

**Essays in Systematic Theology 41: ‘As the Father Has Sent Me’:
The Mission of the Church in a Multi-religious World¹**

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The annual fall colloquium in systematic theology sponsored by the Marquette Lonergan Project is exploring what it is to do Catholic systematic theology in a multireligious world. In 2009 the topic was the theology of the mission of the Holy Spirit in the context of the world’s religions, and in my paper I argued that this context will provide the ferment for a development in pneumatology in the twenty-first century. Last year the question was how to understand the mission of the incarnate Word in the same context, and my answer to that question had to do with locating in the human knowledge of Jesus the principal locus of divine revelation, and in the linguistic and incarnate meaning of the Word made flesh the principal communication of the revelation of God’s love. This year we turn to the mission of the church.

I am happy to be joined this year by Dr. Susan Wood, Chair of the theology department at Marquette University, and by Dr. John Dadosky of Regis College, Toronto. In her lecture tomorrow morning Dr. Wood, a noted ecclesiologist and ecumenist, will help us advance to the next step in our dialogue on this important issue as she moves in her own work beyond Christian ecumenism, where she has done so much good work, to interreligious dialogue and understanding on a broader scale. Dr. Dadosky is no stranger to these colloquia. He lectured at the

¹ This was the 2011 Emmett Doerr Lecture at Marquette University, delivered November 2, 2011. It was the opening lecture in the third annual colloquium on doing Catholic Systematic Theology in a Multireligious World. An audio recording of the lecture may be found on this site under Events/Conferences/Lonergan Colloquium 2011.

2009 colloquium and responded to one of the major papers last year. As many of his recently published articles display, he is in the process of writing an ecclesiology directly related to interreligious friendship and collaboration. His paper in this colloquium brings together many of the lines of thought in these earlier papers.

My principal systematic-theological work has not been in ecclesiology but in trinitarian theology and in the theology of grace. I have written only one piece in ecclesiology, the fifth chapter in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, entitled 'The Community of the Servant of God.' But in recent years I have been attempting to develop a trinitarian theology of religion, or perhaps better of faith.² My most complete attempt is in a book entitled *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions*, vol. 1, *Missions and Processions*, scheduled for publication with University of Toronto Press. It is time to bring those reflections to bear on the question of the mission of the church, and this lecture is my first attempt to do precisely that.

My paper has three parts. The dogmatic-theological context of ecclesial mission resides in the missions of the Holy Spirit and of the Son, and in part 1 I will review my understanding of these two missions as they relate to the mission of the church. In part 2, I will address the sociocultural context of the church's mission in the multireligious situation of our time. Thus in these first two parts I will be placing the mission of the church in two interrelated contexts, one of them dogmatic-theological and the other cultural. In part 3, I will relate the dogmatic-theological context of part 1 to the heuristics of church ministry suggested by

² See the suggestions of Wilfred Cantwell Smith regarding use of the words 'religion' and 'faith' in *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

Lonergan in chapter 14 of *Method in Theology*, the chapter on the functional specialty ‘Communications,’ and will add a general note on how my proposal affects functional specialization in theology, or more broadly the division of theological tasks.

1 The Dogmatic-theological Context of Ecclesial Mission

An adequate understanding of the mission of the church must be located in the context of the missions of the Holy Spirit and of the Son. The church has no mission independently of the two divine missions, and without its mission the church would not exist. On the two divine missions and their relations to each other I follow the theological doctrine of Frederick Crowe, which Crowe claims to be the position of Bernard Lonergan in his later years: ‘God first sent the Spirit, and then sent the Son in the context of the Spirit’s mission, to bring to completion, perhaps not precisely the work of the Spirit but the work which God conceived as one work to be executed in the two steps of the twofold mission of first the Spirit and then the Son.’³ While there are terminological refinements that should be made to this statement, distinguishing common and proper predication, the general point is clear. But for the sake of precision, let me make those refinements: The Father and the Son first sent the Holy Spirit, and then the Father sent the Son in the context of the Spirit’s mission, to bring to completion, perhaps not precisely the work of the Spirit, but the work which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

3 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.

together conceived as one work to be executed in the two steps of the twofold mission of first the Spirit and then the Son.⁴

