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November 5, 2010

**2nd Annual Colloquium on Doing Catholic Systematic Theology in a Multireligious World
Response to Fr. Hughson's "Classical Christology and Social Justice: Why the Divinity of
Christ Matters"**

First I want to start off by thanking Fr. Doran for inviting me to be part of a panel with such an intriguing and important topic for discussion, and also thank you to Fr. Hughson for such a well-crafted and provocative presentation. Diving right in, I take the main thrust of the paper to come in section four: namely, "Christ as incarnate Logos acting universally in the power of his divine nature mediating the act of creation is the ultimate and universal principle of social justice for Christians and non-Christians alike" (26). This universal act of the incarnate Logos is the ongoing act of creation, which takes place by the divine nature of Christ and is, as Fr. Hughson points out, the divine operation of the incarnate Logos that is the *least* conceivable as an act or attribute of Jesus' human nature. While I think that this thesis could prove through further elaboration to be a significant if not crucial advancement in how to think of social justice in Trinitarian terms in a pluralistic world, I would like to add to this project, in the way of a complement, by highlighting how the divinity of Christ matters for social justice precisely in the way the power of Christ's divine nature works through and in his humanity. In doing this I would like to engage Fr. Hughson's thoughts under the three headings of human dignity, the concrete good of order, and the importance of religious and moral conversion for social justice.

In the seven central themes of Catholic social teaching summarized in the USCCB's 1988 *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*, the dignity of the human person looms large, as well as in the 2005 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.¹ The theological anthropology in both

¹ United States Catholic Conference, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1998); Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, English translation by the Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004; Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 2005).

of these documents is thoroughly christological; both make appeal to the dignity of the human creature made in the image of God and redeemed by Christ, made in the likeness of the Trinity and therefore an intrinsically social, communal, and relational being made for love and justice. In his assumption of humanity, the incarnate Logos heals and elevates our common nature wounded by sin. Echoing *Dei Verbum*, both documents imply that the full potential and meaning of human dignity are seen most clearly only in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the deeds and sayings of the Incarnate Logos. Only Jesus Christ, both fully human and fully divine, reveals to us the true face of humanity, and so to assert human dignity as a fundamental building block of social justice is to gaze continually on the face of Christ's humanity precisely as it is united, enlightened, inspired, and animated by his divinity. As Fr. Doran discussed last night, the human consciousness of Christ is the locus of divine revelation.

Of course, in each of the previously mentioned documents on social justice, as well in common parlance or even in international dialogues on human rights, the importance and acceptance of the dignity of the human person, considered in the abstract, are not at issue. However, when it comes down to sticky issues like who exactly counts as a person, what constitutes dignified treatment, and how particular policies are to be adapted to best promote and serve human dignity, a host of problems arise. Moreover, the problem is more than theoretical or political: it is theological, insofar as any Christian theology that truly confronts offenses against human dignity has to deal with sin head-on. No doubt the Logos's mediating of the act of creation from the Father and with the Spirit has always been at work as long as creation has existed, as Fr. Hughson brings out nicely, again in section four. And I think he is dead-on to emphasize that this continuous act of creation carried out in Jesus' divine nature is not interrupted or halted by the Incarnation. While the Incarnate Logos' divine act of creating may

rightly be regarded as the ultimate theological principle of the good of order in society, the world in which the Logos took flesh and the world into which we are all born was and continues to be marred by concrete disorders and injustices of every kind. One reason why social sin is so serious is the way it tends to obscure the very nature of human dignity, making it difficult to recognize our neighbor in the minority group, the downtrodden, the habitually unheard and ignored margins of society. In the grips of cultural, social, and psychological forces taken captive by individual and group bias, we fail even to know our own humanity rightly, and we are tempted to think that our current way of things *is* the right order and even that it should come to characterize all times and places.

In other words, because long-term success at fidelity to the integral scale of values laid out by Lonergan and developed by Fr. Doran² is relatively rare, what really constitutes the good of order in any situation cannot be deduced from the current state of things but only creatively and collaboratively performed on the basis of the life, death, and Resurrection of the Incarnate Logos that we read about in the Gospels as he reached out to the poor, the sick, and those at the outskirts of society. As Fr. Hughson points out, according to Chalcedon this Incarnate Logos is none other than the Eternal Word of the Father, the ultimate principle of the good of order in the entire universe. However, my emphasis here is that in searching for and working for the concrete good of order that should characterize our affairs here and now, what Christ did with divine power but in and through his humanity during his ministry and mission must remain the normative starting point, even in interreligious dialogue. For example, while we can definitely glean from the Logos's divine operation of creating a concern for the common good of order as well as a humble recognition of our shared dependence on the Creator, it takes an ongoing appropriation of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as these salvific events are worked out

² Robert M. Doran, S.J. *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990).

in both his divinity and his humanity to arrive at the preferential option for the poor, which is essential to Catholic social teaching as it is now understood.

