

## **Trinitarian Theology and Religious Diversity: Finding a Systematic Framework**

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Perhaps the novelty of what Terrence Tilley names our “post-age stamped”<sup>1</sup> situation (post-modern, post-colonial, post-Vatican II, post-9-11, post-Christian) makes David Tracy’s 20 year old theological challenge even more pressing today: “[T]he question of the ‘other religions’ can no longer be left until the end of a Christian systematic theology but should enter at the very beginning.”<sup>2</sup> Until now the question of the simultaneous presence of multiple religions has remained an ancillary question and an addendum to already established theological constructs. The entry of the question of ‘other religions’ at the very beginning of a Christian systematic theology will have significant effects in the mediation between cultural matrices and the significance and role of religions in the matrices in which we live.<sup>3</sup>

In this paper I wish to begin by articulating the need for a “paradigm shift” in systematic reflection on religious diversity. I am suggesting that the Trinitarian theology of Bernard Lonergan, particularly his theology of the divine missions, provides the systematic framework for such a shift.<sup>4</sup> Next, I will explore Lonergan’s “missio-centric” theology of religions derived

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<sup>1</sup> Terrence W. Tilley, *Postmodern Theologies: The Challenge of Religious Diversity* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995) vi.

<sup>2</sup> David Tracy, “Christianity in the Wider Context: Demands and Transformations,” *Religion and Intellectual Life* 4 (1987) 8.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), xi.

<sup>4</sup> I am using the term “framework” to describe what Lonergan calls a “model.” I am not using “model” because it is used in another sense in the literature on theologies of religions (e.g. Dupuis and Knitter). Also, I am refraining from using paradigm because these are closed concepts. Instead, “framework” communicates both structure and open-endedness. For models purport to be, not descriptions of reality, not hypotheses about reality, but simply interlocking sets of terms and relations. Such sets, in fact, turn out to be useful in guiding investigations, in framing hypotheses, and in writing descriptions... Again, when one possesses models, the task of framing an hypothesis is reduced to the simpler matter of tailoring a model to suit a given object or area. Finally, the utility of the model may arise when it comes to describing a known reality. For known realities can be exceedingly complicated, and an

from this framework. I will conclude with the new challenges this framework poses for a theology of religions.

### **1. Out of Sight but not Out of Mind: Approaches to Religious Diversity After Vatican II**

The well known phrase “Outside the Church, no salvation” disappeared from the official documents of the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II. While the Magisterium taught that this phrase was not to be taken literally at least since the 1949 Leonard Feeny affair, Vatican II marks a tremendous and radical turn in the Roman Catholic attitude to other religions.

Enumerated by Bernard Sesboüé<sup>5</sup> they are: first, the Church no longer situates itself in opposition to Others (whether religious, secular, atheist, etc.). Next, there is not a sense of general exclusion from salvation tempered by exceptions (like baptism by desire). Further, the evaluation of other religions is quite positive with regards to the revelatory values outside of the Church (people of different mind sets, cultures, and religions). Fourthly, salvation is opened up beyond the small number of “the elect,” it is no longer treated individualistically but from a wide historical perspective. Each religion is properly contextualized within the history of salvation. Next, non-catholic Christians are included in the Church of Christ as incorporated members. Lastly, non-Christians are treated under the rubric: “ordered toward the church” and “preparation for the Gospel.” Non-Christians are saved because they are a part of humanity.

Although the phrase has disappeared from the literature, post-Vatican II theologies of religion have all grown out of the “outside the church no salvation” mentality. Theological debates around the simultaneous presence of many religions continue to be circumscribed by the double foci of Christology and soteriology, (and derivatively, ecclesiology). Three principal

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adequate language to describe them hard to come by. So the formulation of models and their general acceptance as models can facilitate enormously both description and communication.” Lonergan, *Method*, 284-285.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Sesboüé, *Hors de l'Église pas de salut, histoire d'une formule et problèmes d'interprétation* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2004) 241-244.

theological paradigms are operative: ecclesiocentrism, christocentrism and theocentrism and their three correlative positions of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. The ecclesiocentric-exclusivist<sup>6</sup> paradigm claims explicit faith in Jesus Christ as the exclusive and constitutive way of salvation. The Christocentric-inclusivist paradigm holds Jesus Christ as the constitutive but not exclusive way (with differing views on the role of the Church in the explicitation of divine grace). Third, the theocentric-pluralist paradigm holds Jesus Christ as either normative but not constitutive of salvation or else as one of many saving figures. These paradigms or a combination thereof permit theologians to speak of ecclesiocentric, christocentric, theocentric, regnocentric, pneumatocentric theories of salvation<sup>7</sup> and then descriptive models of religions that order Christianity to the other world religions within salvation history (total or partial replacement, fulfillment, mutuality, acceptance models). Jacques Dupuis maintains these paradigms are principles of understanding, overall keys of the interpretation of reality, and are mutually opposed and exclude each other.<sup>8</sup> David Tracy suggests that answering questions about the simultaneous presence of multiple religious traditions without abandoning our Christian identities “is unlikely to be, as some suggest, from a ‘christocentric’ to a ‘theocentric’ position. This Christian response seems more a postponement of the issue rather than an adequate response to it.”<sup>9</sup>

The three paradigmatic shifts enumerated by Dupuis from the ecclesiocentric paradigm to the Christocentric and then the theocentric reflect the changing context of ecclesial life and praxis, especially as ecclesial power and population wanes. Asian theologians involved in interfaith dialogue maintain that these paradigms “do not make sense” in the inter-religious

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<sup>6</sup> J. Peter Schineller, S.J., “Christ and Church: A Spectrum of Views,” *Theological Studies* 37 (1976) 545-66.