The mission of the Son thus entails *revealing* the love of God poured out upon humanity in the gift of the Holy Spirit. This mission is to make explicit and known what has always been conscious. The revelation of divine love enables explicit and deliberate personal relations of human beings with God and with one another that would not be possible precisely as explicit and deliberate without that revelation, and so the mission of the Son is constitutive of the human friendship with God that is inaugurated on God's part by the gift of the Holy Spirit. The mission of the Son articulates the meaning that renders this friendship not simply conscious in some unobjectified fashion but also known. The first and foundational set of personal relations made possible by the two divine missions together is with the three divine subjects, and indeed with each of them distinctly. We pray 'Our Father,' as Jesus taught us to pray. But we also pray 'Lord Jesus Christ' and 'Come, Holy Spirit,' and when we do so we know that we are addressing distinct subjects of the one divine consciousness, distinct divine persons. Each of the divine persons is a distinct term of a relation on the part of the human spirit.⁵

4 Lonergan is very clear on the active and passive constitution of the divine missions. For details, see Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, vol. 12 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 466-69.

5 The issue of the extent to which these are distinct relations is a question that I will not pursue here. For Lonergan relations are really distinguished, not by a multiplication of terms, but by a multiplication of orderings. See *The Triune God: Systematics* 248-51. It is sufficient for my present purposes to emphasize that there are three distinct terms of our explicit created human relation to the triune God. But see the next note.

Drawing on Lonergan, I have argued in the past two lectures in this series that the structure of the grace that makes all who accept it pleasing to God (*gratia gratum faciens*) by initiating them into participation in divine life is itself trinitarian. It is a created participation in and imitation of the trinitarian relations of active and passive spiration.⁶ Let me explain this briefly once again.

First, through the gift of God's love the uncreated Holy Spirit dwells in us, Lonergan says, not as a form or quasi-form, but as the uncreated term of a created relation. That relation to the Holy Spirit requires a base called sanctifying grace, a base that must be a created participation in active spiration, since active spiration is the divine relation of Father and Son to the Holy Spirit. We share through sanctifying grace in the relation of the Father and the Son to the Spirit. This is the basic or foundational gift.

Next, our participation in active spiration must reflect a participation in the Father and the Son together, since active spiration is really identical with the Father and the Son. The reception of the unqualified love of the Father establishes a quality of self-presence, a condition in which the mind finds itself, that may be likened to Augustine's notion of *memoria* as the created analogue for the Father.

⁶ See Robert M. Doran, 'Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling: A Key to the *Nexus Mysteriorum*,' now available as Essay 32 in *Essays in Systematic Theology: An E-book*, on www.lonerganresource.com, and to be published in *Lonergan Workshop 23*. See also 'What Is the Gift of the Holy Spirit?' and 'Social Grace and the Mission of the Word,' available as Essays 34 and 37 in the same book and also under 'Events/Conferences' on www.lonerganresource.com, in the proceedings of the last two colloquia in this series. In terms of the question raised in note 5, if in fact grace is structured in this way, there would be two distinct relations, because there are two distinct orderings: the relation to the Holy Spirit based in sanctifying grace, and the relation to the Son and the Father based in charity.

But *memoria* is joined to, equiprimordial with, *mens*, mind, and gives rise to a knowledge born of that love, the knowledge that Lonergan calls ‘faith.’ *Memoria* and faith together are the created participation in Father and Son together, in active spiration. We share in active spiration by *memoria* and faith, by a transformed disposition and the knowledge born of that disposition, or to put it in terms borrowed from Heidegger, in a graced *Befindlichkeit* and *Verstehen*, precisely as together they breathe love. Faith, the knowledge born of God’s love, is articulated in a set of judgments of value regarding the worthwhileness of the gift and of everything else,⁷ but in its basic moment it is an ineffable ‘yes’ to the gift that has been given. The reception of love and the faith born of that love breathe charity, our love of God. Charity, then, as proceeding from participation in active spiration, is a created participation in passive spiration, that is, in the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, so charity proceeds from the transformed disposition that may be likened to what Augustine called *memoria* and the knowledge born of that disposition, the knowledge that Lonergan calls faith.

