

# College of the Holy Cross

BERNARD FRANCIS LONERGAN

The one world which God created, we have been led sometimes to believe, ran reasonably well, until the theologians divided it in two parts: the natural and the supernatural. Ever since the profane was severed from the sacral, the philosophers and theologians of Christendom have been trying to solder the rift.

Today, when the philosophical mood is more existentialist than speculative, and when, among some theologians, ad hoc commitment seems more relevant than strenuous reflection, it is quite out of fashion to address one's self to a problem as abstruse as methodic thinking. The explosion of knowledge within our lifetime, the proliferation of new branches of learning, and the relentless pressure upon a scholar to become a specialist, are enough to dishearten anyone in his personal search for a method which will illumine the total process of understanding himself, his universe, and his God.

It is rare, indeed, to meet a representative of that creative minority of thinkers who have had the curiosity to investigate the dynamic range of man's intelligence. Such a rare thinker is Bernard Lonergan. He has had the daring to propose a self-appropriating method of learning through experience, insight, reflection, and judgment. "Authentic knowing", he wrote, "is not in books, but in the mind of the one who knows. Metaphysics is not something on a page, but something in the mind". Although Father Lonergan has attracted no headlines to match the latest news from The Netherlands, his productive years of research and teaching at Montreal, Rome, and Toronto, have already had an impact on Christian thinking the world over.

Bernard Lonergan entered the Society of Jesus forty-seven years ago at Guelph, Ontario. His education was cosmopolitan: classics at Guelph, philosophy at Heythrop College in England, further studies in the humanities at the University of London, theology at the Gregorian in Rome, and ascetics at Amiens, France. For the next quarter of a century, he had only one assignment: teaching theology to seminarians in Canada and Rome. In his impressive bibliography, two works are outstanding: his articles on the concept of Verbum in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, universally acclaimed as a major contribution to both rational psychology and Trinitarian theology; and Insight: A Study of Human Understanding, a profound rethinking of Aristotelian and Thomistic epistemology in terms more acceptable to the contemporary scientific mind. Presently, at Toronto, he is preparing another major work: On the Method of Theology.