Before moving on to the issue of conversion, I would like to exemplify my point about the concrete good of order by offering the Resurrection as a theological test-case. In short, it seems to me that, from a Christian viewpoint, long-term, sustainable social transformation is untenable without the Resurrection of Christ, which by definition never could have been accomplished without the union of two natures in one divine person such that the Resurrection is in some way also accomplished by and in Christ's humanity. Fr. Hughson mentions that Aquinas ascribes the principal cause of Jesus' creative act as Logos to his divine nature and does not even include Jesus' humanity as an instrumental cause. In contrast, as made clear in an article by Gerald O'Collins in an 1970 *Theological Studies* article,³ Aquinas asserts in Q. 56 of the *Tertia Pars* that the humanity of Christ is the instrumental cause of his Resurrection, with of course the principle effective cause being the power of his divinity. Furthermore, the Resurrection enacts and perfects the re-creation of humanity begun in the Incarnation. Unlike the resuscitation of a corpse, which is what we find elsewhere in the New as well as in the Old Testament and which Aquinas calls an imperfect resurrection (Q. 56), the Resurrection of Christ is a perfect resurrection. The Risen Incarnate Logos is the new creation *par excellence*, because the risen Christ will never die again. The resurrection of Christ by the Father, with the resultant greater unleashing of the Spirit, is an irreplaceable theological underpinning for social justice theory and praxis, since the Resurrection represents and really is the ultimate victory over the same forces of evil and death that lurk behind all forms of injustice. Only the Resurrection fully enacts and represents the overturning of a world order ruled by greed, oppression, and bias, and only the

³ Gerald G. O'Collins, "Thomas Aquinas and Christ's resurrection," *Theological Studies* 31, no. 3, 1970: 512-522.

Resurrection fully vindicates the victims of injustice by identifying them with the very Incarnate, now Risen Son of God. Given the economy of salvation, the Resurrection is a necessary installment of divine effective and constitutive meaning insofar as this event in salvation history helps usher in a new world order. This new world order, which we can call the reign of God, is the glorious raising up of all who experience the crucifixion of weakness, poverty, and marginalization.

Finally, I want to present a few thoughts relating social justice to religious and moral conversion as they are framed within Lonergan's Trinitarian theology. In the fourth section of his reflection, Fr. Hughson makes a wonderful distinction between the ultimate principle of social justice, the creative Logos, and the proximate sources of social justice, human persons working toward the good of order by self-transcendence. Here I would further specify self-transcendence as it is the fruit of religious and moral conversion. Moral conversion is the *metanoia* that Lonergan conceives as a turning away from satisfactions to values as the criterion of one's decisions, while religious conversion is an "other-worldly falling in love," the very love of God coming into us.⁴ It is precisely moral conversion that is necessary to root out and eradicate the group bias that is often at the root of forms of social injustice such as racism and sexism. However, in Lonergan's schema religious conversion usually precedes moral conversion, but neither form of conversion is necessarily restricted to Christians. Insofar as grace is offered to all, all people are empowered and inspired with the Holy Spirit by participation in the active spiration of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son.⁵ This is the gift that grounds religious conversion and makes us children of God by the grace not just of creation but of re-creation or

⁴ See Robert M. Doran, S.J., *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 36, for a nice summary of religious and moral conversion as Lonergan understood and formulated them; cf. Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 102-107.

⁵ Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?*, 64-5, 108-9.

new creation. Moreover, from sanctifying grace comes the habit of charity, which grounds right judgments of value concerning the dignity and rights of others, as well as concrete acts of love of God and love of neighbor. These are the fruits of moral conversion, which empower us to actually treat each other as the brothers and sisters in one family of God that we really are. Without the presence of this moral conversion on both an individual and societal level, social injustices are perpetuated, and the shorter cycle of decline repeats itself. But if the fruits of religious and moral conversion can grow and ripen outside of the visible confines of the Church, then so can true social justice. Every instance of fidelity to the integral scale of values is evidence of the Spirit at work.⁶ The universally offered gift of grace and the fruits of conversion are what bind together both Christians and non-Christians in their pursuit of justice within society. Then every hindrance to social justice is not simply a moral failure but an impediment to the realization of our identity as children of God, while every advance in social justice is a real growing in the stature of the sons and daughters of God that we have become in and through Christ.

Thank you.

⁶ Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?*, 204: “Conversely, wherever genuine progress (measured by fidelity to the scale of values) takes place, the Spirit of the Father and the Son is present and active.”