For Christians charity manifests itself in companionship with the Son made flesh for us and in eschatological hope for the vision of the Father through the mediation of the Son. But just as the gift of God’s love is universal, so charity in return is not limited to Christians. 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 and a love of one’s neighbor as oneself. In Christian and non-Christian alike, the love of God and neighbor grounds the

⁷ See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 115-18 for an excellent and clear articulation of such judgments of value.

changed attitudes of Galatians 5.22: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

This might be diagrammed as follows, where parentheses signify that the enclosed elements are to be considered as operating together:

(reception of love → faith) → charity
 (part'n in active spiration) part'n in passive spir'n

(eschatological hope ← love of Jesus) ← charity
 (purified transcendence ← love of wisdom) ← charity

Our created relation with the three divine subjects thus establishes the state of grace as an intersubjective and indeed interpersonal situation that then extends to the establishment of genuine community, community of meaning and value, among human beings. 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 primordial intersubjective status of human religion to the distinctly and explicitly interpersonal.⁸

⁸ This has implications for Girardian mimetic theory and its significance in theology. Briefly, when religion remains primordially intersubjective, its extension to human relations is what Girard calls 'interdividual,' and is subject to the vagaries of mimetic desire, including notable aberration. The promotion of intersubjectivity to deliberately interpersonal relations should transcend the danger of the deviated transcendence to which Girard calls attention, though clearly religions of the word have their own history of violence, and they have fewer excuses for succumbing to distorted interdividuality. The advent of the religious word does not eliminate human sin. For Lonergan's own reflections on religions of the infrastructure

It is in this same dogmatic-theological context that I would understand the mission of the church: ‘As the Father has sent me, so I send you’ (John 20.22). And so the first and principal theological thesis in this lecture is the following: 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. That mission is fulfilled as the church discerns the presence of the Holy Spirit and announces in word and sacrament the news of God’s love.

The trinitarian dogmatic-theological context for the mission of the church implies (1) that the positive moment in all religions is the fruit of the gift of the Holy Spirit, but also (2) that the revelation of the gift of God’s love occurs in the mission of the Son. The outer word of avowal in the revelation of the Word 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.

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. The beginning of the community is marked by an outburst of joy over the fruitfulness of the divine revelation of God’s love. What was hidden is now revealed. What was conscious but not objectified or what remained

(intersubjectivity) and religions of the superstructure (interpersonal relations mediated by the word), see ‘Sacralization and Secularization,’ in Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, vo. 17 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 68-70. Typically, Lonergan is more generous than Girard, in this case with his evaluation of religions of the infrastructure.

imperfectly articulated is now known and can be clearly spoken, proclaimed, announced. The mission of the Holy Spirit, previously for the most part invisible, becomes not only visible but also tangible and audible at Pentecost, as the community is born whose mission it is to cooperate with God in carrying on both divine missions and manifesting their unity and complementarity.

Pentecost is thus the beginning not only of the church but also of the church's mission, which is inseparable from the existence of the church. I would suggest that evangelization within this context has two dimensions.

First, it proceeds from the conviction that the incarnation of the eternal Word marks the definitive revelation of the gift that God is always pouring forth by flooding human hearts with God's love by the Holy Spirit given them. But if that gift, now revealed, is offered universally, then evangelization entails speaking a word that assists others to recognize God's gift of love in their own lives, including in their own cultures and religious traditions.

Second, as rooted in the revelation that occurs precisely in Jesus and so in the paschal mystery, evangelization addresses specifically the problem of evil, and it does so from the standpoint of the Law of the Cross as the revelation of the divinely ordained response to evil. In the words of Lonergan's justly famous final thesis in *De Verbo incarnato*, 'This is why the Son of God became man, suffered, died, and was raised again: because divine wisdom has ordained and divine goodness has willed, not to do away with the evils of the human race through power, but to convert those evils into a supreme good according to the just and mysterious Law of the Cross.'⁹ In this sense, then, genuine evangelization promotes among all peoples what I have called a soteriological differentiation of

⁹ Bernard Lonergan, Thesis 17, *De Verbo Incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964)

552. The translation is by Charles Hefling.

consciousness, a conversion of heart and mind that entails refusing to meet evil with evil and instead overcoming evil with more abundant good.¹⁰

2 The Cultural Context of the Mission of the Church

More must be said, however, about the context of ecclesial mission, for the second divine mission is the mission of the divine *Word*, and so of divine meaning. Words are social realities. Through them, subjects (including the divine subjects) communicate. And so the visible, tangible, audible mission of the Word and of the church that is sent by the Word just as the Word was sent by the Father is intimately connected with the social mediation of the human good through the communication of meaning and value. Evangelization entails speaking a word, and the word as spoken is a cultural reality. The social mediation of the human good depends on the articulate development of cultural values, where culture has the function ‘to discover, express, validate, criticize, correct, develop, improve [the] meaning and value’ that people find in their living and operating.¹¹ Not only did the visible, tangible, audible mission of the incarnate Word entail the proclamation of the reign of God, but that proclamation was delivered not in abstraction from history, but in the context of the cultural and religious values of his immediate surroundings.¹² Before embodying the law of the cross in the incarnate meaning of

10 On the soteriological differentiation, see Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 2001) index, under ‘Soteriological constitutive meaning, differentiation.’