<sup>7</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*. (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 181.

<sup>9</sup> David Tracy, *Dialogue With the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

context of the Indian sub-continent.<sup>10</sup> Felix Wilfred claims that these theological discussions are “a debate of Western factions” that cannot be transposed easily to other cultural contexts.<sup>11</sup> The Indian Theological Association criticizes approaches that issue “from a monoreligiocultural society and a mere academic and speculative point of view.”<sup>12</sup> The Indian theologians challenge Christians, from their faith perspective, to strive to “understand the purpose and meaning of the wonderful religious variety around us and its role and function in the attainment of salvation.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus, Dupuis’ monumental works explore “the root-cause of pluralism itself, for its significance in God’s own plan for humankind, for the possibility of mutual convergence of the various traditions in full respect of their differences, and for their mutual enrichment and cross-fertilization.”<sup>14</sup> He champions *de iure pluralism* that evaluates pluralism as “a positive factor to be welcomed as a gift from God.” By contrast, *de facto pluralism* considers religious pluralism “a fact of life to be reckoned with.”<sup>15</sup> *De facto pluralism* confronts religious difference as, to use M. Shawn Copeland’s words, “not merely variance, but deviation, division, discrepancy, discord, incongruity, incompatibility, inconsistency, anomaly, contrariety, aberration and misunderstanding;”<sup>16</sup> difference is something to eradicate and overcome. *De iure pluralism* would be consonant with an alternate understanding of difference proposed by Copeland, where it “carries forward the struggle for life in its uniqueness, variation and fullness; difference is a

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<sup>10</sup> Aloysius Pieris, “An Asian Paradigm: Interreligious Dialogue and Theology of Religions,” *Month* (26) 130.

<sup>11</sup> Felix Wilfred, “Some Tentative Reflections on the Language of Christian Uniqueness: An Indian Perspective,” *Pro Dialogo Bulletin* 85/86 (1) 57.

<sup>12</sup> “Towards an Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism,” quoted in Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002) 199.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Dupuis, *Toward*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Dupuis, “Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism” in *The Myriad Christ: plurality and the quest for unity in contemporary Christology*, T. Merrigan and J Haers, eds. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000) 96

<sup>16</sup> M. Shawn Copeland, “Difference as a Category in Critical Theologies for the Liberation of Women,” in *Feminist Theology in Different Contexts*, ed. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and M. Shawn Copeland (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996) 143.

celebrative option for life in all its integrity, in all its distinctiveness.”<sup>17</sup> I agree with Dupuis’ approach to religious pluralism and his overall theological agenda, and a reading of Lonergan on the topic would support Dupuis’ initiatives. However, instead of situating his theology of religions in a combination of existent paradigms, what he terms inclusive-pluralism,<sup>18</sup> I believe that a paradigmatic shift to a Trinitarian framework would more adequately support his insights.

A Trinitarian framework will meet some of the challenges raised by theologies of religion today. First, it “searches more deeply, in the light of Christian faith, for the meaning in God’s design for humankind of the plurality of living faiths and religious traditions with which we are surrounded.”<sup>19</sup> While the Second Vatican Council teaches universal salvation for individuals, it remains silent on the question of whether non-Christians are saved by virtue of their own religious traditions or in spite of them: Are non-Christian religions salvific? A second issue has to do with the construction of religious identities in the face of other religions. Is the construction of our Christian identity a purely self-mediating process or is it a mutually self-mediating process that takes the insights of and differences between other religions seriously? A third issue relates to the mission of the Church and dialogue. Do all religions have something theological to learn from one another? Is there mutuality in our conversation, or do Christians impart special salvific knowledge upon non-Christians thereby purifying and elevating their religions?

## **2. The Trinity as Starting Point for Reflection**

Theologians such as Jacques Dupuis, Gavin D’Costa, S. Mark Heim and Peter Phan all point to a trinitarian hermeneutic as the key to understanding the providential purpose and

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<sup>17</sup> Copeland, “Difference as a Category in Critical Theologies for the Liberation of Women” 143.

<sup>18</sup> Or alternately “pluralist-inclusivism” in Jacques Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions: from Confrontation to Dialogue*, Phillip Berryman, trans. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002) 90-95.

