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LONERGAN AND PROTESTANT THOUGHT: INTRODUCING A SPECIAL ISSUE

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MY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL forbade the observance of Halloween. We were not entirely forlorn, however, since candy was supplied (in abundance) for the annual Reformation Day party, also held on October 31st to commemorate that autumn day in 1517 when Luther is thought to have nailed the Ninety-five Theses on the church door.

We sang "*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*" – in the vernacular – munched sweets, and (somewhat falsely, it turns out) imagined the dramatic moments as each hammer blow pounded home the theses. It was exciting.

For many, 2017 is as exciting, with the 500th anniversary of the Reformation a backdrop to celebrations, studies, conferences, publications, and journal issues sponsored by various organizations, Protestant or otherwise. Bernard Lonergan, who as a priest belonged to the same Society of Jesus famed for its energetic role in the Counter-Reformation, nonetheless makes a good conversation partner for those who read Protestant theology.

Of course, Lonergan was familiar with the thought of notable Protestant thinkers such as Kant, Rudolf Otto, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Paul Tillich, among others, even as influential Protestants such as George Lindbeck and N. T. Wright gleaned much from his thought, sometimes critically. More than scholarly conversation, however, Lonergan's insights into conversion, faith, belief, hermeneutics, grace, sin, atonement, and the Trinity are not only of interest but resonate with ways that (at least some) Protestants frame questions and structure experience. Or at least it seemed to me when as a young Protestant scholar I first encountered Lonergan, and others articulate similar responses.

As a major thinker, Lonergan's reading of Protestant theology is worth consideration. Interesting, also, is his limited but nonetheless real influence within contemporary Protestant circles, particularly in scriptural studies. Further, whether by accident or something more, not a few Protestant scholars have taken to Lonergan, choosing his work as a focal point and source of their own. Thus, this special issue on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Steven D. Cone begins with a survey of issues central to Protestant theology for which Lonergan may be an especially productive partner. These include biblical studies, faith and conversion, inter-religious dialogue, grace, salvation, the Trinity, theological anthropology, method, and objectivity.

Karen Petersen Finch next examines the rejection of natural theology prevalent in certain forms of Protestant thought, particularly within the Reformed tradition. Not only natural theology, but the thought of Aquinas in particular, is sometimes presented in dialectical opposition, but Petersen Finch explores the possibility of a natural theology stirring up wonder rather than pride.

The two following pieces, the first by Joseph K. Gordon and the second, a reprint of Ben F. Meyer's influential essay, "The Primacy of the Intended Sense of Texts," give evidence of the fruitful reception of Lonergan's critical realism, often mediated by Meyer, to notable biblical scholars such as N. T. Wright and James D. G. Dunn. Gordon further explores Lonergan's contribution of historical consciousness as relating to how Christians understand the truthfulness of Scripture.

Lonergan's turn to the subject has parallels in Protestant theology. Richard Sherlock argues that the subject is foundational in Kant, Ritschl, Harnack, Bultmann, and even Barth, although Lonergan, states Sherlock, provides a substantive critique of these versions and a more coherent understanding of knowing.

Finally, Carl Trueman, noting an interest within Reformed thought of the historical heritage of doctrine, turns to John Henry Newman's understanding of doctrine's development, one offering challenging questions for Protestants. According to Trueman, while Lonergan self-consciously builds upon Newman, his account of doctrinal development may be particularly helpful.

On behalf of the editors, I offer my gratitude to the authors for their contributions to this special issue on "Lonergan and Protestant Thought."

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE:
WHY A PROTESTANT WOULD
CARE ABOUT LONERGAN

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LONERGAN STUDIES is a largely Roman Catholic field that has a number of interested Protestants within it. Given the questions Protestant scholars tend to have and the discussions they generally pursue, why would the heirs of the Reformation study this Jesuit philosopher and theologian? This is a different question, of course, from why Protestants *should* read Lonergan; his thought is foundational and not easily absorbed within existing forms of Protestantism (nor, I would say, within existing forms of Catholicism).

This essay gives a bird's-eye survey of issues endemic to Protestant theology for which Lonergan's work may be especially helpful. I also indicate the basic direction of Lonergan's contribution. In honor of the 500th anniversary of Luther's Ninety-five Theses, I structure my comments roughly to follow the doctrinal slogans that typified the Protestant Reformation.

Presenting Lonergan's contribution according to Protestant commonplaces risks, at the least, making it more about Protestants than about Lonergan. On the other hand, Lonergan emphasized that questions arise spontaneously and that one must be authentic to the process of inquiry one actually has. What we will see below, then, is an interplay between the logic of the Protestant mottos and the trajectory of Lonergan's thought. At the least, it should show a significant intersection between these *topoi*, and many fruitful avenues that can be or have been pursued.