



# **The Divine Initiative : Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan (Lonergan Studies)**

*J. Michael Stebbins*

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Bernard Lonergan spent much of his early career grappling with Thomas Aquinas' monumental effort at 'thinking out the Christian universe.' What he learned from Aquinas reinforced the basis of a theological paradigm whose main lines would remain intact throughout all of his subsequent work.

The Divine Initiative explores Lonergan's comprehensive position on the doctrines of grace and providence formulated in his early writings, paying particular attention to the unpublished treatise *De ente supernaturali* (On Supernatural Being). J. Michael Stebbins' investigation uncovers a theological synthesis of remarkable assimilative capacity. A key to Lonergan's position is his sophisticated understanding of the structured but dynamic process that characterizes the order of the created universe. Lonergan characterizes grace as a particular instance of God's providential activity in human living and in the cosmos as a whole. On the strength of his inquiries into Aquinas' positions on the meaning of causality, free will, sin, and divine transcendence, Lonergan explains why God's governance of all created activity is compatible with the contingency of created events in general and with human freedom in particular. Lonergan's conclusions are made possible by his insistence that the elements of Thomist metaphysics are grounded in corresponding activities of human cognitional process.

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