<sup>19</sup> Dupuis, *Toward*, 10.

meaning of religious variety while at the same time promoting Phan's concern that "the contours of Christian identity [...] be delineated in positive correlations with other religions, and at the same time, [preserve] a genuine respect for their 'otherness.'"<sup>20</sup> Phan claims that the doctrine of the Trinity naturally and rightly plays a decisive role as *the* Christian doctrine of God. He quotes from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the "hierarchy of truths of faith." The whole history of salvation is identical with the history of the way and the means by which the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, reveals himself to men "and reconciles and unites with himself those who turn away from sin."<sup>21</sup>

Phan argues that "the doctrine of the Trinity can function as the architectonic principle with which to build the cathedral of faith, or to vary the metaphor, as the thread to weave all the Christian doctrines into a patterned tapestry."<sup>22</sup> The Trinity can serve as the "architectonic principle" toward understanding the providential nature of the historical reality of multiple religions and the wideness of revelation and salvation. A Trinitarian framework does not ignore Christological, soteriological and ecclesiological questions, it does however re-orient and situate them within a wider context. It will be able to appropriate the insights gleaned through the past 50 years of dialogue and engage the religious other without effacing the real and important differences that make inter-religious conversation possible while at the same time probing ever more deeply into the mystery of the Triune God that lies at the heart of our Christian identities.

### **3. A Keplerian Revolution**

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<sup>20</sup> Peter C. Phan, "Universal Salvation, Christian Identity, Church Mission, Theological Foundation of Interreligious Dialogue" Unpublished Presentation given at the Journées romaines, August 2009.

<sup>21</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1995) no. 234.

<sup>22</sup> Peter C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously, Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004) 24.

The major challenge and opportunity in a trinitarian framework is the retrieval of the Holy Spirit as the starting point in systematic theology.<sup>23</sup> Christians can no longer hold the unbalanced and excessive emphasis on the person and mission of Jesus Christ, as it comes at the expense of the other two persons of the Trinity. This is “Christomonism.” Ralph Del Colle associates Christomonism with “ecclesial juridicism and theological rationalism,”<sup>24</sup> Gerald O’Collins, an emphasis on the institutional dimension of Church and an under-appreciation of its charismatic character.<sup>25</sup> Western Christians<sup>26</sup> may be rightly accused of being practical binitarians, who unlike actual binatarians that acknowledge only two divine persons, may not deny the three persons doctrinally but act as if the Holy Spirit does not really matter.<sup>27</sup> Yves Congar maintains the period following the Second Vatican Council has become the time to redress our underdeveloped pneumatology.<sup>28</sup> With regard to this contemporary challenge, Frederick E. Crowe suggests:

Our religion cannot be Christocentric in quite the same way it was in the past, but we are troubled by the various efforts to conceive a new center. May I suggest that we discard the image itself of a center, and think rather of an ellipse with two foci. A circle...is a special form of an ellipse, one in which the two foci coincide. Does that provide an image of our previous history in regard to Son and Spirit? ...The Spirit, instead of being allowed to be himself, functioning as a focus in Christian life, was brought into coincidence with the Son and so into a measure of oblivion...In the image of an ellipse the two foci of Son and Spirit are distinct and complementary. Of course, our God is triune, and eventually we must find a place for the Father, but at least we have a first approximation on the way to a complete integration of the three persons in the work of redemption.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Robert M. Doran, “The Starting Point of Systematic Theology,” *Theological Studies* 67 (2006) 750-776.

<sup>24</sup> Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 9.

<sup>25</sup> According to Gerald O’Collins the problematic lies in an understanding of the Holy Spirit to be the Spirit of Christ instead of the Spirit of God. See Gerald O’Collins, “The Holy Trinity: The State of the Questions,” in *Trinity*, ed. Gerald O’Collins et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 1-25.

<sup>26</sup> M. Volf and M. Lee note that even the Orthodox tradition have a less than developed Spirit-ecclesiology in “The Spirit and the Church,” *Advents of the Spirit: An Introduction to the Current Study of Pneumatology*, ed. Bradford E. Hinze and D. L. Dabney (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001) 382-383.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, “Son of God, Holy Spirit and World Religions,” in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 331.

<sup>28</sup> Yves Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, trans. David Smith (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986) 117.

<sup>29</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, “Son and Spirit: Tensions in the Divine Missions?” in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 304.

John Hick's theocentric paradigm, hailed as a Copernican revolution, gives way to what as David Burrell calls a "...a 'Keplerian revolution' to remind us that it was Kepler's substitution of an ellipse (with twin foci) for a circle which allowed Copernicus' model of the solar system to meet the celestial observation in an elegant (and hence workable) fashion."<sup>30</sup>

#### **4. Two Missions: Distinct and Complementary**

Robert Doran writes that the Spirit and Son are *sent* by the Father "for a purpose, and the divine missions are for the purpose of establishing and confirming interpersonal relations, first between God and us, and then among ourselves."<sup>31</sup> The two missions located in creation and in history have the single aim of drawing humanity into the beatific vision, "the heavenly city for the glory of the Father."<sup>32</sup> They are at the heart of a Trinitarian framework for understanding religious diversity.

