

Thanks to Fr. Doran for the invitation and to Dr. Nussberger for a very good paper.

It was suggested that I look at correspondences between Lonergan's and Balthasar's thought on the issue. That suggestion, along with Dr. Nussberger's reference to last year's colloquium, prompted me to look once again at Fred Crowe's article dealing with the missions of the Son and Spirit, which grounded many of the systematic suggestions put forward last year. I found there grounds to affirm a correspondence that might have been missed last year between Lonergan's thought and Balthasar's.

In Crowe's article, there is a clear affirmation of the necessity of emphasizing both the Son and the Spirit. Crowe noted both that the Spirit is present among the various world religions, *and* "that this partial moment calls for its completion: the need of the world religions to hear the gospel message is the same need still that the world had when God sent the only Son to be its way and truth and life (Jn14:6)" (326). From this perspective, Christians share with the world religions the gift of God's love that is the gift of the Holy Spirit to us (Romans 5:5) (328), but in developing this point, both Crowe and Lonergan made use of marriage as an analogy, as did Fr. Doran yesterday: in Lonergan's words,

when a man and a woman love each other but do not avow their love, they are not yet in love. Their very silence means that their love has not reached the point of self-surrender and self-donation. It is the love that each freely and fully reveals to the other that brings about the radically new situation of being in love and that begins the unfolding of its life-long implications (MT, 112-13).

The same point applies analogously to the missions of the Spirit and the Son. I don't have the time to flesh this out fully, but it is clear that for both Lonergan and Crowe, the outer word—the mission of the Son—is constitutive in its resonance with and completion of the inner word—

the mission of the Spirit; neither is complete without the other. This hopefully alleviates at least some of the questions from last year and highlights a correspondence between the positions of Crowe and Lonergan, on the one hand, and the emphasis on Christocentricity that both Balthasar and Dr. Nussberger would like to retain, on the other hand.

But as Dr. Long pointed out at this event last year, if all a respondent has is agreement, then these sorts of events aren't any fun. With that in mind, I want to attempt to clarify something that is important not only for Dr. Nussberger's points about Balthasar, but also for the issue of the Christian engagement with the religious Other in general: does the Balthasarian position mean that an authentic Christian interreligious engagement will involve literally "speaking" Christ, the Word, as such? Must our performative embodiment of Christ necessitate a priority of the explicit affirmation of Christ in language? To be clear, my question is not whether Christians' participation in interreligious dialogue must be Christic—if we're not on the same page there, then we have much bigger problems; my question is whether being Christic in interreligious dialogue necessarily involves an explicit linguistic reference to Christ.

Crowe put the issue this way: besides working out a way for Christians to have a Christian way of understanding what is going on in other religions,

it is another matter . . . to develop a language in which to communicate across the borders of the religions. [The language of Christians for Christians] is not, or need not be, the language of dialogue with the world religions. (336)

Lonergan attempted just such a move when he used phrases like (from Crowe, 338): the "orientation to transcendent mystery . . . provides the primary and fundamental meaning of the name, God" (MT, 341); "a clouded revelation of absolute intelligence and intelligibility, absolute truth and reality, absolute goodness and holiness" (MT, 116); or when he made reference to

Otto's notion of the *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*, Tillich's notion of being grasped by ultimate concern, or Rahner's consolation without a cause (all three MT, 106).

Crowe suggested that these efforts of Lonergan sought "to go behind the Christian terms . . . and describe the religious differentiation of consciousness that he supposes in all the world religions" (338). Similarly, Crowe saw Paul, in Acts, talking one way with fellow Jews (13:16-41), another way "with simple folk" (340) (14:15-17), and a third way with "the cultured despisers of religion" (340) (17:22-31). He saw the same thing operative in Aquinas (SCG I, 2), where differences with Jews could be settled by appeal to the Old Testament alone; differences with unbelievers could be settled by appeal to reason. I would add to these the point that Christ not only argued from scripture, but he also made use of parables, and the variations often depended on his audience (see, for instance, Mt 12:1-14 versus Mt 13:10-23).

