

THANK YOU:

Doran: Invite, Excellent paper turning to the mission of the Word

All the participants

Wonderful annual colloquium on a very important topic

Fr. Doran argues that the horizon of a properly Christian understanding of interreligious dialogue must be Christological. For him, even in mutual self-mediation between the Christian horizon and any other horizon, the “substance [of the church] is ‘the Christian message conjoined with the inner gift of God’s love and resulting in Christian witness, Christian fellowship, and Christian service to [humankind].’”<sup>i</sup> This must be remembered when reading his work, precisely because if we do not keep that central focus in mind, Doran’s project might seem to be problematic when in fact it is not.

Fr. Doran is certainly correct when he emphasizes that the mission of the Son, the revelation of divine love, is constitutive of the divine-human friendship inaugurated by the Holy Spirit.<sup>ii</sup> For this reason, it is also worth noting that, while in one sense we can say that for those who do not know this revelation charity is “in fact if not in name” a full love of God,<sup>iii</sup> in another sense we may need to admit that this love is not mutually avowed in a fully constitutive sense. While the Holy Spirit does move the human religious situation from an intersubjective to an

interpersonal level, even for Bernard Lonergan that interpersonal level is not full without a mutual avowal of that love in history, an affirming response of one party to the concrete historical expression of another.<sup>iv</sup>

Doran is aware of this difference, which is precisely why he has constructed a paper that wants to insist on the mission of the church as the continuation of that avowal through its proclamation in history.<sup>v</sup> That effort might seem to be limited by some of his language, as for instance when he states that “The outer word of avowal . . . seals the mutual presence of self-donation that is initiated by the prior gift of the Holy Spirit and accepted in the response we call charity.”<sup>vi</sup> But while we have to keep in mind that, for Lonergan, an avowing outer word is a *constitutive* seal, Doran did affirm this constitutiveness elsewhere in his paper. This constitutive outer word is the ground of the distinctiveness of the Christian church, as Doran notes: “Pentecost marks the beginning of the community that *knows* these missions, and indeed that knows *both* of them. That knowledge distinguishes the church from all other communities.”<sup>vii</sup>

This particular distinctiveness of the Christian church raises further questions related to the issue of horizons in interreligious dialogue. Christian particularity arises from its being a community gathered around the ongoing proclamation of God’s avowal of love in history. Doran identifies the epistemological horizon of that community as an “epistemology of love that

contrasts . . . sharply with the sinful inclination to return evil for evil.”<sup>viii</sup> While Doran understands social sin to be rooted in a “refusal to allow the meaning of the normative scale of values to inform the social order,”<sup>ix</sup> he sees Christianity’s contribution to culture as the communication of this epistemology to cultural superstructure in order to foster integral meaning<sup>x</sup>—that is, in order to foster adherence to the normative scale of values.

But the horizontal, epistemological implication of Christian distinctiveness raises further questions on this front that push toward further development of Doran’s work. While Doran rightly emphasizes that the mission of the church is to “guide the reorientation of human-scientific endeavors in the light of the theological foundations provided by religious, moral, intellectual, and affective conversion,”<sup>xi</sup> the epistemological horizon of Christianity arises from its being a distinctive community made distinctive by the fact that it knows *both* the mission of the Spirit *and* the avowing mission of the Son. A further question then arises about the place of an affirmative response to the avowal of God’s love in history, or a particularly Christian conversion, among theological foundations.

Or, to go about the same issue from another angle, keep in mind three things, with all of which I think Fr. Doran would agree: (1) that fully integral adherence to the scale of values is only possible with God’s grace, (2) that grace is part and parcel of an interpersonal relationship of love between God and human beings, and

(3) that interpersonal relationships of love only reach their full actualization when that love has been mutually avowed in history. Doran emphasizes that evangelization is the church's proclamation of God's avowal in history to the cultural superstructure, but there is a further relevant question here having to do with the difficulties of such communication when those with whom the church is attempting to communicate have not affirmed that avowal.