God's self-giving in history results in the invitation of creation to participate in the inner life of God. This is the definition of a mission: created participation in the eternal divine relations. The tradition has named this process deification, or Crowe's apt neologism: trinitification. The relations between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit constitute the inner life of the Trinity. Their very personal identity is determined by these relationships; thus, the Father is only the Father because he is the Father of the Son. These relations are paternity, filiation, active and passive spiration. Filiation is the generation of the Son by the Father; active spiration the breathing forth of the Spirit by the Father and the Son; and passive spiration the proceeding love, the Holy Spirit. The created participation in the relation of paternity is in the incarnation of the Word in the God-man Jesus Christ. Sanctifying grace is a created

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<sup>30</sup> David Burrell, *Faith and Freedom, an Interfaith Perspective* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 244.

<sup>31</sup> Robert M. Doran. *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 71.

<sup>32</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, vol. 12 of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 491.

participation in active spiration; the habit of charity is a created participation in passive spiration; the light of glory is a created participation of the children of God in the divine sonship (filiation). Since the Incarnation is a singular and unique historical event of the past and the light of glory something of the future, it is sanctifying grace (operative grace or being in love) and the habit of charity (co-operative grace or the coalescing of acts of love) that have immediate significance for the present. It is only through the created participations in the active and passive spirations that the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is mediated from the past to the present and the future event of the created participation of the children of God in the divine sonship at the beatific vision is proleptically present and yet hoped for. It is through the relations of active and passive spiration that the Triune life of God is available for the imitation of and participation in by all humanity, Christians and non-Christians alike. As Congar says, the Spirit “is the bond of unity not only in God, but also between God and creation, a unity of love.”<sup>33</sup> Killian McDonnell echoes this sentiment in his comment that the Spirit is “the contact point between God and humanity” and “the point of departure of our journey to God.”<sup>34</sup>

The Son and Spirit have a specific relationship to their unique operations in the world. The Son, as he has taken on human nature, performs works proper to this fact (i.e. birth, death, resurrection). The Holy Spirit has only the divine nature and thus, does no work that the Father and Son do not likewise do.<sup>35</sup> Each of the divine missions, though ordered to the same end, has its own distinctive role and function neither of which is the “same” nor “superfluous.”<sup>36</sup> Each mission brings its unique eternal divine meaning (determined by the divine relations) into the world; history is affected by the missions of the Spirit and Son.

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<sup>33</sup> Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3 (London: Chapman, 1983) 149.

<sup>34</sup> Killian McDonnell *The Other Hand of God : The Holy Spirit as Universal Touch and Goal* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003) 111, 115.

<sup>35</sup> Lonergan, *The Triune God* 485.

<sup>36</sup> Crowe, “Son and Spirit: Tension in the Divine Missions?” 303.

“The indefinite adaptability which the historicity of [humankind] requires”<sup>37</sup> is furnished by the mission of the Holy Spirit that blows where she will and “fills the entire space-time universe.”<sup>38</sup> It is complemented by the Son’s mission whose “very historicity [...] the completeness of his *kenosis*” prevents him “from becoming an immediate model for the whole human race in all its variety.”<sup>39</sup> In the historical *kenosis* of the Son of God, he is subject to social and cultural conditions, to the limitations of time and place, to language and mores; Jesus’ very Jewishness reveals the totality of the divine *kenosis*. Crowe queries if in our Christomonism and practical binatarianism “we [have] demanded too much of the Son and by that very fact done irreverence to the Spirit the Father gave us?”<sup>40</sup>

## 5. The Order of the Divine Missions

Crowe applies the Aristotelian principle regarding the relation between the ontological and cognitional order of things to the Trinitarian missions. “[T]he principle is that what is first in our eyes is not first in itself; on the contrary, what is first in our eyes is last in itself, and what is last in our eyes is first in itself.”<sup>41</sup> Christians are not surprisingly accustomed to thinking of the Son as being sent into the world first and then the Spirit in continuity with the mission of the Son. Historically, Christian reflection began with the mission of the Son, the experience of the Word made flesh, and then on the Holy Spirit to arrive at an understanding of the persons of the Trinity in themselves after many centuries.<sup>42</sup> In applying the Aristotelian principle to the two divine missions, Crowe writes:

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<sup>37</sup> Crowe, “Son and Spirit: Tensions in the Divine Missions?” 305.

<sup>38</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., “A Threefold *Kenosis* of the Son of God,” in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 323.

<sup>39</sup> Crowe, “Son and Spirit: Tensions in the Divine Missions?” 308.

<sup>40</sup> Crowe, “A Threefold *Kenosis* of the Son of God” 323.

<sup>41</sup> Crowe, “Son of God, Holy Spirit and World Religions” 327 and also “Rethinking God-With-Us: Categories from Lonergan,” *Science et Esprit* XLI/2 (1989) 173.

<sup>42</sup> Such an understanding is first articulated by Augustine in his psychological analogies and reaches considerable technical clarification in Thomas Aquinas.

