

Response to Fr. Robert Doran's "Social Grace and the Mission of the Word"

Paul Joseph LaChance

College of Saint Elizabeth

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in this conference. It is indeed an honor to be invited to join with you in this work.

In response to Fr. Doran's very rich paper I want to comment on what I see as necessary avenues of collaboration.¹ These two avenues of collaboration would implement what Lonergan himself noted about his own Trinitarian theology in *Caring About Meaning*. In those interviews Lonergan said that his whole Trinitarian theology had become purely Scriptural and that a new text on the Trinity would have to include general terms concerned with human relations taken from group consciousness: "Persons are all related to the Trinity: 'Our Father', 'Our Savior'".² So, Fr. Doran has initiated is a project that requires the collaboration of theologians in systematics with those in interpretation and history, specifically in the areas of biblical and religious studies.

First, then, the systematic articulation of the mission of the Holy Spirit invites collaboration with biblical scholars. In the papers for this year and last year Fr. Doran builds upon a highly technical understanding of the relationship between gift of the Holy Spirit and the fruits evident in the authentic operating scale of values. When he speaks of the Holy Spirit as Gift, he intends to name the Holy Spirit properly and not by way of appropriation. In *The Triune God: Systematics*, Chapter 6, Lonergan explained that the

¹ I offer these comments hypothetically, as part of an ongoing conversation, recognizing that collaborators may anticipate but should not determine the results *a priori*. Besides, my own understanding is *in fieri*.

² Pierrot Lambert, Charlotte Tansey, & Cathleen Going, *Caring About Meaning* (Montreal: Thomas Moore Institute, 1982) p. 62.

sending of the Holy Spirit may be understood in three ways: “first, that a finite spiritual effect is produced in the creature”; “second, that the third divine person comes into a creature”, that is, I believe, that the Holy Spirit comes of his own accord as one might understand, for instance, the petition *veni sancte spiritus* (though this is not how Fr. Doran means it in his paper--see p. 6); “third, that the third divine person is really and truly sent by the other two” (pp. 453-455). Only according to the third understanding would the Holy Spirit properly be called Gift. According to the first two ways the Holy Spirit would be called ‘Gift’ by appropriation. The created spiritual effects are known, willed, and produced by each person distinctly and without confusion, but also by all three in virtue of the one divine essence. Properly speaking, the mission of the Holy Spirit is constituted by a divine relation of origin. This is understood on the analogy of divine knowledge—as “God knows that contingent things exist through his own knowledge and not through an external term, which is nonetheless required”; so “the Holy Spirit is sent through that which the Holy Spirit is and not through an external term, which is nonetheless required” (p. 459).

On the basis of this understanding Lonergan affirmed that “by the very fact that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit conceive and will the sending of a divine person, the constituted mission itself and the appropriate created external term are already present.” (p. 467) That is, with respect to Fr. Doran’s third doctrine, the Three as distinct Persons commonly conceive and will that the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to creatures and together produce the mission. Lonergan writes, “the three persons equally and truly create the appropriate terms.” (p. 469) The mission with its external term is sufficiently constituted, and what is constituted by divine knowing, willing, and

producing is that the first two send and the third is sent. The three commonly yet distinctly will that the Holy Spirit be given and that creatures be united in friendship with God. Further, this grace of friendship is the gift of God's whole self in love, which means that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit indwell both personally and commonly, that is as Trinity. The contingent truths or external terms are summarized by Lonergan in the four point hypothesis (p. 473), under discussion in Fr. Doran's paper.³

That technical understanding invites a return to the sources of revelation and to the history of doctrine. Lonergan and Doran have differentiated for theological inquiry the specific grace consequent to the sending of the Holy Spirit precisely as sent by the Father and Son. That question should then be taken up in a return to the first phase of theology in a query of the sources of revelation and the previous histories from the viewpoint or within the horizon of interiority and methodical theology. However, while tremendous work has been done regarding the sources of revelation in contemporary pneumatology, and some manuscripts relating to history have been written, these have not been adjudicated dialectically. In fact, the question of adjudication may even be a bit premature. Still, it is worth noting that Lonergan called attention to something that Aquinas had observed. Aquinas was aware that St. Augustine and the Eleventh Council of Toledo in 675 had interpreted Isaiah 48.16 "The Lord God and his spirit has sent me" to refer to the Spirit's sending the Son and distinguished between two ways of

