



The Society for Ecumenical Studies

Newsletter 13



Editorial Notes

The Committee were grateful for those who responded to our enquiry as to the future of this newsletter. We have agreed to send out three newsletters a year and keep most of the entries relatively short, though there may also be an occasional longer article.

The Committee has kept very active, via Zoom, during the lockdown. Zoom has been a boon to us since it has enabled our recent webinars to take place, which meant we have had something to offer you all in a difficult time when we have not been to hold ordinary meetings. The webinars have created quite a lot of wider interest. We intend to continue with them and plan further ones. I include in this very issue a paper given, by Keith Clements, at the webinar on the 850th anniversary of Thomas Becket's martyrdom.

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The Committee

We have recently expanded our committee. We now have on it a young research student, Victoria Turner, who hopes to complete a PhD at Edinburgh on the involvement of young people in the Ecumenical Movement. We are looking for other new members, being particularly keen to have Orthodox, Pentecostal and 'new church' representation. Two long-serving members of the committee have retired from it, Donald Norwood and Keith Clements, to whose energy and experience we owe an enormous amount. Other new members are Robin Gibbons, an Eastern Rite Catholic priest, who will guide us on relationships with universities, Mariam Tadros, a Copt, and, most recently, Rachael Adebayo, from the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

We congratulate our chair, Elizabeth, on the publication of her recent PhD thesis under the title of 'The Holy Spirit and Worship, Transformation and Truth in the Theologies of John Owen and John Zizioulas', comparing the theologies of the Holy Spirit of the Puritan, John Owen and the modern Orthodox scholar, John Zizioulas. It is a major scholarly work and I review it further on in this newsletter.

May I remind you all that I welcome short contributions from any of you on any activities in which have been involved recently and which you think would be of wider interest? Please e-mail me at david@carterbristol.eclipse.co.uk

Recent dialogues and News

WRITTEN BY DAVID CARTER

Elizabeth was also a co- chair of the International Reformed-Anglican dialogue, which, in November 2020, produced its report, *Koinonia, God's Gift and Calling* (subtitled 'The Hiroshima Report' after the location of the final meeting). This is now available on the World Communion of Reformed Churches website. It is a report that deserves attention beyond the two communions immediately involved because it deals with the ethos in which relationships within all communions and between communions should take place, an ethos conditioned by our common allegiance to Christ and baptism in him. I have recently commended it in a short notice in *The Window*, organ of the Anglican-Lutheran Society. It will be of particular interest to Lutherans since many Lutheran churches are in communion with either Anglican and Reformed churches; indeed, in the USA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has full communion agreements with both Reformed and Anglican churches.

Another international dialogue has been completed between Methodists and Roman Catholics. It is not quite yet ready for publication, but will appear under the title *God in Christ reconciling: On the way to Full Communion in Faith, Sacraments and Mission*.

Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic Church plans to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Pope John-Paul II's ecumenical encyclical, 'Ut Unum Sint' and it hopes to engage us all in renewed discussion of it in the light of the developments of the last twenty-years in both World and Church. Certainly, further work has been done, not just in official dialogues but by other groups and individuals.

The present Pope has made it clear he wants more synodality in the Church - he is insistent that his ministry is within the Church, not above it. He certainly wants to hold out a more active role and influence to ordinary clergy and lay folk as well as fully delivering on Vatican II's stress on episcopal collegiality. The International Theological Commission produced a report on synodality in 2018 and there has also been more work on the role of the parish in mission.

It may be that, particularly on the latter, there could be room for fruitful dialogue between churches in the 'independent' tradition and Roman Catholics as the former share their vision of the local church meeting, under the invisible headship of Christ, to discern God's will for their local mission and service.

Much more energy is currently being put into joint Christian witness on ecological issues. The most recent issue of *Ecumenical Trends*, the journal of the Atonement Fathers of New York contains an article by Aaron Hollander, the assistant director of the Graymoor Ecumenical and inter-religious institute, two more articles by Catholic religious, one on Armenian ecological theology, another article by an Orthodox, an article by a minister of the United Church of Canada and, finally by a professor at the Pacific School of Religion. Quite a galaxy!