11 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 32.

12 N.T. Wright has insisted, for example, that intimate to Jesus’ proclamation of the reign of God, indeed at its heart, was the insistence that violent revolution against the Roman

the paschal mystery, Jesus was already proclaiming it when he discouraged violent resistance to unjust oppression – resistance, yes, but the kind of resistance that heaps up good born of love, not the kind of resistance that would destroy the oppressor and keep the wheel of violence turning. The mission of the church born at Pentecost is to carry on precisely *that* evangelization in all the cultural contexts into which the church is led by the Spirit of God. Evangelization is directed specifically to culture, that is, to the meanings and values that inform different ways of living, and it brings to culture primarily the epistemology of love that contrasts so sharply with the sinful inclination to return evil for evil. Without that dimension, without the spirituality of the deutero-Isaian servant of God that is incarnate in Jesus, the rest of what the church does is sounding brass and tinkling cymbal, for it prescind from the trinitarian and paschal context of the church’s mission, and without that context there is no mission.¹³

But if culture is the locus of evangelization, then we need to address the issue of culture head-on in any discussion of the mission of the church. The

occupation was not the way of the kingdom he was proclaiming. That dimension of his proclamation was ultimately rejected by the supreme guardians of the cultural and religious values of the people, and the non-violence of Jesus’ message was a principal reason for that rejection. That rejection led to his death, but his death and resurrection were also the catalyst of the birth of the church and the beginning of the evangelization that proclaims meanings and values transformed by the paschal mystery, meanings and values that arise when a soteriological differentiation that includes the precept to return good for evil is brought to bear on prevailing cultural values. For an excellent exegetical and historical study of these dynamics, see N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1992).

13 This is the central point in my previous venture into ecclesiology, that is, chapter 5 of *Theology and the Dialectics of History*.

function of culture unfolds on two levels, infrastructure and superstructure. I draw on Lonergan for the meaning of these two terms, and in *Theology and the Dialectics of History* I spend a good amount of energy distinguishing his position from that of Marx.

The term 'infrastructure' when used with respect to culture refers to the realm of common sense as it goes about its business of relating things to us in the practical affairs of everyday life and the dramatic interchanges among people. More precisely, the full infrastructure of society consists of the technological, economic, and political structures that emerge from the dialectic of practical intelligence and intersubjectivity in the constitution of the social order, under the dominance of the everyday dimensions of culture. The infrastructure thus conceived is proximately responsible for the distribution of vital goods to the community. The superstructure results from what Georg Simmel calls *die Wendung zur Idee*, the turn to reflection that is almost inevitable in cultural development. The superstructure is constantly engaged in transforming the infrastructure, for better or for worse, and the infrastructure is constantly either aiding the superstructure to do its authentic work through deep reflection or, more usually, interfering with that work through the influence of the general bias of common sense against theory, long-range issues, ultimate questions, and deeper reflection in general. The turn to reflection may be mythic, but it may also be genuinely religious; it may be ideological, but it may also be truly theoretical; it may be oppressive, but it may also be the fruit of wisdom; it may be manipulative and mendacious, but it may also persuade to intellectual, moral, religious, and psychic conversion; it may serve only the interests of the rich and the powerful, but it may also serve the common good of order and even adopt a preferential option for the poor. It may be, and usually is, some mixture of authenticity and inauthenticity. In most contemporary societies, the *Wendung zur Idee*, the turn to

reflective objectification, contains a theoretical component, and its principal home is the academy. But the contemporary academy is no stranger to the rationalization of inauthenticity and alienation. In general, we may say that the intellectual ministry of the church is aimed primarily at the superstructure of culture and so to the academy, but with an eye to and even for the sake of the well-being of the infrastructure.¹⁴

Viewed from a theological standpoint, both infrastructure and superstructure will always stand in need of reorientation and integration. The work of evangelization is intimately connected to this reorientation and integration of culture, of the meanings and values that inform human living. Lonergan expresses this need by citing the destructive influences of several kinds of bias in culture and society, where in each instance bias is at its root a flight from understanding.¹⁵

14 I have spelled out my own understanding of the relations of infrastructure and suprastructure in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, in the context of a dialogue with Marx, but with an eye to the integral functioning of the entire scale of values. See Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 2001), especially chapter 12. If I were to rewrite that material today, I would have to engage in a dialogue not only with Marxist tendencies but with neoconservative individualism, selfishness, cynicism, and manipulation and with the ideologies that promote these, beginning with the political philosophy of Leo Strauss.