We have simply to reverse the order in which commonly we think of the Son and Spirit in the world. Commonly we think of God first sending the Son, and of the Spirit being sent in that context, to bring to completion the work of the Son. The thesis says that, on the contrary, God first sent the Spirit, and then sent the Son in the context of the Spirit's mission, to bring to completion- perhaps not precisely the work of the Spirit's mission, but the work which God conceived as one work to be executed in the two steps of the twofold mission of the Spirit and then the Son.<sup>43</sup>

Of course, this is a retrieval of an important part of the Christian tradition evident in the Gospel of Luke's Spirit-Christology. It is attested to by Irenaeus for whom the Spirit and the Word are the two ways God is operative in the history of creation and salvation; and for Ambrose, the Spirit is the source of all creation. At no point in history is the world without the Spirit.<sup>44</sup>

## **6. Loving Over Knowing in the Order of Salvation**

The first and foundation gift given by God is God's very self in the gift of Love, the Holy Spirit. This gift of love "is not objectified in knowledge" but remains "a dynamic vector, a mysterious undertow, a fateful call to dreaded holiness" in interiority<sup>45</sup> Love is oriented toward its fulfillment in its avowal and continues to develop and grow toward consummation.<sup>46</sup> An illustration is to be drawn from a couple falling in love:

If a man and a woman were to love each other yet never avow their love, there would be lacking to their love an interpersonal component, a mutual presence of self-donation. Without that interpersonal component, their love would not have the opportunity to grow.<sup>47</sup>

A couple can fall in love and be in love without naming their situation; however, at some point they must name their situation of love if it is to grow and develop.

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<sup>43</sup> Crowe, "Son of God, Holy Spirit and World Religions" 325.

<sup>44</sup> Dermott Lane, "Pneumatology: Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue," *Louvain Studies* 33 (2008) 138.

<sup>45</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "The Response of a Jesuit" in *A Second Collection, papers by J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. William F.J. Ryan S.J. and Bernard Tyrrell, S.J. (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1974, 1996) 173.

<sup>46</sup> Lonergan, "The Response of a Jesuit" 173.

<sup>47</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Faith and Beliefs." in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965- 1980*, vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) See also, "The Response of a Jesuit" 174.

God's falling in love with us is the sending of the Spirit, the gift of divine love. This love is then avowed in the Incarnation of the Son. God's Word is a public "yes" to loving humanity. Thus, the initial gift of divine love given in interiority, is developed and grown through the power of self-surrender and self-donation until it is freely and fully revealed in the public declaration of divine love in the Word that seals the relationship. The future consummation and fulfillment of love given (the Holy Spirit) and declared (the Word) is in the final union with the originator of the gift of love, God the Father.

The missions of the Spirit and the Son are unique and distinct but intimately related and interdependent, as the former remains but an orientation to a mystery without a visible proper object of being-in-love<sup>48</sup> and the latter in need of interpretation and understanding. The invisible gift of the Spirit is given in interiority and known through the data of consciousness while the visible gift of the Word is given in history and known through empirical data. Without the Word we are unable to articulate the interior experience of love. Conversely, without the mission of the Spirit, the Word as the proper object of being-in-love enters human history but is not received.<sup>49</sup> Hence, it is only through the Holy Spirit that we can declare that "Jesus Christ is Lord!" Likewise, the mission of the Holy Spirit transforms humankind into beings-in-love in community and fellowship. God's self-communication in the Word discloses in whom we are to believe and what love means (self-sacrificing agapic love). Together, in the complementarity of these two missions there is a redemptive function that promotes the Reign of God "as charity that dissolves the hostility and the divisions of past injustice and present hatred" toward deliverance and salvation.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Lonergan's distinction is similar to Karl Rahner's distinction between the transcendental revelation of the Holy Spirit and the categorical revelation of the Son.

<sup>49</sup> Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit" 32.

<sup>50</sup> Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit" 31.

The foundational and universal gift of the Holy Spirit does not imply that the Spirit fills a “void” that the historicity of the Son’s mission is unable to fill. On the contrary, not only does God address all humanity with an inner word in the “secrecy of our hearts” but God also announces the divine intention throughout history, through prophets, in the Messiah, and through the apostles.<sup>51</sup> According to Doran, the public “avowal of that love is given incrementally in the progressive revelation that culminates in the sending of the Son.”<sup>52</sup> The Word is not only present in the history of the Incarnation but whenever and wherever love is objectified because the presence of the Holy Spirit is the presence of the Father and Son together. This is at the heart of our Trinitarian tradition: Athanasius points out not only the distinction in the Trinity but inseparability of the two missions and Basil the unity of action of the Father and the Son in every operation of the Spirit.<sup>53</sup> The works of the Trinity *ad extra* are inseparable.

## 7. Theology of Religion

Lonergan’s theology of missions permits him to speak of two sets of correlative terms in a theology of religions: infrastructure/inner word/faith and suprastructure/outer word/belief.