David Carter



The Pandemic and the continuing need for Christian Unity

DOMINIC ROBINSON
REFORM, MARCH 2021

"Let's begin to listen to one another". These words of President Joe Biden at his inauguration represented for many the hoped-for dawning of a new era. The pandemic has, through such great suffering, been giving birth to much soul searching as many look to larger horizons to address a new existential angst in the midst of our weariness as a world at odds with itself. For Christians this current global situation presents a non-negotiable imperative. At this time, more than any recent time in history, we need to be as united as we possibly can be.

The particular context of this invitation to closer unity is our vital place in a society as it blinks its way into a new post-pandemic era. Listening together to the signs of the times, hearing what our neighbour has to say from whatever religious tradition or none, and responding together confidently in common witness to the radicality of the Gospel is the key ecumenical challenge of this extraordinary time.

We have the solid rock of a century and more of fruitful dialogue and work for Christian unity. The ecumenical movement has been through all four seasons of the waxing and waning of inter-ecclesial relationship building as we agree and disagree on doctrine, spirituality, Church culture. All this is a vital part of the story which shapes a future which must never be satisfied with partial incomplete unity.

The quest for full visible unity will carry on through the theological discussion and domestic neighbourliness which has brought us in Britain to a place where Christian unity is already a lived reality. But right now at this time of 'kairos' we are surely called to something bolder as we recognise the vital force of the Christian message of hope in our broken world.

In Britain the Christian churches and congregations have been in a privileged position during the pandemic. Government has been persuaded that remaining open to the public is vital to the spiritual health of the nation. Within the context of a multicultural society we have led the way in providing pastoral care on the front line in hospitals and care homes. We have been out on the streets serving the poor and destitute, those all too easily forgotten in society as the collateral damage of the pandemic.

The collaboration I have seen here at first hand in London between organisations like Caritas, The Connection, and various congregations and parishes has been inspirational. The Christian voice has taken its place as a united force of hope, comfort, justice, and been proactively involved in working to rebuild a better post-COVID Britain in partnership with government local and national, agencies and institutions, and other faith groups.

It is our responsibility as denominations now not to let this become solely a crisis-led response but a catalyst of drawing closer together as a force for the common good in society.

Yet, ultimately, it is not the crisis in itself which draws us together. Rather it is the person of Christ which unites us, the Christ who is revealing himself to us at this extraordinary time as the human face of the God who cares for his people with an infinite love and mercy and invites us to embrace the mystery of his presence among us in good times and bad.

Dominic Robinson

Are churches united enough now?

VICTORIA TURNER
REFORM, MARCH 2021.

Our own union was not envisioned as an ecumenical end goal. We saw ourselves, in our beginnings, as a loose ecumenical body, inviting other churches to join (refused by the major bodies in 1973) and as Martin Camroux has expertly discussed, we almost accidentally solidified into a denomination. Did this happen because the union of our four churches was enough?

Ecumenical enthusiasm in Britain had its heyday from the 1940's to the 1970's and it concentrated on the Faith and Order agenda; the end goal conceptualised as institutional unity. Some outcomes of this effort being that we understand each other's ecclesiology's and practices more, we have affirmed the legitimacy of other's ministries and we can also share rites with denominations that before we could not. However, energy for ecumenism came out of mission- at Edinburgh 1910 missionary and church leaders realised that the church needed to co-operate to effectively evangelise the world. It was the few representatives from the Global South who voiced that co-operation was not enough and they wanted a united church without the imposition of foreign denominations. Our reaction to this was to educate the 'newer churches' as to the reasons for our divisions. Ecumenism has been focused on British institutions, but it goes beyond our church structures. Oikumene can be translated as 'the whole inhabited earth' and ultimately, it asks about the unity between our relationships with each other, with those outside of the church, and with creation. For me, church unions are useful when they fulfil this larger reality - if they heal relationships.

With this understanding, it's hard to see how we could ever be united enough - but the form of that unity comes into question. What would be the benefit of the historic Protestant denominations of the UK uniting? Would it help our witness to the world- or even just to the diverse reality of the UK? How could a mega-structure prioritise the voices on the margins?

