

Is divine revelation possible in other religions? Are there divine outer words in other religions? If so, are these religions aware of the difference between their own human words and God's own word? Does the Buddha have anything *from God* to say to Christians? How does the possibility of divine revelation in other religions affect Christian missionary activity? In raising these questions, I hope to address Dr. Petillo's comment about the disparity between divine love and the human word, along with Dr. Cone's question about missionary activity.

In Lonergan, the status of divine revelation in other religions, or as he puts it, the outer word of other religions, is ambiguous. I would like to clarify and amplify what Lonergan says by adverting to Fred Crowe's work on world religions. With this clarified language, I will then call attention to the next steps Lonergan scholars should take in order to make their work relevant to current concerns of comparative theology, theology of religions, and missionary activity.

Admittedly, the possibility of divine revelation in other traditions is a controversial question in the life of the magisterium, but I think the Christian tradition may have resources to affirm this possibility. Any time world religions interact, differences will come to the fore. When divine revelation is on the table, incongruities between religious expressions become existentially problematic. We need a method for treating apparent incongruities between Christian divine revelation and God's word in other traditions without reducing these religions to a lowest common denominator.

In fact, the possible presence of revelation within other religious traditions would not *necessarily* proclaim something that is incongruent with Christian revelation. Christians believe that God remains the same and that God's love is unconditional. What does change, is us: humans, including Jesus himself, are historical beings who live under spatio-temporal conditions.

To consider the possibility of divine revelation in other religions, let's define terms: inner word, faith, outer words, and belief. First, "inner word" in Christian language is the mission of

the Holy Spirit, the gift of God's love flooding our hearts. "Faith," is the religious knowledge born of this gift. In other words, faith is the response to the inner word.

Next, besides the inner word of religious experience, there is the "outer word" of religious tradition.¹ Three outer words are possible within a religious tradition : there is a human outer word and two kinds of divine outer words First, the 'human outer word' is a community's objectification of the inner word of its religious experience. But outer words can do more than express the inner word. And so secondly,, there is God's own divine outer word that *avows God's love for us*. Crowe differentiates two kinds of divine outer word, which both avow God's love: Divine Outer Word One is "the public word God speaks to accompany the personal gift of divine love." Divine Outer Word Two is the word God speaks that will manifest the full extent of divine love.² Divine Outer Word Two is what we have in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the fullness of time the Son was sent to avow the gift of God's love given to us in the Holy Spirit.

The reason Crowe proposes two divine outer words is that Lonergan seems to affirm the possibility that God has spoken to other religions in history, as Petillo notes. Yet, Lonergan simultaneously affirms the uniqueness of Christian revelation in Christ Jesus.³ These outer words, then, constitute a religious tradition's "belief." That is, beliefs are "the judgments of fact and the judgment of value that the religion proposes."⁴ Beliefs are socio-historical in character.

Now for a few relations: Beliefs are distinct but not separate from faith. As Lonergan says, "Faith discerns the value of believing the word of religion."⁵ In other words, faith sets the horizon from which we can accept the beliefs of a tradition. Finally, the relationship between the inner word and the two divine outer words—that is between missions of the Spirit and the Son—has been understood by analogy with the avowal of love between a woman and a man.

Now that we have defined some terms and relations, we can attend to the ambiguity. It is unclear whether there are divine outer words in religions other than Christianity. The human

outer word *is* present in all religions. Divine Outer Word Two is the uniquely Christian divine outer word manifested by Jesus Christ. But what about the Divine Outer Word One, the public word that accompanies God's personal gift of divine love? In other words, the most pressing question given our present interreligious situation is, "does God avow God's love in other traditions, or are they left with only the anonymous inner word and their own human word about it?" And so it is this Divine Outer Word One gives rise to the greatest ambiguity in Lonergan scholarship. Divine Outer Word One is also where the possibility of affirming divine revelation in other traditions lies.