This issue has to do with horizons.<sup>xii</sup> If the church is constituted most fundamentally by "the revelation of God's universal gift of love . . . in the paschal mystery,"<sup>xiii</sup> and the church thereby has a particular epistemological horizon in conformity with the ground both of the universe and of integral adherence to the normative scale of values, then further questions are raised when we affirm that the church is a part within a larger whole of human culture<sup>xiv</sup> or even if we affirm that the church needs to operate on the level of our day.<sup>xv</sup> If the horizon following on God's gift of love coupled with concrete avowal is the most universal, then larger here can only be a *quantitative* term expressing an empirical fact: there are more non-Christians than Christians. If it is taken qualitatively, a further relevant question is, Is the Christian epistemological horizon one horizon among many to be subsumed under a larger, more universal, context, or is it the most universal epistemological horizon?

Let me note here that when Fr. Doran speaks of a “world-cultural context,” I do not think that he intends to suggest that this “world-cultural context” is more universal or sufficient as over-against a Christian horizon; instead, I think he would affirm (and if so, I would agree) that a Christian epistemological horizon has a certain priority, which is precisely why it needs to be brought to culture. In other words, Christianity needs to be on the level of its time, not in order that it might reach *up* to a more universal horizon, but in order that it might be adequate to its own internal exigencies by reaching *out* to persons with non-Christian horizons: we are commanded to proclaim the avowal of God’s love to those to whom the avowal has not been proclaimed—those who, in other words, do not share the Christian horizon.

I think this latter point is exactly what Fr. Doran is after when he suggests that we turn the Christian principles behind ecumenism to interreligious dialogue: the church, as it participates in the mission of the divine Word, provides the horizon by which we ought best to understand interreligious dialogue from a Christian point of view.

It is good to emphasize the centrality of Christ and the Christian community in forming epistemological horizons. Some theologians are rightly concerned that we not lose the fundamentally criteria-setting role of a Christocentric horizon grounded on avowed interpersonal relations with the Trinitarian God. While at first

blush Doran's position may seem to run afoul of this concern, in fact he does not, and further, these sorts of concerns raise questions that may help to continue the fruitful development of the work Fr. Doran has begun.

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<sup>i</sup> 18, quoting *Method*, 363.

<sup>ii</sup> "The revelation of divine love establishes personal relations of human beings with God and with one another that would not be possible without that revelation, and so the mission of the Son is constitutive of the human friendship with God inaugurated by the gift of the Holy Spirit" (3, referring to Frederick E. Crowe, 'Son of God, Holy Spirit, and World Religions,' in Crowe, *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 325).

<sup>iii</sup> "for those who do not know the revelation of this trinitarian gift, charity takes the form of a love of wisdom and a purified transcendence that in fact if not in name is a love of God with all one's heart and all one's mind and all one's strength" (5).

<sup>iv</sup> See 6: "Even without the revelation of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the religious situation of humankind has always been intersubjective; but the revelation of the gift in Jesus promotes the primordially intersubjective status of human religion to the distinctly and explicitly interpersonal." *Method* example.

<sup>v</sup> "The mission of the church is to cooperate with the three divine persons as they extend to the ends of the earth and to the end of time the revelation of the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the visible mission of the incarnate Word, as these two missions together establish the interpersonal relations with the three divine subjects and among human beings that constitute the state of grace" (7).

<sup>vi</sup> 7

<sup>vii</sup> 7

<sup>viii</sup> 10

<sup>ix</sup> 13

<sup>x</sup> "By 'integral meaning' here I am referring to theological, philosophical, and human-scientific (including economic) positions that are the fruit of interdisciplinary collaboration carried on in explicit dedication to evangelization at the level of the cultural superstructure" (13).

<sup>xi</sup> 14

<sup>xii</sup> In a brief note originally made public at last April's WCMI Lonergan conference at Loyola Marymount University and subsequently published in this past spring's issue of *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, Fr. Doran suggested the distinction of Lonergan's functional specialty of Foundations into two tasks, which he named Horizons and Categories. Horizons would sit outside or above, to go with a spatial metaphor, the eight functional specialties Lonergan originally affirmed in *Method in Theology*. Its object would be the objectification of the normative subject, and I would suggest that one aspect of that objectification would be a wrestling with the question of the relation between various epistemological horizons. That, I suppose, is at least in part what I am attempting to get at here.

<sup>xiii</sup> 15-16

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<sup>xiv</sup> 16, 17–18

<sup>xv</sup> 19