

A Response to Fr. Doran and Prof. Dadosky

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In keeping with the task of this colloquium as one of reflecting on the shape of systematic theology in a multi-religious context, I would like to focus my response on where I see Fr. Doran's and Prof. Dadosky's papers taking us in this regard. How do they point the way toward a systematic theology that is conscious of its multi-religious context? Furthermore, how do they help us to decide where we go from here?

Given the disparate foci of the two presentations, it may seem necessary to speak of their impact on the enterprise of systematic theology strictly in turn. However, I find that both of them are in fact united by a common thread: the role of the Holy Spirit. For Fr. Doran, this involves the Holy Spirit's role as the universal gift of God's love which itself produces acceptance of the gift and consequent value judgments which have the potential to recreate the world through charity acting in justice. For Prof. Dadosky, this involves the Holy Spirit's role as the giver of wisdom in the process of discerning the quality of differences in interreligious dialogue for the purpose of mutual self-mediation. In both respects, the condition for the possibility of the communication and deeper understanding of Christian faith through the practice of dialogue with the Other is God's self-communication, God's dialogue with humanity through the ever-present Spirit. In essence, we are never the ones talking first or acting first in the process of dialogue. God is always the principle Actor, the principle Speaker, who declares God's presence in history to make God's self known through the Spirit of recreation and regeneration. The Spirit, then, is the light leading the way along the challenging path of exploration that Prof. Dadosky spoke of. Such a path becomes more traversable for the theologian, because the Spirit has already paved the way for the theologian's journey.

In saying that the Spirit is the precondition for dialogue, the theologian, like Fr. Doran, acknowledges the priority of God's grace over any human attempt that may either conflate differences for the sake of a counterfeit unity or only emphasize differences for the sake of a triumphant hegemony on one side or the other. The Spirit alone is the author of a unity that resides in difference, a difference that mediates each dialogue partner's identity to self and Other, as Prof. Dadosky suggests. At the same time, the Spirit is the basis for a unity of purpose that associates difference not only with mutual self-discovery but also with the richness of a multi-faceted, combined religious effort to inform cultural and social values for the common good, as Fr. Doran suggests. We should not mistake this understanding for a relativist elevation of "difference" as a god in its own right. It is, rather, a humble submission and obedience to the Spirit's wisdom in revealing how such differences can work together for promoting the greater glory of God. As Prof. Dadosky notes, this includes the Spirit's work in the guidance of discernment wherein the quality of differences are adjudicated along the path of an increasingly more profound awareness of self and Other. We can conclude, then, that both Fr. Doran and Prof. Dadosky point the way to a systematic theology that is pneumatologically dense and pneumatologically driven, to the extent that the intertrinitarian dynamic of love is present at all times, encompassing and encouraging the process of dialogue to achieve God's ends through the obedient efforts of those who willingly follow the Spirit's lead along the path of mutual self-mediation.

We now arrive at the question of where the pneumatological starting point can take us. We recall how Fr. Doran appealed to Crowe's essay in its attention to Lonergan's proposal that though the Spirit is last cognitively—being that the Spirit is unseen, coming after Christ and the Incarnation in the order of knowing—the gift of the Spirit is first in its universal in-breaking,

quietly but powerfully infusing the human subject with the love of God that allows for participation in God's own love. In the proposal of the Spirit as the condition for the possibility of authentic dialogue—both as source and facilitator of dialogue's complex processes—the Spirit is first as epistemological guide, and Christ and the Incarnation can appear as if they are unseen. However, the Spirit in the Spirit's own mission reveals that this is not the case.

From the Christian side, it cannot be denied that the gift of salvation through Christ's kenotic obedience unto ultimate self-sacrifice in death is the defining revelation of God's justice and God's love that is the central mystery of Christian faith, a mystery which gradually transforms the Christian believer into a humble dwelling place or temple of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, the Spirit—even in the Spirit's all-encompassing reach and gathering in of humanity through the grace of God's presence in love—cannot be fully understood and accepted on the part of human beings without Christ's defeat of sin and death which breaks open the human heart for conversion to grace-filled participation in triune life and love. From the Christian side, the mystery of the Holy Spirit's indwelling is inseparable from the mystery of the Son's Incarnation. The dialogue that the Spirit facilitates is the eternal Word's dialogue with the world, making the incarnational event reverberate throughout all times and places due to the fulfillment of the Spirit's mission to bear witness to the salvific mission of the Son. So explains Jesus in Chapter 16 of John's Gospel (16: 13-15, NRSV): "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

To propose a pneumatologically dense systematic theology conscious of its multi-religious context is to glorify the eternal Word. For, the Spirit speaks the language of the Word, the discourse of love which includes the repentance of sins, the obedience of conversion, the carrying of the Cross, and impassioned imitation of Christ as individual believers united through ecclesial commitment into Christ's one body. The Spirit directs us to where we go from here in doing systematic theology in a multi-religious context, though the path is still uncertain and the cautions along the way are many. What we do know is what John's gospel suggests: that the Spirit makes Christ visible in the here-and-now, visible through the Christian conformity to Christ according to the Spirit's promptings. For the Christian to engage in dialogue with the Other is to imitate Christ through a kenotic self-emptying that creates a receptivity to the movement of the Spirit in the Other.

In the same way that the Son's kenotic sacrifice through Incarnation does not divest him of his divinity, the Christian's self-emptying in dialogue does not evacuate her of her Christian identity. Rather, her authentic identity in Christ is reaffirmed, because she is "becoming Christ" in dialogue, following the Spirit's direction to glorify the Word, taking what belongs to the Word and declaring it to the Other. This is an act of self-emptying. First, it is such, because one is making room for the Spirit. Second, it is such, because one cannot "become Christ" without imitating Christ's openness to the Other and Christ's undying desire to hear and understand the Other on her own terms. Only then, can the Christian hear the Spirit teaching the way of relationship in a multi-religious context where Christ is reaching out through the hands of the Spirit to heal a divided world.

I am grateful to both Fr. Doran and Prof. Dadosky for their faith-filled listening to the Spirit who unfolds a manner of pursuing systematic theology in a multi-religious context. I am also confident and hopeful that their examples will show us the way of speaking the language of the Spirit in glorification of the Word. For, in and through the Spirit, we will not speak on our own but will speak whatever we hear, because we will take what is Christ's and declare it to the world.