What is the difference between the public word God speaks and the word God speaks that fully manifests God's love in Christ Jesus? This is the relationship I find most ambiguous in Lonergan and in subsequent scholarship, and it is the relationship most pertinent to interreligious dialogue, at least from a Christian point of view. With respect to world religions, there are two tasks I think we Lonergan scholars need to take up: we need a more robust understanding of divine outer word 1. Also, we need to study other world religions. With respect to the first task, we have focused our energies on three things: the inner word, divine outer word 2, namely the one and only visible mission of the Son, and the relation that obtains between them. We have neglected, however, divine outer word 1—God's public word that accompanies divine love. This neglect leaves intact the ambiguity about divine revelation in other religions.

In order to address this ambiguity, we need to develop further the natural analogue—the avowal of love between a man and woman. I do not think the natural analogue, as it stands, is fully explanatory. Think about the psychological analogy of the Trinity as developed in Augustine, Aquinas, and Lonergan and how much effort is made to understand the natural analogue—intelligible emanations—for divine procession in God. What we have said about the analogy of the avowal of love between a man and a woman in order to understand the divine

missions pales in comparison. The lack of a fully explanatory analogy contributes to the basic ambiguity about divine revelation in other religions. Just as there is much more that takes place leading up to and subsequent to the event of the avowal of love between a man and woman, so there may be more that occurs between the mission of the Spirit (inner word) and the mission of the Son (outer word). Developing the analogy may assist us in clarifying two relationships: one, the relationship between the inner word and Divine Outer Word 1. Two, the relationship between the two kinds of divine outer words. Developing the “avowal” analogy, then, is the first task.

The second task then is to study other religious traditions. Lonergan scholars have concentrated almost exclusively on developing the upper blade of theology of religions. Studying another tradition is crucial if we wish to address the question of divine revelation, and if we wish to be taken seriously by other theologians working in the field of world religions. They rightly claim that such a study is essential to our task. While developing the natural analogue and mining the depths of our own Christian tradition is crucial, much of the relevant data for Divine Outer Word 1 lies in other religious traditions.

Thus, studying other traditions must be our next step. Anything short of this concrete endeavor will leave us only with the dull blade of an abstract possibility. We need a scissors method. Lonergan scholars are uniquely situated to contribute to this field because of the openness and thoroughness that comes with Functional Specialization. Here, I refer you to Fr. Doran's work. We have an excellent starting point in our current Doctrines—the universal salvific will of God and Crowe's doctrine about the reversal of the traditional ordering of the divine missions. However, in order to understand and develop these doctrines, we need to return to the first phase of theology and study another tradition therein. History is especially important because what we are looking for is God's redemptive action in history, and we do so by searching out God's avowals of divine love. In the process, a development of the doctrine on

world religions may take place. We will then be in a better place to pursue a Systematic understanding of this doctrine. However, that may be the task of future theologians.

How we attend to these tasks will impact our approach to missionary activity. If Lonergan is correct in asserting that there has been a radical shift in the question concerning Christ's divinity, how should our missionary activity accommodate this movement? The shift he is referring to is that contemporary Christology does not focus Christ himself. Rather, it focuses on how God revealed his love for us, namely by sending his own Son to suffer and die. With chapter 20 of *Insight* in mind, I suggest that the parallel shift in our missionary activity should start by asking others, "What can I do for you?" In this way, we extend God's friendships to other nations, as it was first extended to us by Jesus. This is the model we are receiving from Pope Francis. In comments concerning refugees, the pope asked nuns and monks to abandon the practice of using their convents as hostels and instead to open their doors to refugees. He closed his comments with a reflection on the sufferings of humanity, claiming that even amidst their darkness, these sufferings disclose that it is possible for us to do something now. He ended by saying, "Suffice it to knock on the door and say 'I'm here. How can I give a hand?'" Interestingly, most of these refugees are Muslims.⁶

¹ See Hefling, "Insight and/as Revelations," 100.

² See Crowe, "Universalist View of Religion," 165.

³ *Method in Theology*, 283; see also "The Future of Christianity," 156 (*A Second Collection*); Crowe, "Universalist View of Religion," 168-69.

⁴ *Method*, 118.

⁵ *Method*, 118.

⁶ <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-address-to-the-astalli-center-in-rome>. (Sept. 10, 2013 during the Pope's visit to the Astalli Center).