The universal gift of God’s love, the Holy Spirit, and its experience in interiority pertain to the infrastructure of religion.<sup>54</sup> This experience is immediate in consciousness and unarticulated in discursive reasoning. This “dynamic vector,” “mysterious undertow,” “fateful call to dreaded holiness”<sup>55</sup> is the common element and source of all authentic religions.<sup>56</sup> The infrastructure common to religions is the dynamism of being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion,

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<sup>51</sup> Lonergan, “Faith and Beliefs” 47.

<sup>52</sup> Robert M. Doran, 2009 Emmett Doerr Lecture, Marquette University (*Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*)

<sup>53</sup> Lane, 138.

<sup>54</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, “Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time” in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J. (Mahwah: Paulist Press) 70.

<sup>55</sup> Lonergan, “The Response of a Jesuit” 173.

<sup>56</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, “Philosophy of God” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965- 1980*, vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), questions and responses following the paper 178.

consciously but without an object. This gift, given in the immediacy of human experience, makes us pleasing to God and transvalues our values.<sup>57</sup> Although the giving is personal it is not solitary, private<sup>58</sup> or unhistorical because “the dynamic state of being in love has the character of response.”<sup>59</sup> God’s self-communication enters into history, individually and communally.

Lonergan states:

The Spirit is given to many, and the many form a community. The community endures over generations, spreads over different nations, adapts to cultural changes. It acquires a history of its origins, its development, its successes and failures, its happy strokes and its mistakes. Though God’s grace is given to all, still the experience of resting in God ordinarily needs a religious tradition for it to be encouraged, fostered, interpreted, guided, developed.<sup>60</sup>

Grace is received, encouraged, fostered, interpreted, guided and developed in the suprastructural dimension of religion. Suprastructure pertains to the objectification, thematization and formulation of the experience of the inner word. The classical Christian formulation that Lonergan is so fond of repeating is a suprastructural example of the experience thematized in the metaphor “the gift of God’s love flooding our hearts” (Roman 5:5). The suprastructure of a religion reflects the dynamism of human consciousness to apprehend and discern what is valuable, to name what is meaningful in the experience, and to bring forth value and meaning into human living. It is the apprehension of the love of God met in a judgment of value and in a commitment to live according to the experience of God’s love given. Suprastructure is necessary for the experience of God’s love to move out of the world of immediacy into the world mediated by meaning while at the same time to draw religious believers back into contact with that foundational experience of being in love.

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<sup>57</sup> Robert M. Doran, “Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling: A Key to the *Nexus Mysteriorum Fidei*” 16.

<sup>58</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, “Faith and Beliefs” 47.

<sup>59</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 119.

<sup>60</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, “Theology and Man’s Future,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. William F.J. Ryan S.J. and Bernard J. Tyrrell, S.J. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996) 146.

The suprastructural dimension of religions is not merely a human attempt to objectify an interior experience but reveals the dynamism of the interior word toward self-expression in an outer word expressed in the world mediated by meaning.

Then not only the inner word that is God's gift of his love but also the outer word of the religious tradition comes from God. God's gift of his love is matched by his command to love unrestrictedly, with all one's heart and all one's soul and all one's mind and all one's strength. The narrative of religious origins is the narrative of God's encounter with his people. Religious effort towards authenticity through prayer and penance and religious love of all men shown in good deeds become an apostolate, for '...you will recognize them by their fruits' (Mt. 7, 20). Finally, the word of religious expression is not just the objectification of the gift of God's love; in a privileged area it also is specific meaning, the word of God himself.<sup>61</sup>

The character of response that mediates the immediate experience of the inner word into the world mediated by meaning is that of a person or persons in love, already transformed by the gift of God's love. Thus, "religious beliefs would be objectifications not only of internal experience but also of the externally uttered word of God."<sup>62</sup> Inner and outer words are both divine utterances, the former immediately in consciousness and the latter mediated through community and history. God does not leave us alone to interpret the experience of divine love but announces the divine intention in history. "There is a personal entrance of God himself into history, a communication of God to his people, the advent of God's word into the world of religious expression;"<sup>63</sup> and "God's gift of his love has its proper counterpart in the revelation events in which God discloses to a particular people or to all mankind the completeness of his love for them."<sup>64</sup>

This brings us to the third correlative set of terms : faith and beliefs. Faith is knowledge born of religious love. It is the result of God's gift of love that enables us to be transformed and

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<sup>61</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 119.

<sup>62</sup> Lonergan, "Faith and Beliefs" 47.

<sup>63</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 119.

<sup>64</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 283.

apprehend and respond to what is valuable.<sup>65</sup> Religious beliefs result from the judgment of value of religious knowing. According to Lonergan the distinction between faith and beliefs rooted in the experience of the gift of God's love is the basis for inter-religious dialogue:

For in the measure that experience is genuine, it is orientated to the mystery of love and awe; it has the power of unrestricted love to reveal and uphold all that is truly good; it remains the bond that unites the religious community, that directs their common judgments, that purifies their beliefs. Beliefs do differ, but behind this difference there is a deeper unity. For beliefs result from judgments of value, and the judgments of value relevant for religious beliefs come from faith, the eye of religious love, an eye that can discern God's self-disclosures.<sup>66</sup>