³ Lonergan also conceived of the Trinitarian character of the transition in human consciousness from the natural to the supernatural in terms of vertical finality. ("Mission and the Spirit", *Third Collection*, 23-34; 23) When the relation of sanctifying grace or of divine friendship is conceived as the terms of the mission of the Holy Spirit, then it is constituted personally by the Spirit, but the person reaches the term or participates in the Trinity as the work of the Persons. Vertical finality orients individual to the higher and that orientation leads to a participation in the constitution of the higher only because of the agent of the whole. Our attainment of the end to which we are related is effected by God who orders the whole. Further, vertical finality is obscure and the relation effected by sanctifying grace is known only obscurely. It is clarified in the visible mission of the Son and only that much of it is known with any clarity as is assented to in faith and put into act in charity.

designating the sender, either as the principle of the existence of the one sent or as the principle of the effects implied in the mission (ST. I.46.8). What is wanted then is a systematic use of this distinction in the same way that theologians incorporated into their reading of Scripture Augustine's distinction between things said of Christ in virtue of his humanity and things said in virtue of his divinity.

That systematic use might be presented in light of other attempts to resolve an acknowledged difficulty in understanding the Spirit's relation to Christ, on the one hand, and to creation and providence, on the other. Eager to encourage a broader understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit than may be allowed by an exclusive emphasis on the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ sent to believers, Maurice Wiles and Geoffrey Lampe have accused theologians of trying to understand the Holy Spirit in a too direct, isolating, and hypostasizing manner. They preferred a less differentiated approach to the bible that identified the work of the Spirit as the work of God generally. For these writers, a Christological understanding of the Spirit excludes the universality of divine love.⁴ John Webster has offered a conceptualist articulation of this dilemma and a possible solution. Webster, writes that "what starts as the attempt to protect the identity of the Spirit from dissipation into a general presence of God easily becomes itself a threat to that identity. To tie the Spirit too closely to the person and work of Christ is to underestimate that differentiation within the one divine life and thus to encourage the slow drift into

⁴ Closer to the topic of this conference, the understanding of the mission of the Spirit when distinguished from divine providence up to the last century has been restricted to the community of believers effecting life in Christ and a new creation. The Spirit is the guarantor of inspiration and the mission of the Spirit to the church ensures unity and apostolicity but, since the Apologists, the Word universally enlightens all peoples. It must have been a remarkable history by which the appreciation of the historical particularity of Jesus of Nazareth and of the catholicity of the Spirit led to the present reversal of perspectives. Some indications of the causes of this reversal are perhaps given in Yves Congar's magisterial three volume work, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, particularly the second part in which Congar treats the theology of Spirit in light of renewal and ecumenism.

modalism which is so common in western Trinitarian theology.” For Webster the issue is rooted in the conception of Person that guides Trinitarian theology. Thus, the solution is a revision of the conception itself:

‘Person’ is again to be conceived relationally: the person is not an autonomous subject but rather is constituted as person in relationship and dialogue. Understood in this way, the divine ‘personality’ or ‘subjectivity’ does not preclude relationship and differentiation; indeed, it is relationship. God’s personality is God’s relatedness to himself.

