversion" contrasts with "socio-political conversion." Socio-political converts take responsibility, not simply for themselves and for their subsequent personal development, but also and especially for human institutions and for the decisions of those who give them shape. The socio-political convert stands therefore committed to collaborating with others in order to ensure that the social sanctions which shape human institutional life foster ongoing conversion and effect the common good. The distinction between personal and socio-political conversion grounds the fourth and fifth dynamics of conversion.

4) Socio-political conversion *deprivatizes* the four forms of personal conversion by dedicating them to the collaborative pursuit of a just social order. The commitment to social justice forces the socio-political convert to confront "the Others," the poor, the marginal, the outcast, as well as those whose beliefs, commitments, and life-styles differ from one's own. That ongoing confrontation poses emotional, intellectual, moral, and religious challenges which one ducks if one confines one's attention exclusively to the growth experiences which personal conversion demands.

5) The four forms of personal conversion *help authenticate* socio-political conversion by providing it with norms for evaluating disordered institutionalizations of human intercourse. Affective conversion yields important insights into the difference between institutionalized neurosis and psychosis, on the one hand, and healthy human customs of relating affectively, on the other. Intellectual conversion unmasks the lies, distortions, and inadequacies of deceptive ideologies. Ideologies seek to ratio-

nalize situations of injustice as part of the inevitable scheme of things. Personal moral conversion yields a sound insight into the personal rights and duties which unjust social structures violate. Christian conversion yields an insight into divine justice: i.e., into the way in which God desires humans to institutionalize their relationships to one another.<sup>24</sup>

#### *The Two Dynamics of Christian Conversion*

Finally, Christian conversion contributes the following two dynamics to the total process of conversion. 6) Initial Christian conversion *mediates* between affective and moral conversion. 7) Ongoing Christian conversion *demand*s the transvaluation in faith of the other four forms of conversion. These two dynamics hold the methodological key to the operations which shape a foundational Christology. Let us ponder why they do so.

One form of conversion mediates between two others when it sets them in a relationship to one another which they would not otherwise have. Christian conversion begins in the heart, in the confrontation with those attitudes, commitments, and values which stand between oneself and one's commitment to God. Most frequently, disordered emotions block commitment to God in faith: resentment at the Church or at the hypocrisy of those who claim to believe, fear of an encounter with the Holy and of the demands it might make, guilt at having offended God, shameful self-hatred which makes it difficult to believe in the love and forgiveness of God. By bringing these disordered affections to healing in faith, Christian conversion transforms affective conversion into repentance.

As disordered negative emotions find healing, the sympathetic affections find greater scope to play. The imagination acquires new flexibility. One grows in a sensitivity to beauty. When, however, the divine excellence incarnate in Jesus and in people whose lives resemble His stirs the heart, one finds oneself loving divine beauty incarnate. That love motivates the commitment of discipleship; and the commitment of discipleship dedicates one to living in the image of Jesus and of those whose lives resemble His.

Inevitably, then, an initial commitment of faith in Jesus Christ also transforms the human conscience. Besides invoking natural prudential norms of right and wrong, the converted Christian conscience now also judges between good and evil in the light of the historical revelation of God's saving will for a sinful humanity. Moreover, growth in the ability to reach sound judgments of conscience in faith transforms natural prudence into the charism of discernment. The gift of discernment suffuses natural prudential thinking with prayerful receptivity to the divine Breath's illumination. Since both prudential judgments and judgments of dis-

24. Cf. Gelpi, *Grace as Transmuted Experience and Social Process*, pp. 97-139.

cernment engage a sense of the fitting and since one grasps the fitting with judgments of feeling rather than with inferential judgments, Christian conversion also establishes a new kind of relationship between affective and moral conversion.

Commitment to a life of discipleship has both a this-worldly and an other-worldly dimension. Commitment to proclaiming and establishing the reign of God anchors the Christian in this world; faith in the paschal mystery anchors the Christian in the world to come. These two worlds overlap and interpenetrate without completely coinciding. That interpenetration creates the eschaton, the last age of salvation. In the last age of salvation, one's work for the kingdom in this life begins one's participation in risen life with Christ, but full transformation in God comes only after death.

