

TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

Topic: Trinitarian Relations
 Convener: Anthony Keaty, St. John's Seminary
 Moderator: Christopher Ruddy, University of St. Thomas
 Presenters: Gill Goulding, Regis College
 M. John Farrelly, St. Anselm's Abbey

Gill Goulding, in the title of her paper—"Divine Intimacy: Trinitarian Self-Surrender and Obedience—An Invitation?"—asked whether relations involving self-surrender and obedience can serve as an invitation to fuller life or whether such relations inevitably result in the loss of human dignity. It is incumbent upon ministry in the 21st century to make the self-giving, and self-surrendering love that lies at the heart of the Trinity compelling. Goulding attempted to do so by exploring Trinitarian relations from the standpoint of the theology of the cross. The cross reveals, Goulding argued in keeping with Hans Urs von Balthasar, that inner-Trinitarian relation is a kenotic event. In the dramatic portrayal of the relation between Jesus and the Father in the story of Jesus' crucifixion, human persons are both invited and initiated into the life of the Trinity. In dialogue with the work of Sarah Coakley and Aristotle Papanikolaou, Goulding presented self-surrender and obedience as dynamic, life-giving forms of relationships within the triune life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and as fulfilling manners of relating for the human person.

Farrelly proposed an understanding of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and through the Son that harmonizes both the Western and Eastern understandings of the Holy Spirit's procession. Drawing upon Thomas Aquinas, Farrelly presented the procession of the Holy Spirit as a procession of Love. The Holy Spirit's procession as Love is diffusive in much the same way that good is self-diffusive. The Holy Spirit proceeds as a response to the Father's infinite goodness. Farrelly posed the following illustration to help make his point. Imagine a whole ocean, like the Atlantic Ocean, heaving itself by a gigantic tidal wave into a river, such as the Hudson River. This vast ocean of water, heaved from the Atlantic Ocean, would in turn flow back through the Hudson River to the Atlantic Ocean. The gigantic tidal wave from the Atlantic Ocean illustrates the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father. In the one act of spirating the Holy Spirit, the Father spirates the Son's response to the Father's infinite goodness, represented by the ocean flowing by means of the Hudson River back to the ocean. Farrelly's understanding of the procession of the Holy Spirit incorporated the Greek insistence that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. The Atlantic Ocean is the source of the flowing water. At the same time Farrelly incorporated the Latin concern that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son in so far as the Holy Spirit proceeds as the Son's response of Love, just as the water flows back to the ocean through the form of the Hudson River. The Spirit receives its identity from the source of water, that is from the Father, and from the form in which the water flows, that is from the Son. Thus,

we can say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from Father and Son without denying the primacy of the Father.

In the discussion that followed, Goulding was asked whether self-surrender meant procession. Goulding responded that she would be reluctant to identify self-surrender with procession. Goulding was further asked to clarify how self-surrender is consistent with personal identity. Goulding answered that self-surrender is only possible for someone with a clear personal identity.

Farrelly was asked whether, in the contemporary context where the relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and other Christian doctrine needs to be made more manifest, the psychological analogy for the Trinity, which was developed as a way to avoid the errors of Arius and Sabellius, was still useful. Farrelly answered that in his writing on the Trinity he has tried to show the relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and other doctrines, such as the cross of Christ. Nevertheless, the psychological analogy can still help shed light for us on the doctrine of the Trinity.

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