15 On dramatic, individual, group, and general bias, see Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, chapters 6 and 7. Lonergan elsewhere elaborates more on the distorting role of individual, group, and general bias, but dramatic bias, reconceived at least in part as deviated mimesis, is just as destructive. On mimesis, see the work of René Girard,

Now the conversion required for the integrity of culture is made thematic, and so able to be elevated to an explicit role in culture, through participation in the mission of the incarnate Word, and so through the linguistic carriers of meaning, the words, that are directly dependent on that mission, as the church appropriates its own foundation and builds its proclamation on that appropriation. The mission of the church to culture entails making conversion thematic and so elevating it to the place where it becomes an explicit dimension in culture. In the academy, where the church addresses the superstructure of culture, this includes and even privileges an intellectual conversion. The church's appropriation of its mission entails a turn to reflective objectification on the part of the church. That reflective objectification is theology. Through the development of the religious word and the specification of its relation to other cultural meanings and values, and especially to other words, theology elevates conversion from being simply conscious to being known, articulated, appropriated, and implemented. It makes conversion a theme in the public life of the academy, and it helps the church make it a theme in the public life of society in general through the evangelizing proclamation of the gospel. But by its explicit location in the academy, theology reminds other superstructural practitioners that there is an intellectual as well as a religious, moral, and affective dimension to conversion.

It is in this way that the social mediation of the human good involves what we may call social grace. Grace becomes social as the meanings and values that inform given ways of living are transformed by the explicit revelation of the gift of God's love, that is, by the two divine missions extended into history in the mission of the church, the community that knows both missions explicitly. That

beginning perhaps with *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

transformation means conversion of those meanings and values, and such conversion is a matter of reorientation at both levels of culture, the infrastructural, everyday, commonsense level, and the superstructural, reflective, and in many instances academic level. In one sense, then, grace will not become truly social until a series of words is spoken that will reorient economic and political life for the sake of the realization of the integral scale of values: vital, social, cultural, personal, religious.¹⁶

Of particular concern is the link between cultural and social values, where meaning is the controlling factor in human affairs. Ideology, the rationalization of inauthenticity, has the unfortunate effect of preventing the pursuit of meaning from exercising that controlling function. For, as I said in my lecture last year, there is a complex surd that at times escapes personal and communal control and prevents integral meaning from becoming operative in the constitution of the social order. By ‘integral meaning’ 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. The complex surd that prevents these developments is precisely what is meant by social sin. Social sin, correctly understood, is at its roots the failure, indeed the refusal, to allow the meaning of the normative scale of values to inform the social order. In Lonergan’s theology of social sin, bias – the bias of distorted affectivity, the bias of the individual, the bias of the group, and the general bias of common sense against ultimate issues and long-term solutions – contributes to the increasing dominance of the social surd. The integral functioning

16 On the scale of values, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 31-32. The notion of the scale of values joins the notion of dialectic to form the central complex of meanings in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*.

of the full scale of values is constitutive of what I mean by the ‘social grace’ that in my theology I would set over against social sin.¹⁷ And that integral functioning entails the reversal of bias precisely through the word that speaks the truth and exhorts to the good, not only at the infrastructural level of everyday living but also at the superstructural level of objectifying reflection, where the mission of the church is precisely to guide the reorientation of human-scientific endeavors in the light of the theological foundations provided by religious, moral, intellectual, and affective conversion. And as I argued extensively in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, intrinsic to the full functioning of the scale of values is the equitable distribution of vital goods to the entire community, and within that context what both the theology of liberation and the church’s magisterium have called the preferential option for the poor.¹⁸

3 The Church as a Process of Self-constitution in History

The mission of the church with respect to the multireligious situation of our time has to be set in these overarching trinitarian and cultural contexts. The trinitarian context acknowledges the gift of the Holy Spirit and so of participation in trinitarian life as a universal offer to humankind, one that is revealed and so made known in the visible mission of the Son but also one that Christians must respect wherever they discern it, whether the revelation has penetrated individual and

17 See Robert M. Doran, ‘Social Grace and the Mission of the Word’ 1-2.

18 On the relation between liberation theology and the magisterium in the use of this expression, see the first two chapters in Rohan Curnow, “Bernard Lonergan and the Preferential Option for the Poor: Integral Conversion, Liberation Hermeneutics, and the Mission of the Church,” Th.D. dissertation, Regis College, University of Toronto, 2011, chapters 1 and 2.

communal consciousness or not. The cultural context calls for the evangelization of infrastructure and superstructure, where by evangelization is meant the application of a soteriological differentiation to the establishment of social structures that deliver just conditions at the infrastructural level and to the reorientation and integration of philosophic, human-scientific, and scholarly endeavors at the superstructural level.