As we shall see in greater detail later on, life in the kingdom of God dedicates one to living as a child of God in Jesus' image. It requires one to trust in the Father's providential care in ways which free one to share one's bread, the physical supports of life with others. Christian sharing seeks to break down the barriers which separate people from one another by including the sinful, the marginal, the outcast, the oppressed in the active ambit of sharing. Christian sharing also expresses a mutual forgiveness which imitates the forgiveness of Christ. Christian forgiveness, therefore, extends even to love of enemies; and such forgiveness tests the authenticity of Christian prayer.<sup>25</sup>

The commitment of faith which results from initial conversion to Christ creates an all-embracing frame of reference which engages every dimension of human experience. It demands therefore that one judge all things in the light of that commitment. Re-evaluating things in the light of faith, things which one had previously known apart from faith, requires that one transvalue them. One transvalues one's perceptions of reality by transposing them from an old context into a new one which endows them with new connotations.

The transvaluation of the other forms of conversion in an ongoing Christian conversion supplies the second dynamic which Christian conversion contributes to the total process of conversion. A foundational Christology seeks to understand how commitment to Jesus Christ transforms affective, intellectual, personal moral, and socio-political conversion. It focuses, therefore, on the ongoing transvaluation of the natural forms of conversion in faith.<sup>26</sup>

A conversion occurs naturally when it happens in abstraction from the historical self-revelation of God and focuses exclusively on created reali-

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-66.

26. Because the counterdynamics of conversion do not contribute positively to the construction of a foundational Christology, I have not included them in the main text of

ties. Transvaluation happens when, having understood and appreciated some reality in one frame of reference, one finds oneself forced to re-evaluate it in the light of another frame of reference. The context of faith transvalues human natural perceptions in the light of God's historical self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

As Christian conversion transvalues affective conversion, it effects the healing in faith of disordered human desires and aspirations. In the process it gives birth to Christian hope. A foundational Christology of hope examines how commitment to Jesus Christ motivates Christian hope. It enables one therefore to distinguish false from true hopes, healthy from neurotic hopes, and oppressive from liberating hopes. At the same time, it teaches the human heart to long for the establishment of God's reign on earth as in heaven and for the ultimate redemption of all things in the second coming of Christ.

One cannot formulate a foundational Christology of hope, without confronting in a systematic way the claims of Pauline Christology; for hope in Jesus Christ lies at its heart. At the same time, a Christology of hope must examine the ways in which Christian apocalyptic, the Christian longing for the restoration of all things in Christ, also recreates and reshapes human longing for ultimate salvation. An exploration of the apocalyptic dimensions of Christian hope requires a reappropriation of the Christology enshrined in the book of Revelation. In the third part of this volume, I shall attempt to develop such a Christology of hope.

As we have seen, the human mind grasps reality both with judgments of feeling and with rational inferential judgments. A foundational Christology must explore how commitment to Jesus Christ transvalues imaginative perceptions of reality. That exploration engages the narrative Christologies enshrined in the gospels. In second volume of this study, I shall examine how faith in the Christ of the synoptic gospels transvalues human beliefs and the imaginative perception of reality; and, in the first part of the third volume, I shall examine the Beloved Disciple's narrative Christology.

this chapter. Let me, however, list them here. 1) The absence of affective conversion suffuses the other forms of conversion with neurotic rigidity and aesthetic obtuseness. 2) The absence of intellectual conversion suffuses the other forms of conversion with an inflexible fundamentalism. 3) The absence of personal moral conversion leaves the other forms of conversion in a state of partial ethical disorientation. 4) The absence of personal conversion leaves the socio-political convert without adequate norms for diagnosing social injustice. 5) The absence of socio-political conversion leaves all the other forms of conversion privatized. 6) The absence of initial Christian conversion leaves the other forms of conversion without any authentic, practical orientation to Jesus and to the action of His Breath. 7) The absence of ongoing Christian conversion betrays the initially converted Christian into replacing Christian hope, Christian faith, Christian love, the Christian search for justice, and Christian service with natural, secular, or sinful realities and values.