Crowe would transpose this difference, insofar as our problems today involve content, not sources. So, he asks,

do we all believe in a wise and beneficent God? If not, go back (if we are taking Lonergan's route) to chapter 19 [of *Insight*] or as much farther as the need may take us to overcome fatalism, atheism, and so on. But if we do believe, go on to the next step. Do we admit a problem of evil, and expect our God to be concerned with it? If not, go back and establish that; but if we do, we can begin to discuss possible solutions, from the first place to the thirty-first, or the hundred and thirty-first, as far again as need takes us (342).

I think there is a similar move in Dr. Nussberger's suggestion that "the first moment of encounter for interreligious dialogue can . . . be one of meeting each other as flesh and blood human beings with human questions regarding the nature and goal of our being and existence."

She suggests that, to these questions, “the Christian then offers a christological answer that is relevant across interreligious boundaries, because it begins with the Christ whom everyone can see as active in the community.” My question is, again, whether that communal performative witness demands that the Christian answer to the common human questions must include linguistically explicit reference to Christ.

One could easily end up suggesting a “public,” supposedly neutral, sphere distinguishable from a “private,” Christian, sphere, as though there were a realm of language to use with nonbelievers, and a realm of language to use with Christians. Not only would I disagree with such a sharp distinction, but it would also go against one of my key praises of Dr. Nussberger’s paper: that she does *not* seek a neutral public sphere, but works out a properly Christian theology of interreligious dialogue. Dr. Nussberger’s way of avoiding the problem is to situate the Christian christological response as an answer to the questions arising from the commonalities of human experience that cross the boundaries between different religious communities. They are not two ways of speaking that sit side-by-side; instead, one is above the other, as answer to question.

This offers a clue to a correspondence between this Balthasarian position and an aspect of Lonergan’s thought. For Lonergan, such different realms of discourse needn’t be understood as competing horizons side by side with one another, but can instead be understood in terms of sublations, where the higher retains the lower, but situates it into a higher context.

Christologically-centered, thoroughly and explicitly Trinitarian language in the mode of Balthasar or Dr. Nussberger, or in the mode of Crowe’s Christian language spoken to Christians or Lonergan’s repeated references to Romans 5:5, hold the highest position, but they might not foster the level or type of dialogue with others that would, in fact, reflect a properly Christic

interaction. Other language might be preferable, derived with reference to a common interior religious experience, or a common understanding of the problem of evil, or common value judgments, or common affirmations about the meaning of love.

Lonergan did something very similar with natural theology, suggesting that it no longer be considered part of philosophy but that it be “moved,” as it were, to systematic theology, where it would stand under fully theological systematic work in a relation of sublation (MT, 337-40). Just as a natural theology is recognized as properly theological by that move, so different ways of speaking to one another in dialogue are made properly Christian by their sublation under explicitly Christological and Trinitarian language, even if they don’t use explicitly Christological or Trinitarian language. This allows us to choose from among various forms of expression without having to a) surrender to a notion of a neutral linguistic space or b) threaten the Christocentric character of Christian participation in interreligious dialogue. Instead, it recognizes that there are multiple modes of being Christic that allow adjustment to the otherness of one’s dialogue partners, all of them having their root in ecclesial Christic performance.

As a final note of correspondence, I want to return to Crowe’s article and note how it ends. For Crowe, the steps up through all these lower, sublated, ways of speaking point not directly to Jesus of Nazareth, but more directly and immediately to the Church of Christ. As if to say, with the First Vatican Council, that it is the Church which is, or should be, the *signum levatum in nationes*, a sign raised up to the peoples of the world. As if to say that the world religions may be justified, or at least show plausible grounds, in seeing no reason to investigate certain events said to have occurred long ago and far away from them, but they might have every reason to investigate a Christian reality present in their midst, and from that be led

back to the events of long ago and far away that Christians claim as their origin. If that is so, our immediate responsibility in evangelization is clear: it is to make the Church what Christ our Lord would have it be, and on that basis begin to talk to others about Jesus of Nazareth (342-43).

I suggest that this is precisely a Lonerganian take on dialogue that resonates very clearly with Dr. Nussberger's suggestion that "one of the best ways to begin communicating Christian understandings of God and humanity across religious boundaries is to perform that vision through action according to the Christic life form." The further question is, what linguistic limits are imposed by such Christocentricity?