The recent reaction from the Church of England towards Jarel Robinson-Brown who called out white nationalism is an example of how large institutions feel compelled to side with the majority. The idea of one powerful, national, British church fills me with fear. To be more aligned with its origin, I do not think unity can be divorced from mission. Our mission is not to impose structural unity because 1 Corinthians 1:10 asks for there to be no divisions, but because this same verse asks that we are 'perfectly united in mind and thought.' The end goal of ecumenism cannot only be institutional unity - that's a tool to help unify God's creation. I definitely don't think we've done enough of that.

Victoria Turner



Thomas Becket: an inspiration for the Churches today?

KEITH CLEMENTS' PRESENTATION AT THE MARTYRDOM OF BECKET WEBINAR

Church-state relations

My thanks are due to Professor Mayr-Harting for such an informative and thought-provoking guide to the twelfth-century scene and the context of Thomas Becket's martyrdom. For myself, I love being given an impossibly wide and complex subject to speak on in so few minutes, because no one can expect me to treat it adequately!

We live in the long aftermath of the breakdown of that medieval synthesis of religion and secular society, church and state, which proved explosive in Thomas Becket's dispute with Henry. History has bequeathed us a wide spectrum of church positions vis a vis the state.[1] But instead of the old synthetic system most of what we call mainstream churches have now taken a different line, what I would call a symbiotic approach to church-state relations. This is set not primarily in a legal-political framework of control over competing interests but in an understanding of the divine purpose for the whole of human society. We find it set out for example in Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, which sets out the need to draw together all individuals and groups in society working for human betterment. Drawing on a number of previous documents, it states:

Founded to build the kingdom of heaven on earth rather than to acquire temporal power, the Church openly avows that the two powers—church and State—are distinct from one another; that each is supreme in its own sphere of competency. But since the Church does dwell among men, she has the duty 'of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel'. Sharing the noblest aspirations of men and suffering when she sees these aspirations not satisfied, she wishes to help them attain their full realisation. [2]

There would surely today be a strong consensus among the churches on this statement as setting the basic contours of church-state relations. [3]. This has come about through shared historical experience in the past one hundred years, at least in Europe.

There is however a problem here. It presupposes that both sides, church and state, play fair: that infamous cliché, the level playing field, comes to mind. The Soviet Union, to name but one, was a very uneven playing field – as was Franco's Spain and likewise apartheid South Africa. But neither have churches always been totally innocent. Sometimes the symbiosis becomes an unholy alliance, as seen in the drama which stands as the darkest scene in twentieth-century Europe. Preaching in Berlin in the summer of 1932 – actually six months before the coming of Hitler to power – Dietrich Bonhoeffer issued a prophetic warning, that 'times will come again when the blood of martyrs will be required'. But he immediately goes on to a second warning, still more grave: 'But this blood, if we really still have the courage and honor and faithfulness to shed it, will not be as innocent and untarnished as that of the first witnesses. On our blood would lie the great guilt of our own; the guilt of the worthless slave, who is thrown into the outer darkness. [4] He was meaning that Christianity had itself been helping to create conditions for the impending tyranny: complicity in nationalism, militarism and racism. We cannot today work with such a neat and convenient distinction between 'church' and 'state'. By design or default, churches themselves are involved, for good or ill, in forming societies and shaping systems of government. As well as spreading the gospel. They may have been sowing dragons' teeth.

1. At one end, we have the anabaptist-mennonite tradition which sees a basic incapability between the Christian community as a fellowship of love, and the state which relies on a machinery of coercion, and at times violence, to maintain order and to assert its will. At the other extreme there is the tradition of national or people's churches which 'baptize' the given society, and its culture, whether national or tribal, and call it 'Christian'. Yet another movement, which oddly is a product both of Protestant pietism and the secularising Enlightenment, is to view religion as a purely individual and private matter of belief, which, having been formally guaranteed by the state under the banner of freedom of religion, this should be left alone by the state and equally should itself seek no part no part or voice in the public or political sphere. This was officially the position of Soviet communism, and in Britain is found the National Secular Society and eminent thinkers like the late Professor Mary Warnock.