If God’s triunity is thus understood as a personal, related society, then the danger of absorption of the Spirit into the person of Christ will be considerably lessened, precisely because God’s being will be seen as fully plural. A pluralist understanding of God’s being, moreover, will furnish the basis for understanding the distinct role of the Spirit in the divine economy, related to but properly distinguished from those of Father and Son. This will, in turn, serve to reinforce a sense of the distinct identity of the Spirit.⁵

Raymond Brown offered a reading of the pneumatological texts according to a pattern that he had established in interpreting New Testament Christology.⁶ Brown carefully attends to the ambiguity of the meaning of the term *pneuma* in the New Testament. On Brown’s reading, the Christian community, beginning with an apprehension of the role of the Holy Spirit in Christ’s Resurrection, move both backward and forward. They moved backwards in their reflection on the place of the Spirit in

⁵ John Webster, “The Identity of the Holy Spirit: A Problem in Trinitarian Theology,” *Themelios* 9.1 (September 1983): 4-7. Retrieved from http://s3.amazonaws.com/tgc-documents/journal-issues/9.1_Webster.pdf

⁶ Raymond E. Brown, “Diverse Views of the Spirit in the New Testament”, *Worship* 57.3 (1983): 225-236.

Christ's baptism and ministry, personality and conception, and finally on the Spirit's relationship to the pre-existence Word. They also moved forward in their reflections on the place of the Spirit in the constitution of the Church. Brown, thus, reads pneumatological texts as representing different stages in Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit, Christ, and Church. Brown's overriding concern is the distinction between the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of grace, and the human spirit, the breath of life, the image of God within all human beings.

A further distinction is reflected in N.T. Wright's questions concerning the general and the proper work of the Holy Spirit. Wright opines: "Somehow we are committed to saying both that the Spirit is the same Spirit who was active in the world all along, and especially in Israel (inspiring the prophets, for instance), and that the Spirit is given in a new way through the death and resurrection of Jesus and through faith in him."⁷ Wright's formulation is reminiscent of 'Christian realism', still we have to wait to see how the application of Aquinas' distinction to a reading of the data on revelation might elucidate Wright's reflections and the real meaning of "somehow".

At this point I must ask a question touching on the systematic side of the collaboration. I am still unclear on how best to think about the distinction between the appropriated and the proper work of the Spirit, between the role of the Spirit in bringing about the effects of the Missions (the external term of divine knowing, loving, and producing), and the role of Spirit precisely as sent by the Father and Son (the external term of the Spirit's mission). Lonergan distinguished between religious experience and religion as infrastructure and superstructure. As infrastructure religious experience is not

⁷ N.T. Wright, "The Holy Spirit and the Church", Fulcrum Conference, 29 April 2005. Retrieved from http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/holyspirit_webster.pdf

experience of God but an orientation to an as yet unknown albeit to an orientation which is perhaps best described negatively as a restlessness or some dissatisfaction with proportionate being.⁸ I take it that the orientation itself is the work of the Spirit. But, I believe, Lonergan also described this new orientation as a transvaluation of values. The transvaluation of values means a new originating value that “is not human intelligence and responsibility but divine light and love” (quoted on p. 12). So is the invisible mission of the Word or the inner word of love as a judgment of value distinct from that transvaluation or new originating value? Can the proper external effects of the Word and Spirit be distinguished along these lines somehow?

There is a second avenue of cooperation is between systematicians and scholars in the area of religious studies. Fr. Doran has given particular attention to the interpretation of the missions with respect to constitutive meaning in human living, and for this reason highlights the scale of values as fruits of the Spirit and participation in the mission of the Word. He writes,

My first approximation to the notion of social grace is to indicate that grace as a social reality would be the gift of God’s love considered not so much as affecting individual biographies and establishing within them created relations to each of the uncreated divine Persons, but as transforming the ‘functioning and/or malfunctioning good of order,’ the ‘communal realization of originating and terminal values and disvalues,’ and the ongoing genesis or deterioration of

⁸ This, it seems to me, restates Charles Hefling’s sentence: “The inexpressibility of faith is the cognitional counterpart of the unrestrictedness of the love from which it is born” (Doran, p. 13), to which Hefling added, “Faith is an apprehension of value, and the primary expressions of apprehended values are the judgments and decisions by which those who apprehend them constitute their living.” (Hefling, p. 20).

meaning, that is, as affecting that social and historical reality that is more than
 ‘just a sum of individual words and deeds.’ (p. 10-11)