The theological virtue of faith engages the imagination; but it also transforms graciously the rational, inferential mind. Any foundational Christology must, therefore, also deal with the rational doctrines which ground commitment to Jesus. Foundational Christology needs, moreover, to develop criteria for distinguishing sound from unsound Christological doctrine and for understanding the relationship between the rational formulation of faith and its intuitive expressions. I shall address this question in section two of the third and final volume of this study. There I shall argue that the intuitive grasp of the divine in Christian hope and in narrative faith supply the doctrinal thinker with key criteria for distinguishing sound from unsound doctrine. Narrative and doctrinal Christology examine how faith in Jesus Christ transvalues intellectual conversion.

Finally, any fully adequate foundational Christology needs also to understand how commitment to Jesus Christ transforms the two forms of moral conversion: personal moral conversion and socio-political conversion. That requires the development of a practical Christology. To this question I shall turn in the final part of volume three. In it I shall examine how commitment to Jesus Christ requires not only the transformation of human interpersonal relationships but also the transformation of unjust social structures as well. Moreover, I shall argue that the moral consequences of Christological doctrines endow them with their full speculative meaning.

In this first section of the present volume I have reflected on the current Christological crisis and have proposed a method which promises to resolve that crisis, because if Lonergan and Peirce have the right of it, a foundational Christology will provide the norms for distinguishing between sound and unsound Christological doctrines. Sound doctrine will advance conversion; unsound doctrine will not.

In the second section of this first volume, I shall attempt to clarify one of the currently confused but key Christological categories. I refer to "the humanity of Jesus." I shall argue that in a contemporary, North American context one can legitimately conceive the humanity of Jesus as a finite, developing, human experience. Foundational method requires me to paint an interdisciplinary portrait of Jesus' humanity. Accordingly, I shall verify an experiential, philosophical construct of Jesus' humanity in the personal and social sciences and in the new quests for the historical Jesus.

In developing a systematic account of Jesus' humanity, I shall first examine some of the inadequate constructs of the human which Christologists have in the past invoked. I shall reject all dualistic and nominalistic constructs of the human, and I shall search for a middle ground between anthropological pessimism and anthropological optimism.

In the course of arguing for the legitimacy of understanding the humanity of Jesus philosophically as a finite, developing, socially conditioned human experience, I shall show that those who to date have attempted to make the theological "turn to experience" have done so poorly because they have acquiesced uncritically in a di-polar, individualistic, nominalistic construct of experience. I shall argue that only a realistic, social, triadic construct of experience promises to provide a verifiable and adequate philosophical understanding of this key term.

Philosophy alone, however, cannot offer an adequate contemporary account of the meaning of "the human." In addition, one needs to draw on relevant insights yielded by other scientific disciplines which examine the human condition: empirical, clinical, and social psychology; sociology; and anthropology. As we have seen, the results of these disciplines not only verify the truth of whatever philosophical construct of the human one may choose to defend; but they also expand that construct in greater developmental detail. Accordingly, after proposing a descriptive, philosophical construct of experience, I shall verify and amplify it in a preliminary manner in the results of the personality and social sciences. I shall at the same time ponder the Christological implications of the resulting construct of humanity.

Finally, any adequate, contemporary account of the humanity of Jesus must take into account the results of recent quests for the historical Jesus. In summarizing the results of those quests, I shall attempt to de-objectify them by contextualizing them in a thoroughly relational, social, philosophical construct of human experience.

#### *An Adequate Method*

The foundational strategy for regrounding Christology which I have just described takes into account all of the legitimate concerns of the other strategies which I have examined. At the same time, it supplies for their inadequacies.

With *Barth* my foundational method insists that one lay the grounds for reformulating Christology in faith; but it makes place nevertheless for both critical and constructive philosophical reflection in Christological thinking.