There is another problem. A symbiosis of church and state may look very harmonious, but at a certain price for the church. If I might for a moment slip into literary mode, it's hard when talking about Thomas Becket not to refer to T.S. Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral*. In Part I of the play Thomas is approached by three tempters in turn, as in the gospel story of Jesus being tempted by the devil. The second tempter offers Thomas the possibility of worldly power: 'Power obtained grows to glory, /life lasting, a permanent possession. /A templed tomb, monument of marble.' And this, says the Tempter, includes the power to do good: 'To set down the great, protect the poor, /Beneath the throne of God can man do more? /Disarm the ruffians, strengthen the laws, / Rule for the good of the better cause, / Dispensing justice make all even, / Is thrive on earth, and perhaps in heaven' (E, 248) Then, when Thomas asks by what means this will be obtained, comes the catch: 'Real power/Is purchased at price of a certain submission'. [5]

Murder in the Cathedral was first staged in Canterbury Cathedral in 1935. That was exactly the time when, over in Germany, the opportunity to purchase power and influence and safety was being offered to the churches at the price of effective submission to the regime. Already in 1933 the Concordat between the Reich and the Vatican had been signed, guaranteeing the rights and privileges of the Catholic Church in exchange for guarantees of non-intervention by the clergy in political affairs and thus neutralising any potential opposition by the Church, which, it was stated, should confine itself strictly to 'religious affairs'. On the Protestant side, Hitler wanted a church compliant to the Nazi regime and its ethos, and in this he was aided by the populist so-called Faith Movement of German Christians, eager to impose on the church the Nazi nationalistic and racist ideology, especially the demand to exclude pastors of Jewish descent. In return the church would not only be guaranteed its existing privileges but also have the status and prestige of being seen as a truly German church, appropriate for the new Reich: under state patronage and approval, its security would be guaranteed, its public esteem enhanced. Only question: would it still be the church of Jesus Christ the Suffering Servant, the Saviour of all people without distinction, gentile and Jew, and the one Lord over all areas of life?

No word has been more seductive for the churches than 'freedom'. It is a vital word, basic to our modern understanding of human rights which enshrine freedom of belief and religious practice. Freedom is also central to the gospel – but not any freedom. Jesus says in John's Gospel: 'You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free' (John 9:32.). It is a freedom conditional on obedience to the word of Christ. We would all hope, I'm sure, that states would as a matter of duty ensure the basic freedoms of their citizens, above all the freedom of belief. But unexamined freedom can become a tool in the hands of the political power. In Nazi Germany, to the shame of those of us in the Free Church tradition, who believe in separation of church and state, Hitler had no more loyal and grateful supporters than the Baptists and Methodists. As minority churches they had for long felt they had suffered discrimination at the instigation of the Lutheran and other state Protestant churches. Hitler now offered the Free Churches a guarantee of freedom from state interference in their internal life, and full freedom to evangelise especially among young people. Again, there was a price of submission to be paid, that of silence in the public realm. Hauntingly apposite, now as then, are Bonhoeffer comments, written in 1939 with American and British understandings of freedom particularly in view:

Freedom as an institutional possession is not an essential predicate of the church. Freedom may be a gracious gift to the church given by God's providence, but it may also be a great temptation to which the church succumbs when it sacrifices its essential freedom to an institutional freedom. Only the actual proclamation of the word of God determines whether the [American] churches are essentially free. Only where this word can be concretely proclaimed in the midst of historical reality as judgement, commandment, gracious salvation of the sinner and deliverance from all human ordinances is there freedom of the church. But where the gratitude for institutional freedom must be paid for through the sacrifice of the freedom of proclamation, there the church is in chains, even if it believes itself to be free. [6]

2. *Populorum Progressio*. In M. Walsh and B. Davies (Eds), *Proclaiming Justice and Peace. One hundred years of Catholic social teaching* (London: CAFOD/Collins, 1991).

3. See, for example, the United Reformed Church statement: 'We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In the things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state, but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head. Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind, and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.' From 'The Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church', *Rejoice and Sing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the United Reformed Church, 1991), no. 761

4. Sermon on Colossians 3:1-4'. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 11. *Ecumenical, Academic and Pastoral Work: 1931-1932* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 459.