By shifting the focus from individual biographies to the social order, Fr. Doran seems to me to be attempting a fuller integration of the four created participations than an exclusive concentration on indwelling perhaps affords. If I understand Fr. Doran correctly, the beatific knowledge of Christ expressed through intersubjective, incarnate, linguistic, and performative carriers of meaning is a reality in the human world, that is, in the world that is the product of the constitutive, effective and communicative functions of meaning. We know that wherever the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed, wherever two or more are gathered in Christ’s name, the Mission of the Word is a reality in the world constituted by meaning. Fr. Doran invites us to consider that wherever religiously motivated judgments of value are operative, there also we find a community constituted by meaning informed by Christ’s beatific knowledge and thus we find the mission of the Word. He has opened in my mind, at least, a question about the meaning of *indwelling* with respect to a ‘social self’—an indwelling that has something to do with a created participation in Paternity, *our* Father.

It is here that we enter the second avenue of collaboration among theologians and human scientists. For Lonergan the transcendental turn to the subject is a turn “to the self as emergent within an intersubjective matrix, as discovering the meaning of its gesture in the response made by another to the gesture, as coming to consciousness of the other and the self within communication.”⁹ Similarly, Robert Bellah writes that “our identity as persons is constituted through our participation in a variety of communities and ... we are

⁹ Lonergan, “The Example of Gibson Winter” *Second Collection* 189-192, p. 190

fulfilled as persons only in and through the institutions that link us to others... In short, we are not self created atoms manipulating or being manipulated by 'objective' institutions. We form institutions and they form us every time we engage in a conversation that matters, and certainly every time we act as parent or child, student or teacher, citizen or official, in each case calling on models and metaphors for the rightness and wrongness of action."¹⁰ As Lonergan affirmed, the mission of the Word is God's entry into the world of human meaning. It is a divine entry not into a world that is simply an independent context within which individuals develop. It is an entry into a world of meaning that is already a constitutive part of individual development. God's entry into the human world establishes a new relationship between creatures and God who is *Our* Father. Thus we may hope to find that a dialectical engagement of careful historical and sociological studies of world religious communities would reveal concrete instances of the mission of the Word wherever individuals communicate and enact religiously motivated judgments of value.

Thus my second question regards the relevant systematic insight that would guide the collaboration. Fr. Doran spoke about memory and about making the ineffable effable. Further, there is some distinction to be made between the constitutive and cognitive thematization. Lonergan wrote,

¹⁰ Robert Bellah, "Social Basis of Ethical Individualism" in James Ogilvy, ed. *Revisioning Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991) 153-64; here p. 158 & 159. Stephen Pope has suggested that there may be a genetic relationship between this position and Aquinas'. Commenting on Aquinas' understanding of self-love, Pope writes that "Human solidarity, Thomas argues, inclines the self away from what might be the exclusivism of interpersonal love and toward concern for the common good. ... Thomas is more interested in the social orientation of human nature than in the "social self," that is, the self as understood as constituted in its ongoing reciprocal interaction with others." Nonetheless, Lonergan's own work suggests a strong affinity between Aquinas' social orientation and the contemporary concept of the social self. Stephen Pope, "Expressive Individualism and True Self-Love: A Thomistic Perspective", *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (1991), pp. 384-399. p. 391-92.

While the existence of division and the slowness in recovering unity are deeply to be lamented, it is not to be forgotten that division resides mainly in the cognitive meaning of the Christian message. The constitutive meaning and the effective meaning are matters on which most Christians very largely agree. Such agreement, however, needs expression and, while we await common cognitive agreement, the possible expression is collaboration in fulfilling the redemptive and constructive roles of the Christian church in human society.¹¹

Can more be said, then, about the relationship between the orientation to mystery effected by sanctifying grace and what may be an empirically fairly universal agreement among those so effected—an agreement constituted by grace specifically understood with respect to the hypostatic union and Christ's beatific knowledge?

Again thank you for this opportunity to join the Marquette community in this fantastic effort!

¹¹ Lonergan, *Method* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 368.