With *Rahner* my foundational method recognizes that laying the foundations for Christology requires the elaboration of a metaphysical anthropology; but it deprives that metaphysics of any claims to *a priori* necessity. Instead, it requires the metaphysical mind to confess to a contrite fallibilism.

With *Tracy* my foundational method recognizes that phenomenology plays an initial role in the philosophical exploration of a Christian experience of conversion; but it requires in addition that strictly normative

thinking about experience mediate between a phenomenology and a metaphysics of experience.

With contemporary *New Testament Christologies* the foundational Christology which follows recognizes the need to take into account the results of contemporary exegesis; but it requires that one do so in the context of exploring the impact of commitment to Christ on all the different forms of conversion. It also grounds hermeneutics in a realistic metaphysics of experience rather than in the existential equation of Being and meaning. By distinguishing intuitive from rational forms of faith, moreover, the regrouping of Christology developed in these pages allows one to deal dialectically not only with New Testament theology but with post-Biblical Christological doctrinal development as well.

With *psychologizing Christologies*, the foundational Christology I shall develop in the following pages recognizes that commitment to Jesus Christ demands the transformation of human affectivity and of the human imagination. I shall argue that therapeutic Christology makes its best contribution to a practical Christology of personal moral conversion.

With *liberation Christology* the foundational Christology I shall propose requires that one "complete the hermeneutical circle." Foundational Christology concerns itself with the institutional consequences of Christological faith primarily, though not exclusively, in the course of examining the ways in which commitment to Christ transforms socio-political conversion.

Finally, the following approach to regrouping Christology recognizes the legitimacy of using *rhetorical analysis* in approaching Christological texts, but only where it applies. Rhetorical analysis will prove especially helpful in formulating a Christology of hope. It will not prove helpful in the verification of Christological doctrines, which requires other norms and methods.

So far I have examined the scope of the current Christological crisis. I have considered seven inadequate strategies for regrouping Christological faith. Finally, I have examined a new, more comprehensive strategy which promises to incorporate the best insights of inadequate methods at the same time that it corrects the inadequacies which mar them.

One final task remains. I need to explore the pastoral implications of the Christology which the following chapters will develop.

#### (IV)

It should not take a great deal of reflection to see that the regrouping of Christology in an adequate theology of conversion would have profound implications for the RCIA (The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). In *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians* I began to lay systematic theological foundations for the work

of the RCIA. **Laying foundations for the RCIA differs from formulating a how-to-do-it catechesis for use in the restored catechumenate. If one applies Lonergan's theory of functional specialties to the work of the RCIA, the formulation of such a catechesis belongs to communications, not to foundational theology.**

**Foundational theology, however, provides the communications theologian with the norms and insights needed to construct such a catechetical program. For Lonergan, communications theology involves much more than popularization of academic theology. The communications theologian addresses pastoral situations in the Church in which communications have broken down. The breakdown of communications in the Christian community always betrays the lack of conversion at some level. The communications theologian needs therefore to use the insights into the demands of initial and ongoing conversion which foundational theology articulates in order to diagnose pastorally how the absence of conversion has fragmented a given Christian community or individual convert. One then needs to design a catechesis adapted to the persons and situation one confronts. That catechesis should summon all those it addresses to the kind of integral, five-fold conversion which will re-establish their communication with one another even as it restores constructive dialogue to the ongoing life of the Church.<sup>27</sup>**

The foundational Christology developed in these pages seeks, then, to advance the work begun in *Committed Worship* by presenting a systematic, conversion-centered Christology which will provide those engaged in the RCIA with the diagnostic and foundational tools which they will need in order to call adult converts to integral conversion to Christ. **The concrete, pastoral application of the results of the foundational investigation which follows must, however, lie in the hands of those who pursue communications theology as their peculiar functional theological specialty. For my part, I renounce any claim to professional competence in theological communications.**

In so speaking, I do not intend to belie the pastoral importance of what follows but to underscore it. **So far, the restoration of the catechumenate has advanced without adequate systematic reflection on the forms and dynamics of conversion. One can hardly blame those practically involved in the pastoral restoration of the catechumenate for this unfortunate lack; for, until foundational theologians supply them with the insights into conversion and with sound norms for conversion, those currently leading the RCIA lack the means for designing the kind of theologically grounded program which their converts need. *Committed Worship* together with this Christology and the trinitarian theology developed in *The Divine Mother* all attempt to advance theological reflection on the**

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 355-368.

foundations of Christian conversion and to do so in a manner which will make possible the responsible pastoral re-structuring of specific RCIA programs.