So, to today. Yes, there is direct persecution in some situations. That is readily detected. But there is also collusion and courtship, if not seduction, going on in a number of church-state scenarios whereby the Christian community may outwardly benefit but is in danger of losing its soul or at least compromising its witness. The martyrdom of Archbishop Janani Luwum in Idi Amin's Uganda in 1977 is an outstanding example of witness unto death, as is that of Oscar Romero in 1980, in the tradition of Thomas Becket; and in Malawi under Hastings Banda in 1992, there was the brave stance of the Catholic bishops, followed by other church leaders. But elsewhere in Africa, such as Rwanda and Burundi in the 1990s, some church leaders have been prone to seek safety in patronage from particular national or tribal leaders and thereby colluding in appalling events. There is the appeal of populist movements, such as in the USA today where some expressions of Christianity cry 'freedom' very loudly but are captive to those seeking power even at the cost of the democratic process. In Europe today we see Viktor Orban's Hungary, where Orban's party and government officials have been courting the support of church leaders for his populist, authoritarian programme, and the church leaders in turn are given high visibility at public events and not just visibility. As one close observer says: 'Both the Catholic and Reformed Churches extracted important subsidies for ministry costs from the [leadership of the political party] Fidesz in exchange for their electoral support.' [7]

Church-State relations may not be as fraught and bitter as in earlier centuries of religious-political rivalry. But symbiosis no less than overt enmity carries its dangers. That duty to which Populorum Progressio refers 'of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel' must ever be paramount in the church's witness. As the great Anglican bishop and prophet George Bell, who was sometime dean of Canterbury and therefore custodian of Thomas Becket's shrine, put it: 'It is not the Church's function to say "ditto" to the State' [8]. In his time, with his life, Thomas refused to say "ditto", and as such will be an inspiration for our time too.

Keith Clements

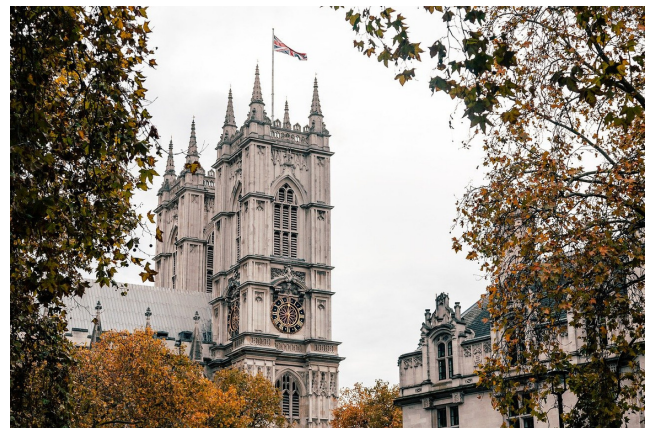
Please note that there will be a follow-up webinar ***Church and State: a holy or an unholy alliance? Where do the boundaries lie?***

7.30 – 9 p.m. Wednesday, 16 June on Zoom with speakers Revd. Gethin Rhys, Policy Officer CYTUN, Revd. Canon Dr. Malcolm Brown, Director of Mission and Public Affairs the Church of England; Visiting Professor, Religion and Theology, University of Winchester), Laura Dunlop QC, Procurator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and Jonny Clark, Director of Youth with a Mission in Ireland. Speakers from the four nations of the United Kingdom will offer reflections from within the different traditions of the Church in relations to the State.

To book, please go to

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/church-state-a-holy-or-an-unholy-alliance-where-do-the-boundaries-lie-tickets-154854292357>

Please contact Alison Evans, our secretary, for further details at sfes.secretary@gmail.com



5. The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 248f.

6. Essay 'Protestantism without Reformation', Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works Volume 15. Theological Education Underground: 1937-1940. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 459.

7. See Alexander Faludy, 'Viktor Orbán and the Hungarian Churches: "Post-Communist" Back Story, 1992-2010.' Keston Newsletter no.32 2020, 11-23.

8. George Bell, Christianity and World Order (London: Penguin, 1940), 87.

Review

Welch, Elizabeth A. *The Holy Spirit and Worship. Transformation and Truth in the Theologies of John Owen and John Zizioulas* (2021), published by Wipf and Stock. ISBN 978-1-7252-6111-2.

This book is highly significant, both for the development of pneumatology and the furtherance of the Ecumenical Movement and serious dialogue within it. The author, Elizabeth Welch, is a minister in the (British) United Reformed Church, where she has been both a provincial moderator and her church's representative to the World Council of Churches. More recently, she has become Chair of the Society for Ecumenical Studies and has also been a co-moderator of the second international dialogue between the World Council of Reformed Churches and the Anglican Communion, a dialogue that issued in November 2020 a report entitled 'Koinonia, God's Gift and Calling', a report of particular significance for the entire koinonia of the Christian Church, with implications for the manner and spirit in which all dialogue both within and between communions should be addressed.