As one might expect from the appeals I have already made to Lonergan's work, these emphases are not absent from the incipient heuristics of ecclesial ministry that are contained in the final chapter of *Method in Theology*, the chapter devoted to 'Communications.' What follows in this section of my paper is a brief interpretation of that material in relation to the position I have already suggested, with a specific focus on the interreligious dimension of the contemporary world-cultural context.¹⁹

Meaning, including the meaning of revelation, fulfills cognitive, effective, constitutive, and communicative functions.²⁰ In particular, meaning is the formal constituent of human community, which is an achievement of common meaning. In each individual, common meaning is constitutive of the individual as a member of the community. In the group, meaning is constitutive of the community itself. The communicative function of meaning is responsible for the genesis of common meaning. It is through communication that people come to share the same or

19 I hope it is clear from *Theology and the Dialectics of History* that by 'world-cultural' I am not referring to some leveling out of cultural differences, but rather to the cumulative differentiations of consciousness that will enable crosscultural appropriations of various religious and cultural traditions.

20 On the functions of meaning, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 76-81.

complementary cognitive, constitutive, and effective meanings, and to develop them. Communities are changed by changes in their constitutive meanings.

The constitutive meaning of the church finds its basis in the revelation of God's universal gift of love in the life, words, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Word of God, and so primarily in the paschal mystery. The church, thus constituted by meaning, rather than being regarded as a distinct *societas perfecta*, should be regarded as a part within the larger whole of the single worldwide society of human beings. As a part within that larger whole, the church has the mission of continuing to proclaim and to speak from the revelation of God's love and to work out the implications of that revelation and proclamation in the infrastructural and superstructural dimensions of meaning precisely as meaning constitutes cultures.

The ideal basis of society is community, the achievement of common meaning. And community, writes Lonergan, 'may take its stand on a moral, a religious, or a Christian principle. The moral principle is that [human beings] individually are responsible for what they make of themselves, but collectively they are responsible for the world in which they live. Such is the basis of universal dialogue. The religious principle is God's gift of his love, and it forms the basis of dialogue between all representatives of religion. The Christian principle conjoins the inner gift of God's love with its outer manifestation in Christ Jesus and in those that follow him. Such is the basis of Christian ecumenism.'²¹ With respect to the theology of mission in a multi-religious situation, the task, it seems, would involve bringing the basis of Christian ecumenism, namely the explicit joining of the two divine missions, to bear on the basis of interreligious dialogue, namely, the gift of God's love in the universal mission of the Holy Spirit, since the distinct feature

21 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 360.

that Christians bring to that dialogue is the explicit revelation of a gift that has been offered to all.

All three of these principles – moral, religious, and Christian – are precarious, thus rendering human community ever imperfect. The moral principle, that we are individually responsible for what we make of ourselves but also collectively responsible for the world in which we live, has been rejected on a massive scale by people in positions to assume that collective responsibility. But the sustained and consistent influence of the moral principle depends on the effective functioning of religious and moral conversion, and of at least implicit intellectual and psychic conversion, at the level of ‘personal values’ in the scale of values. And the same can be said for the religious and Christian principles of community. ‘There are needed,’ Lonergan writes, ‘individuals and groups and, in the modern world, organizations that labor to persuade people to intellectual, moral, and religious conversion and that work systematically to undo the mischief brought about by alienation and ideology.’ By ‘alienation’ he means neglect of the exigencies of human attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility, and by ‘ideology’ he means any doctrine that would justify such alienation. ‘Among such bodies’ persuading to conversion, he continues, ‘should be the Christian church.’²²

The Christian church is ‘the community that results from the outer communication of Christ’s message and from the inner gift of God’s love.’ Its mission is ‘the effective communication of Christ’s message,’²³ and so collaboration with God in the missions of the Holy Spirit and of the Word. The meaning of the message is at once cognitive, constitutive, and effective. To