The inner and outer dimensions of religious traditions is a common structural element though the expressions and formulations of religious beliefs differ. There is a shared common origin in religious experience which makes the recognition of God's self-disclosures in history possible. Differences in the objectification of religious experience expressed in religious beliefs are neither insignificant nor something to be overcome because the outer dimension also reveals God's entry into the world of meaning carried through intersubjectivity, art, symbols, deeds, and word.<sup>67</sup>

The correlative terms of infrastructure/inner word/faith and suprastructure/outer word/belief derived from the missions of the Spirit and the Son have important ramifications in the current debates around soteriology and Christology in theologies of religion. If the mission of the Spirit, the inner word of faith given at the infrastructural level of religion is the first and foundational divine gift given to all cultures and religions, then God's grace abounds in them. "That grace is the finding that grounds our seeking God through natural reason and through positive religion. That grace is the touchstone by which we judge whether it is really God that natural reason or positive religion preaches. That grace would be the grace sufficient for salvation that God offers all men, that underpins what is good in all the religions of mankind,

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<sup>65</sup> Lonergan, "Faith and Beliefs" 43.

<sup>66</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 119.

<sup>67</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 112.

that explains how those that never heard the gospel can be saved...That grace is what replaces doctrine as the *unum necessarium* in religions generally.”<sup>68</sup> The key question for Lonergan is not whether God’s grace is given to all people but once given whether it “operates as the seed that falls on rocks or amidst thorns or by the wayside or on good ground to bring forth fruit thirty or sixty or a hundred fold.”<sup>69</sup>

Differences at the suprastructure level distinguish one religion from another: history, culture, language, expression, etc. Unlike other religions the Jesus Christ event constitutes the very suprastructure of Christianity as he is the public avowal of God’s inner gift of divine love. “[Christianity’s] suprastructure, however, is already extant in the account of Christian origins: God sending his only Son for our salvation through death and resurrection and the sending of the Spirit...The distinctiveness of Christianity lies in this suprastructure.”<sup>70</sup> Non-Christian religions may recognize in Christianity the expression of the gift of love common to all religions. Christians then know God not only through the gift of grace given in interiority but also in the public avowal of God’s love in the gift of the Son, and then in the witness to the Jesus Christ event<sup>71</sup> and in the life and praxis of the church that mediates the meaning of that event in history.<sup>72</sup>

## **8. New Challenge: History**

Affirming the presence of the Holy Spirit in all the religions of the world, and the priority of loving over knowing in the order of salvation affects the Christian approach to the world

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<sup>68</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, “Doctrinal Pluralism” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965- 1980*, vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 83.

<sup>69</sup> Lonergan, “Theology and Man’s Future” 139.

<sup>70</sup> Lonergan, “Prolegomena” 71

<sup>71</sup> Lonergan, “Philosophy of God and Theology” 170.

<sup>72</sup> Lonergan, “Doctrinal Pluralism” 83.

religions.<sup>73</sup> The positive features of all world's religions have their source in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The fact that the same Spirit can be discerned in the world's religions in their outer word and beliefs, by their fruits, reorients the Christian "relation, attitude, and approach" to the religiously Other. Crowe asks, "How will our understanding of non-Christians as gifted with the Spirit affect our general attitude and relation to them?"<sup>74</sup> Since Christians have no active role in the giving of the Spirit, as this is a divine initiative, Christians need not concern themselves with who should receive the Spirit and why. Christians face religiously other persons not as deficient Christians but full of and overflowing with the gift of God's self. Christians need not refer to what is implicit in the Other religions but what is actually present. Thus, Christians need to examine their own attitudes and behaviours toward the religious Other and make "agonizing reappraisals"<sup>75</sup> regarding other religions.

The "common orientation to the mystery of love and awe through the indwelling Holy Spirit"<sup>76</sup> reflects the unity of God's gift given to many; Crowe asks if it could be that "the same Spirit who long ago made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles might be expected to be independent of our division of Christians and non-Christians?"<sup>77</sup> One of the important fruits of the Holy Spirit experienced by the early Church was to break down barriers between Jews and Gentiles. Is it not similarly possible that the fruit of the Spirit today could be to break down barriers of mistrust, antagonism and even violence between the religions of the world? After all, "the one Pentecost [that began at the dawn of time]...is alive and well and ongoing *throughout*

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<sup>73</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, "Son of God, Holy Spirit, and World Religions," in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Washington D.C. The Catholic University of America Press, 1989) 325-326.

<sup>74</sup> Crowe, "Son of God, Holy Spirit, and World Religions" 333.

<sup>75</sup> Crowe, "Son of God, Holy Spirit, and World Religions" 334.

<sup>76</sup> Crowe, "Son of God, Holy Spirit, and World Religions" 335.

<sup>77</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., "The Spirit and 'I' at Prayer," in *Developing the Lonergan Legacy*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 294-295.