Dr Welch is thus well qualified to produce such a book, arguably one of the most significant on pneumatology since the late Bishop John V. Taylor's *The Go-Between God* of 1972, re-published in 2014. Taylor was particularly concerned to stress the vital importance of the Spirit as the indispensable empowerer and enabler of the missionary enterprise of the Universal Church. Welch's concern is to stress the equally indispensable role of the Spirit in worship and the resultant understanding of God and his purposes for humanity that come both to the individual Christian and the worshipping gathering of the people of God.

One of the great gains of the Ecumenical Movement has been to make even those whose traditions might, at first sight, appear most divergent, recognise that they have far more in common than is necessarily immediately perceived through their very different styles of worship. More importantly, both sides can receive from each other emphases and insights that are complementary and mutually enriching. It is just that which is Welch's aim in this book for both the Orthodox and her own Reformed community.

She also suggests that other bilateral dialogues on the role of the Spirit could be very fruitful.

There has been international dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed since 1986 and indeed, also between Oriental Orthodox and Reformed since 1992. How much the formal dialogues have been received remains a point of uncertainty, but it is to be hoped that Welch's study may reach a somewhat wider audience in both traditions and, indeed well beyond them. She writes clearly, enabling the reader to see where she is going at each stage. As far as I know, only Roman Catholics, the Anglican Communion and the Reformed have had dialogues with both Orthodox communions. The liturgical life of the Oriental Orthodox deserves to be much better appreciated.

Welch begins her book by noting the rising importance and influence of Pentecostalism and its stress on worship as transformative in the power of the Spirit. She also mentions other reasons for an increased interest in pneumatology in both the context of a parallel increasing stress on trinitarian theology and a desire to understand the particular role of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity. Much has happened here since the 1982 publication by the former British Council of Churches report on *The (then?) Forgotten Trinity*. It is worth remembering the observation at that time of the late Robert Murray SJ that most western Christians were effectively binarians.

Dr Welch notes that, despite these developments and a concurrent increase in studies of liturgy and worship, there is still relatively little published that deals specifically with the role of the Spirit in worship and its consequences both for the sanctification of individuals and the holiness of congregations within the Church Universal. She is, above all, concerned to explore a possibility that she cites in her Conclusion.

'Seeing the Holy Spirit in worship as the one who draws us into the encounter with the Trinity opens up the possibility of a renewed ecumenical appreciation of the variety of possibilities of ways of worship, offered to the one divine source'.

To work through to this, she summons to her aid two seriously magisterial theologians of the work of the Spirit within worship of the Church. From her own, Reformed, tradition, she selects John Owen, leading Puritan theologian of the Cromwellian/Restoration period, whose theology increasingly dwelt upon the work of the Spirit in prevenient grace, drawing people towards Christ and, through worship, involving them in the trinitarian life of God. In a particularly good chapter in this book, Dr Welch 'sees the relationship into which the Holy Spirit draws a person as a relationship which leads to the knowledge of God and the truth about creation and the human person. The Holy Spirit guides people into truth, truth which is embodied in worship, truth which embraces both heart and mind'. This sort of truth is thus seen as having a relational dimension in contrast to both purely propositional truth or truth according to the whims of the individual concerned. Welch quotes Owen on the gracious work of the Spirit.

'This anointing with the Holy Ghost is the communication of him unto us with respect to that gracious work of his in the spiritual, saving illumination of our minds, teaching us to know the truth, and to adhere firmly unto it in love and obedience. The Holy Spirit both comforts and refreshes the human spirit'.

'He comes upon the dry parched, barren ground of the hearts of men, with his refreshing, fructifying virtue and blessing, causing to spring and bring forth fruits in holiness and righteousness to God (Heb 6:7)'.

