

John Volk

**Response to Dr. John Dadosky
'*Ecclesia de Trinitate: Ecclesial Foundations from Above*'**

I wish to thank Dr. Dadosky for a truly thought-provoking paper. I would guess that ecclesiology is a theological discipline close to his heart given what he has done in this area, not just here but in a number of published papers over the past few years, and I wish to thank him for his work. Ecclesiology is not my area of expertise, but through my study of Lonergan's soteriology there is a close link to the mission of the Church, an interest I would like to pursue in the future, and so I wish to thank Fr. Doran for inviting me to be a part of this panel. I have two basic comments to Dr. Dadosky's paper.

The first regards his position that the Church's relations *ad extra* are to be guided by a principal of mutuality, where here mutuality includes the notion that the Church can not only learn from other traditions, but in fact should *embrace* that learning. I am sympathetic to his position and I believe that to reject a vibrant and thick notion of the learning Church amounts to a basic failure to grasp the full nature of the Church herself, a nature that exists in a world order governed by certain intrinsic principles of development conceived by divine wisdom and chosen by divine will. I would think that the Church would need to be a learning Church, given the nature of the world the Church lives in. To quote Lonergan, 'there are no divine afterthoughts.' In other words, God had planned that his Church be a learning Church. My basic point, in support of Dadosky, is to provide further insight into why the Church should embrace an orientation of learning when encountering what Dadosky calls the 'Other,' beyond what I have just said regarding the order of this world conceived by divine wisdom.

We have the analogy of Christ himself, specifically the distinction between what Lonergan termed Christ's 'effable' and 'ineffable' knowledge, and the implication this had for Christ's own need *to learn*. Christ's human knowledge involved ineffable knowledge, a type of knowledge proceeding from his beatific vision. But such knowledge is unmediated in the first place, so it cannot be directly mediated to others. It can however be indirectly mediated through what Lonergan called effable knowledge, knowledge which can be mediated to others. Christ could not acquire effable knowledge unless he learned, and this is no weakness or threat to his divinity. It does in fact honor his full humanity.

Furthermore, it is Christ who is the mediator of the Gospel message in history, and the Church his instrument. But as part of his work of mediation as a historical person, Christ had to learn how to express that which by its very nature is ineffable. Therefore, in support of Dadosky, I would ask the following question: is it not true that, analogous to Christ, the Church, in order to more fully express and communicate the Gospel message as an instrument of Christ be always and everywhere a learning Church? No doubt a learning Church is enriched by the other. But my point here is that this enrichment itself enables the Church to more fully, more effectively, and more authentically perform her mission. Christ was indeed in a relationship with the world that would meet the qualification of a mutual self-mediating relationship. Christ, as human, intended to reveal his own self-discovery, his ineffable knowledge and love for the Father. But in order to do that, he needed to be in a relationship to the world that Lonergan calls a mutual self-mediating relationship so that, as open to the *world's* self-

revelation, Christ could learn how to express his own revelation, the good news of salvation.

My second comment is more of a question on a particular point in Dadosky's explanation of the redemptive effect of the Incarnation. Let me quickly review what he has said. His stated purpose in the relevant section is to draw out the redemptive effect of the Incarnation through the lens of imitation, through the lens of positive mimesis. Dadosky has spoken of the Incarnation as the ultimate 're-validation' of human beings as created in God's image, an event that functions as the 're-creation and reaffirmation' of the dignity of human existence. He has stated that the Incarnation counters the distorted mimesis in the original act of rebellion. The Incarnation re-established and reaffirmed the creation of human beings in God's image. However, I find myself struggling to grasp where the reality of this re-creation of human existence actually occurs, not in reference to Christ's human nature, but to ours. In other words, to put my question bluntly, is this redemptive effect real?

One reason I ask this question is based on a statement Lonergan had made in various texts: truth and falsity are in the mind; good and evil are in things. Any redemptive effect is a good. It is concrete. Human nature, in itself, is an abstraction. It is only found in concrete human persons. So without recourse to any cooperation on our part, a cooperation which would unite a person to Christ, then how does the Incarnation, in itself, have any redemptive effect? It would make sense if that line of thought was completed with the notion of human persons *joined* to the crucified and risen Christ, so as to appropriate and participate in Christ's re-creation of human existence. The point, from a Lonerganian perspective, is that if Christ shares in the fullest way our humanity, then

this sharing itself effects concrete human existence only if there is sharing from our side, from our joining to Christ, through whatever language one wishes to use to express that union. I think Dadosky has a valid line of thought here, but I also think it needs to be filled out. Or perhaps, the circle needs to be closed. Or perhaps this is his viewpoint, but he felt it was so obvious there was no need to state it. I don't know. That is my question. Without this filling out, without this closing of the circle, I do not see how I can make the judgment that this restoration is real.

I can elaborate on my question using Dadosky's own terminology from one of his other essays cited in the paper.¹ In that essay, titled "Who/What is/are the Church(es)?" Dadosky distinguished between first, second, and third order definitions of the Church. First order definitions pertain to imagery, often from scripture or the early fathers. Second order definitions emerge through further reflection, resulting for example in allegories or models. Third order definitions arise from what Dadosky calls a 'critical exigence' – an exigence that correlates with Lonergan's third level of cognitional operation, otherwise known as 'judgment.' In Lonergan's epistemology, this is precisely where one affirms something as real. By analogy, what I am wrestling with here is whether any description of the redemptive effect of the Incarnation *in and of itself* is truly a third order judgment. Is it real? I do believe that what Dadosky is explaining is more than an image, more than a first level definition. Christ as the New Adam is a biblical image. It is a first order definition. However, Dadosky's reflection on the New Adam through a Girardian lens, interpreting the New Adam as a 'mimicked RE-storation of the good' appears to me as a second order description. In other words he is taking the image to the next level. However, for me to accept this description as third order I need to

¹ John Dadosky, "Who/What is/are the Church(es)?" *Heythrop Journal* 52/5 (2011): 785-801.

affirm through judgment that the redemptive effect is real, and so I need to find the effect, not in Christ, but in concrete human persons. Is Dadosky's description of a redemptive effect of the Incarnation truly a third order definition on the level of judgment, on the level of reality? Or, does it remain on the second order?

I would argue that it remains on the second order, but again, I may be misinterpreting him. Either way, I would like to end here with a suggestion of how the Incarnation could be situated within a context of a third order description, within the context of the real if you will, using Lonergan's distinction between causes and conditions. In any created effect, there is a difference between a cause and any requisite conditions for that cause to actually produce an effect. In my understanding, the Incarnation in and of itself is not the cause of any redemptive effect in history, *but it is a condition*. It is a condition not by necessity of course, but because God has chosen it to be so. As such, I would argue that the Incarnation is a condition for the causality of any true, real redemptive effect understood through the Girardian lens of a positive mimesis, a re-creation and reaffirmation of human dignity.

Furthermore, this causality itself involves two elements above and beyond the condition of the Incarnation. First, it involves the work of Christ to offer us communion to himself. Second, it involves cooperation on our part to embrace that offer of communion, to join ourselves to Christ. Through this offer and acceptance, the potentiality of a mimicked RE-storation of the good becomes concrete. In other words, it moves from potency to actuality.