*the world.*”<sup>78</sup> “[W]e can affirm” writes Doran, “that the Holy Spirit is poured out on all people and *can be found in religions* other than Christianity as well as in the Christian churches.”<sup>79</sup>

A Trinitarian framework marginalizes Christological and soteriological issues and raises new questions having to do with history. It is a view of history structured by the self-giving of the Trinity and of history taken up into the inner life of the Triune God. Crowe articulates some of these questions:

What is God doing in the divine economy of the twofold mission, an economy that extends over all ages? What was God doing in past ages? What is God doing now? What can we discern of the possibilities the future holds and of the actualities God’s intentions may have already determined for us? Some total view of history seems called for: What does Lonergan contribute under that heading?<sup>80</sup>

Crowe outlines two approaches to the series of questions he poses derived from Lonergan’s thought that contribute to his central concern regarding “some total view of history.”<sup>81</sup> The first approach is based on Lonergan’s structure of history: progress, decline and redemption which are simultaneously present in varying degrees at any given moment: “though emphases may vary in different sequences, we are always progressing in some way, always in some degree declining, and equally always being redeemed.”<sup>82</sup> With regard to religious diversity this approach perceives “...the simultaneous presence among us of the many religions, each with its fidelity to the Spirit present in them (progress), each with its infidelity to the promptings of the Spirit (decline), and each being led to the ultimate end of all creation (redemption).”<sup>83</sup> This first approach has to do with the authenticity or inauthenticity of religious believers.

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<sup>78</sup> Crowe, “Son of God, Holy Spirit, and the World Religions” 332. My italics.

<sup>79</sup> Robert M. Doran, “The Starting Point of Systematic Theology,” 750-776. My italics.

<sup>80</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, *Christ and History* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2005) 218. See also “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion” 174.

<sup>81</sup> Crowe admits that the data Lonergan leaves us for such an exploration are “scattered” throughout his writings on the economy of salvation and the mission of Christian history. See “Lonergan’s Universalist View” 176.

<sup>82</sup> Crowe, *Christ and History* 219.

<sup>83</sup> Crowe, *Christ and History* 219.

The second approach to history has to do with the relationship of the religions to one another and to historical events: “sequences in meaning and expression, in social institutions and culture, in all that pertains to human living, and this, whether it be question of progress or question of decline.”<sup>84</sup> In this scenario, writes Crowe

God has seen fit to allow—and promote—the simultaneous existence of many religions, has God a ‘plan’ also for the sequences in the various roles of the various religions? Are some transient, and others meant to endure to the end, if there is to be an end? What is the rationale of the appearance at a particular time in the Judaic religion, when Augustus was Roman Emperor, of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth? Was the appearance of Jesus ‘timed’ not only in relation to Augustus but also in relation to the stage of development reached by the world religions?<sup>85</sup>

One prong in this second approach relates to timing, what Lonergan termed ‘convenientia’ in his theology of Incarnation. Crowe extends the field to include reflection on “the role of the Holy Spirit to the order of universal history...what is the ‘convenientia’ of the interior gift of the Spirit to God’s people? How should we conceive of the overarching order of a universe when we give equal attention to the presence of Son and to the presence of the Spirit?”<sup>86</sup> A second prong asks a similar question in a more universal context: is there timing in the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth or the Buddha, or Mohammed that is related to the stages of development of various religions and of the shared history of religions? In the exploration of such questions the roles of both the Son and the Spirit in history must be given due consideration.

The new challenges a theology of religions poses is significant in thinking about the future and the role religions play in its constitution of history since “God has no will for tomorrow, or anything else that is not.”<sup>87</sup> Here I quote Crowe at length to illustrate the

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<sup>84</sup> Crowe, “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion” 175.

<sup>85</sup> Crowe, *Christ and History* 219 and “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion” 176.

<sup>86</sup> Crowe, *Christ and History* 220.

<sup>87</sup> Crowe, “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion” 178.

relationship of contingency and freedom, responsibility and opportunity in a theology of religions:

If God's 'plan' is already in place for us, that is, in the 'already' of our 'now,' then to that extent we are no longer free. And if God has a determinate 'plan' in place for Christianity and the world religions, then we will let be what must be. But suppose God has no such plan, suppose that God loves a slow-learning people enough to allow them long ages to learn what they have to learn, suppose that the destiny of the world religions is contingent on what we all learn and do—say, on Christians being authentically Christian, Hindus being authentically Hindu, and so on—then responsibility returns to us with a vengeance, and the answer to the question of the final relationship of Christianity and the world religions is that there is no answer yet.<sup>88</sup>

The authenticity of each religion and how each contributes to the construction of identity of the others affects “the destiny of the world religions” and so the destiny of the world is contingent upon the “actual realization of future possibilities” in the present<sup>89</sup>; possibilities for mutual understanding and learning about one another and about the inexhaustible meaning of God. The divine interaction with humankind leaves us free and responsible for the unfolding and making of history. Since there is no determinate plan for human history then the religions of the world have a privileged role to play as participants in the social situation of grace, in the construction of the world and the direction history takes.

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<sup>88</sup> Crowe, “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion” 178.

<sup>89</sup> Donna Teevan, *Lonergan, Hermeneutics, & Theological Method* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005) 151.