From the partner, Orthodox, tradition, she introduces John Zizioulas, arguably, contemporary Orthodoxy's most eminent and influential theologian. Despite their very different contexts in time and particular communion, Owen and Zizioulas show many convergences in thinking about the Spirit's role in worship. Both are ardent trinitarians, Owen having strongly opposed Socinianism, Zizioulas having learnt from the Cappadocian fathers struggling with Arians. Both cite scripture and the early fathers of the Church, Owen giving them rather more attention than was usual with other Puritans because he saw them as adding weight to the testimony of Scripture through their deep reflection on it in their own lives.

For Owen, the prime emphasis was on the role of the Spirit working through the congregation's reception of the word read and preached in worship. Welch also points to what she calls 'synchronicity', the meeting of the human mind with the Holy Spirit, awakened and prepared to receive the Spirit's guidance into the truth. For Owen, the human mind and heart, both have a role to play in both the search for divine truth and in its fruitful reception in Christian graciousness. However, in traditional Reformed style, Owen insists on the primacy of divine initiative and grace. At the same time, for him, the Spirit respects the faculties that He breathed in Adam at the creation and He works with regenerated human spirit.

For Zizioulas, the key point of reception of truth is in the eucharist. For Owen it was primarily the reading and preaching of the Word though which the Spirit worked, for Zizioulas, it is through the eucharist, 'in which all dimensions of communion are to be found. God communicates himself to us, we enter into communion with him...creation as a whole enters through man into communion with God'.

Zizioulas insists that, without the coming of the Spirit, we cannot have Christ. The Spirit's action constitutes the Church. In it, 'Christ is not just an individual but the many.' Central to his thinking it is only when the Spirit comes that Christians are established in their true nature as persons, persons in the one Christ, receiving their true personhood in and from Christ. From being individuals, separated from others and primarily concerned with themselves, they become persons, related in and through the Spirit and Christ to the Trinity and all other Christians.

The Spirit, invoked in the eucharist, creates an act of communion. It is this act of communion that holds out the promise of the final fulfilment of the desire of the Blessed Trinity that into their eternal communion should eventually be drawn all those created in their image, the potential of that creation being fulfilled in the fulfilled likeness of those attaining to 'maturity, the measure of the full stature of Christ' (Eph 4:13). Or, as Charles Wesley puts it, 'the spirit of finished holiness'.

Zizioulas points to the fact that 'the Church is constituted in and through eschatology and communion'. A point, one may add, that is stressed by St Maximus the Confessor when he speaks of the eucharist as 'the memorial of the things to come'.

It is in this eucharist that the people of God are transported both backwards and forwards, both back to the Great Plan of God to 'unite all things in Christ' (Eph 1:10) and its subsequent pivotal point in the events of the paschal mystery, followed by Pentecost and forwards to the consummation of the New Creation in Christ's finally handing the kingdom over to the Father (1 Cor 15:28). Insight into this coming glorious mystery has been part of the Church's prayer since the time of the author of the Didache, recording the prayer, 'Let grace come and the present world pass away'. In the eucharist, we are 'drawn from the future to the future.' We receive the vision of the new Creation.

In every celebration of the eucharist, the Spirit constitutes the Church, all its members a single Body, each ministering to each other in the name and grace of Christ, each growing deeper in to 'the spirit of finished holiness', the renewal of true human personhood in the image of God.

Welch is quite right to insist that, in the present ecumenical context, we should seek to recognise the multiplicity of forms of worship of the triune God through which worship can be offered to the triune God in the accompanying power and inspiration of the Spirit. At the same time, however, I would stress also a degree of receptive ecumenism should occur as we are challenged to learn from the strengths of others. However, we should also recognise the sovereign freedom of the Spirit to inspire new forms of worship and discipleship in praise of the triune God and His mission.

I would further add, as does Zizioulas, that the pneumatic-charismatic elements of the Church always need to be held in tension with the necessary structural elements. We must remember, as Pope John Paul affirmed in his millennial statements, that preparing for the full unity of the Church means 'knowing how to recognise the action of the Holy Spirit who is at work in our brethren, discovering new dimensions of holiness and opening ourselves to fresh aspects of Christian commitment' [9].

This is a great book; moreover, not just a work of fine scholarship but one which can draw us to prayer, as we reflect on the wisdom and insight of the author and the two theologians with whom she dialogues.

David Carter

If you would like to order a copy of this book, Elizabeth has some available at £17, including postage and packing.

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