22 Ibid. 361.

23 Ibid. 361-62.

communicate it is to bring others to share in the church's cognitive, constitutive, and effective meaning, and so to establish community on the basis of moral responsibility, religious love, and Christian proclamation. That message is to be proclaimed to all cultures, and as it is done so effectively it becomes a line of development within a culture, whether morally or religiously or with explicit Christian commitment, or all three. If the church truly enters into the various societies to whom it is to proclaim the moral, religious, and Christian dimensions of the principle of community, it becomes, not so much a distinct society as a process of self-constitution within worldwide human society, a process engaged in mutual self-constitution with the rest of the human family. Its substance 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].'²⁴ That self-constitutive process is structured, outgoing, and redemptive, but the meaning of each of these adjectives requires sustained discernment and bold decision on the part of the church – discernment and decision regarding the structure of ministry, the meaning of mission, and the role of the church in catalyzing non-violent responses to evil that return good for evil. The aim of that process is the establishment of the reign of God in the whole of human society, not only in an afterlife but in this historical life of humankind. The redemptive process, overcoming evil with good, has to be realized not only in the rest of human society but in the church itself, which is no stranger to the biases, to alienation, and to the ideology that would justify alienation. As the *Wendung zur Idee* has already occurred within the church, largely through the development of theology over the centuries, the church is not only a process of self-constitution but increasingly a self-conscious process of self-constitution.

²⁴ Ibid. 363.

In our time, though, the church ‘will have to recognize that theology is not the full science of man, that theology illuminates only certain aspects of human reality, that the church can become a fully conscious process of self-constitution only when theology unites itself with all other relevant branches of human studies’²⁵ and so admits that its own self-constitution is actually mutual self-mediation and mutual self-constitution. This is especially true of the distinctly intellectual and largely academic dimension of the mission of the church. ‘... such integrated studies correspond to a profound exigence in the contemporary situation. For ours is a time of ever increasing change due to an ever increasing expansion of knowledge. To operate on the level of our day is to apply the best available knowledge and the most efficient techniques to coordinated group action. But to meet this contemporary exigence will also set the church on a course of continual renewal. It will remove from its action the widespread impression of complacent irrelevance and futility. It will bring theologians into close contact with experts in very many different fields. It will bring scientists and scholars into close contact with policy makers and planners and, through them, with clerical and lay workers engaged in applying solutions to the problems and finding ways to meet the needs both of Christians and of all [humankind].’²⁶

The aspect of this very summary presentation of Lonergan’s heuristic of the church’s mission that is most relevant to our present concerns has to do with the three principles of community: moral, religious, and Christian. The effectiveness of all three is crucial if the ideal base of society, the achievement of common meaning that is community, is actually to exist and function. Instances of the exercise of the Christian principle are obviously found in the many efforts at ecumenical dialogue,

25 Ibid. 364.

26 Ibid. 367.

consensus, and collaboration. Instances of the church's exercise of the moral principle beyond the explicit boundaries of ecclesial communion may be found in the social encyclicals of the popes and, perhaps more concretely, in such extremely friendly dialogues as those that Pope Benedict XVI has entered into with the profoundly moral concerns of Jürgen Habermas. But it is the exercise of the religious principle that is most germane to the concerns of this paper. That principle, again, is 'God's gift of his love,' as it 'forms the basis of dialogue between all representatives of religion.'²⁷ If Crowe's interpretation of Lonergan's later theology is correct, Lonergan holds that the basis of dialogue between the representatives of religion is the universal gift of what Christians know as the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God. And if that is the case, then Christians must approach the dialogue expecting to find the Holy Spirit, to find grace, operative in their interlocutors.

This expectation vastly expands the range of the data relevant to Christian theology. I have argued in a recent paper, 'Functional Specialties for a World Theology,'²⁸ and in *The Trinity in History* that if Crowe's position on the universality of the mission of the Holy Spirit is correct, then the data relevant for Christian theology include all the data on the religious living of human beings everywhere and at all times. In terms of Lonergan's functional specializations, if all the data on human religious living, whether the religious dimension of that living be explicit or compact, are now to be made available for Christian theology itself, they are also to be interpreted in accord with the critical-realist hermeneutic

27 Ibid. 360.

28 Now available as Essay 36 in *Essays in Systematic Theology: An E-book*, on

www.lonerganresource.com, and scheduled for publication as well in *Lonergan Workshop*

24.