In *Committed Worship*, I argued that the pre-catechumenate ought to verify that converts have converted to Christ initially prior to their admission to the catechumenate. I also argued that the catechumenate itself ought to develop in adult converts an integral five-fold conversion. Advancement in a five-fold conversion requires that commitment to Christ transform and transvalue all the other forms of conversion. The catechumenate ought, then, to deal 1) with converts' affective relationship to Jesus, 2) with their intuitive, imaginative perceptions of Jesus, 3) with their rational beliefs about Jesus, 4) with the ways in which Jesus demands the transformation of their personal social relationships, and 5) with developing in converts a solid commitment to the prophetic Christian search for a truly just social order.

Any well-designed catechumenate begins, therefore, a life-long process of conversion which active participation in the shared faith-life of the Church ought to foster subsequently. As a consequence, a foundational Christology which addresses directly the needs of the RCIA will also address directly the developing faith-needs of any adult Christian; for the process of ongoing conversion never ends as long as we walk this earth. The doctrine of purgatory suggests that conversion even continues in the next life.

In focusing on the RCIA, I seek, then, to address the theological and pastoral needs of every believing adult Christian. In exploring how commitment to Christ transforms every aspect of the conversion process, I hope to invite and challenge all adult believers, both initial and ongoing converts, to confront the demands which ongoing conversion to Christ makes of them.

I recognize that in undertaking the regrounding of Christology, I have shouldered a burden which I may not have the strength to carry to the end. Should I fail, others, hopefully stronger and more capable than I, will undertake to complete the journey on which we are about to embark.

## PART 2

### JESUS OF NAZARETH: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY PORTRAIT

#### Chapter 4

#### On Misconceiving the Human

In the first section of this study, I reflected on the contemporary Christological crisis, on some of the cultural impulses which contributed to it, and on some possible strategies for responding to it. I then considered the method which structures the foundational Christology which I shall be developing in this and subsequent chapters. Finally, I reflected on the pastoral relevance of that method.

The present chapter begins to address one of the key issues raised by the contemporary crisis in Christology. As we have seen, a variety of historical causes have conspired to render a number of key Christological terms hopelessly vague. We find vagueness about the meaning of "humanity," of "divinity," and of "the relationship between the two in the person of Jesus Christ."

In the course of this study, I shall attempt to lend conceptual clarity to all these terms: "humanity," "divinity," "relationship," "person," "Jesus," and "Christ." In the present chapter and in the two which follow it, however, I shall focus on the first of these terms: namely, on "humanity." How, then, in a contemporary, North American context might one conceive the humanity of Jesus with philosophical and theological legitimacy? As we shall see, in responding to that question, I shall also have to clarify the terms "relationship," "person," and "Jesus."

In order to arrive at a sound understanding of "humanity" in a Christological context, one needs first to arm oneself against misleading and erroneous concepts of the human. In the present chapter, therefore, I shall survey dialectically<sup>1</sup> the way in which inadequate conceptions of the human have conditioned and often skewed Christological thinking. Having come to clarity about the blunders one needs to avoid in understanding human nature, I shall then in chapter five present the construct of the human which I shall employ in elaborating a contemporary, inculturated, foundational, North American Christology.

As we saw in the preceding chapter, the method for pursuing a foundational Christology requires that one employ three different kinds of cat-

1. As we have seen, dialectical theology compares and contrasts different theological frames of reference in order to identify areas of agreement and of disagreement together with their motives.