theory presented in both chapter 17 of *Insight* and chapter 7 of *Method*, and the relevant history for Christian theology itself expands to include the religious history of all of humanity. That such a proposal does not mean the collapse of theology into positivist religious studies is guaranteed by accepting the functional specialization of theological tasks; for then, beyond research, interpretation, and history, which is where religious studies would stop, there remains, in the first phase, the dialectic that would mediate the differences, and then there is the normative subject, the concrete universal moving the whole of theology to a second phase; and in that second phase there will emerge vastly expanded functional specialties of categories, doctrines, systematics, and communications. The result will be a vast collaboration constructing what we may call a world theology or a theology for a world church, a theology that takes its stand on the theological and ecclesial doctrine of the universal mission and gift of the Holy Spirit, and that applies the methodological doctrine of functional specialization to the task of mediating from data to results an entire worldwide community of men and women receiving and responding to what Christians know as the third divine Person, the Holy Spirit of God, proceeding Love in the Trinity poured out in the hearts of all by the gift of the triune God to all. The content of all eight (or nine) functional specialties is expanded vastly if we take our stand on Crowe's theological doctrine.

Let me conclude by adding to these reflections based on Lonergan's heuristics of ecclesial mission the central emphasis in my chapter on the church in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*.

In the fifth chapter of *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, I defended the position that the church is best conceived in terms of the deutero-Isaian servant songs as these find their full historical realization in the destiny of the incarnate Word of God. The church as envisioned in that work is always to be engaged in

evoking alternative situations that more closely approximate the reign of God in history. As it shoulders that task, it will inevitably find itself participating in the destiny of the servant as that destiny is enfleshed in the paschal mystery of the law of the cross.

The self-transcendence that will meet the global need for community as the ideal basis of society is a fidelity to the integral and normative scale of values: vital, social, cultural, personal, religious. But that fidelity will inevitably mean fidelity to the just and mysterious law of the cross. As the love of God poured forth in human hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit transforms persons, cultural values, and social structures, those so affected will experience participation in the law of the cross, a law that enjoins meeting the mystery of evil with a love that finds a way to overcome evil with good.

The problem of evil to which evangelization is addressed is to be understood as a breakdown of the integral scale of values. The solution to the problem of evil is not available on the basis of human resources alone, but must be a divinely originated solution, a matter of human collaboration with the divine persons. The inner form of that collaboration lies in the pattern adopted by the divine measure of all human integrity become flesh in our history. That inner form is represented in the deutero-Isaian symbolic vision of redemptive suffering incarnate in Jesus. The incarnate Word is the measure of human integrity. The incarnation of the measure is the obedience unto death that this measure assumed as the catalytic agency through which a new law would be established on earth. Conformity to the cross of the divine measure become human flesh is the summit of the process of self-transcendence under the conditions of a human history shot through with the surd of evil and sin.

My way of appropriating Lonergan's insistence on the church's role in fostering the ideal base of society in community is expressed as follows: the need

is ‘for a communitarian alternative to the competing and escalating agents of imperialistic praxis that constitute the prevailing situation. Ecclesial ministry should catalyze this alternative, both within and beyond the boundaries of the church, through its pastoral, prophetic, and sacramental agency.’²⁹ By imperialism, I mean, with Joseph Schumpeter, the objectless disposition to unlimited forcible expansion that can characterize not only states but also and especially the economic macrosystems that today control even states.³⁰ ‘Imperialism’ is not an explanatory term, however. The explanatory articulation of what it means would appeal to distortions of the integral scale of values, and especially of the relations between cultural and social values, where the constitutive and effective functions of meaning vis-à-vis social structures come into play. As extending the mission of the Holy Spirit and especially the mission of the Son, where grace becomes social through the proclamation of the word, the church has a responsibility for the integrity of the cultural values that would foster economic and political structures to deliver a just distribution of vital goods to the whole of the human community.

These considerations can be related to Avery Dulles’s discussion of models of the church. For me the model of ‘servant’ assumes a relative preeminence over the others, though I would now couple it with a model of ‘mission’ in a way that was not explicit in my previous reflections. The designation of the church as the community of the servant of God on mission in history appeals, I believe, to realities of both grace and nature without whose operative functioning in the ministry of the church all other models of the church will prove to be irrelevant. But, as in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, I do not conceive the ‘servant’

29 Ibid. 116.

30 Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism/Social Classes: Two Essays*, trans. Heinz Norden (New York: New American Library, 1951) 6.

model precisely as Dulles did. For Dulles, understanding the church as servant places the church primarily in the position of servant of the world. For me, understanding the church as servant on mission places the church primarily in the position of extending the divine missions of the Holy Spirit and the Son, and so in the position of servant of God in catalyzing through all the functions of meaning ever greater approximations to the rule of God in human affairs, where that rule may be conceived in terms of fidelity to the integral scale of values.