



Reviews

ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FILIOQUE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
edited by Myk Habets, T & T Clark, Bloomsbury, London and New York, 2014,
pp. xviii + 240, £ 65.00, hbk

Even though the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit was defined at the Council of Florence with the greatest precision, and in a way that took into account the various patristic testimonies on the subject, it continues to be an occasion – some might say a pretext – of divisions within Christendom. This book is a collection of essays written on the subject by members of a variety of Christian confessions. It is the first such collection in English since the publication in 1981 of *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ* by the World Council of Churches.

M. Habets, the editor, explains in the opening chapter that the contributors were asked to provide ‘significant theological proposals’ for resolving the disputes that surround the *Filioque*, and not simply to ‘repeat historical rhetoric’. One can sympathise with the spirit in which this request was made, while disagreeing with the apparent assumption that all the accounts of the procession of the Holy Spirit hitherto given are unsatisfactory.

E. Siecienski, in what is perhaps the most useful chapter of the book, gives an historical overview of the question, condensing his own recent study of the subject. He describes not so much the history of the doctrine as the history of the debate about the doctrine, finishing with the 1995 Vatican Statement on the question. Neither he nor the other authors, however, notes that this *Statement* lacks magisterial authority, coming as it does from the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. P. Molnar’s contribution is a discussion of the thought of T. Torrance, who helped formulate a 1991 agreed statement on the Trinity between the Reformed and Eastern Orthodox churches. He seems to wish to by-pass the *Filioque* debate by affirming a real order within the Trinity without any divine Person deriving deity from another; which appears to this reviewer to involve a contradiction. He also apparently neglects the distinction between being a ‘principle’ and being a ‘cause’.

D. Guretzki, a Free Church scholar, mentions some gains which he finds in recent ecumenical discussions on the subject. The first is that it has come to be generally agreed that the affirmation and denial of the *Filioque* are not dogmas but theological opinions; the second is that the Father is the sole principle of the *ekporeusis* of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the *Filioque* is a dogma for Catholics, having been defined at several ecumenical councils, even though its denial may only be a theologoumenon for Orthodox, having never been defined at an ecumenical council; and to say that the Father is the sole principle of the *ekporeusis* is either contrary to the *Filioque*, or else only trivially true. He also writes, bafflingly, that ‘the concept that the procession of the Spirit is a procession equally from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit makes good sense’ (p. 59). T. Alexopoulos, an Orthodox scholar, writes on the theme of the eternal manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the Son. He discusses the occurrence of this language in some of the Greek Fathers, and the use which some mediaeval Byzantine theologians made of it, in their attempts to explain how the Holy Spirit could have an eternal relation to the Son while proceeding from the Father alone. Like those theologians, however, the author seems unable to give a coherent account of what

'manifestation' means, and to waver between various explanations: the Son as a condition for the Holy Spirit; the Son as an eternal cause of uncreated charismata; simple consubstantiality between the Son and the Holy Spirit.

B. Ellis's reflections are inspired by the thought of John Calvin. His main claim is to deny that one may legitimately speak about 'the communication of the divine essence within the Trinity', even though he agrees that the Holy Spirit proceeds and is God. But it is not clear to this reviewer what he means by procession, or how his definition of the term would, as he apparently thinks, establish a *via media* in the debate between Catholics and Orthodox. C. Holmes also writes on Calvin. According to him, the despot of Geneva taught that the Son eternally receives the Spirit from the Father, as the pattern for the anointing of His humanity; yet elsewhere he writes that Calvin 'implies that the Son receives from the Father 'the faculty of spiration''. It is not clear how these positions are to be reconciled. D. Wilhite, a Baptist, makes a number of blunders in his essay, the most egregious of which is to state that St Augustine thought that one could say that the Son is the Son of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the doctor of Hippo argued that this position was implied by and therefore, being obviously absurd, refuted the suggestion that the Holy Spirit alone was love.

F. Macchia, a Pentecostalist, claims that the *Filioque* is inconsistent with the mutual dependence on the Son and the Holy Spirit found in the New Testament. This claim shows a lack of a proper distinction between Christ's human and divine natures. Like several other authors, he speaks of the mutual dependence of all the divine persons on each other, without sufficiently distinguishing relation and procession. R. Jenson argues that both sides of the debate have an insufficient idea of Trinitarian relations, and wishes to add to relations of origin, 'active relations of the Triune goal'. On this view 'the Spirit differentially liberates the Father for paternal love and the Son for filial love'. The limits of a book review do not allow a critique of these statements. J. McDowell, a Presbyterian who refers to the Holy Spirit of God as 'she', cultivates opacity. We learn, for example, that 'suggestions for the cultural embraciveness of the pneumatic' are liable to 'distort the envisioning of the eschatological through the provision of masterable systems'. It is not easy to know what he thinks of the *Filioque*, though he seems to suggest that the dogma would imply that the Holy Spirit Himself would not be God, not being the source of a procession.

K. Tanner, an Episcopalian, laudably wishes to understand the immanent Trinity by means of the economic Trinity, but again, does not distinguish the divinity from the humanity of the Son. So she can write that 'the Spirit, not just in history but eternally, is the power... behind the Father's begetting of the Son'. When she goes on to declare that the Holy Spirit nevertheless receives 'shape' from Son we seem to have a metaphor rather than a thought. T. Weinandy finds fault with St Athanasius and St Thomas Aquinas for holding that the Holy Spirit, unlike the Father and the Son, is not constituted by a personal act of His own. He argues that 'all three members of the Trinity simultaneously and reciprocally act upon one another'. This appears to introduce passivity into God; and in fact, for St Thomas, only the Father is *constituted* by a personal act (this is perhaps a point to emphasise in discussions with the Orthodox). M. Habets follows a similar line, expressly saying that each divine person is cause and effect to the others. He remarks that rejecting the view that the Father has no principle is a 'controversial move'. Indeed it is; and hardly one likely to heal the Eastern schism!

Finally, it is perhaps a sign of the times that the editor found no contributor willing to expound the account of the Holy Spirit's procession that has been peacefully expounded by Catholic theology for many centuries in accordance with the definitions of the councils. While this book will be useful for those who

wish to know what people are saying about the *Filioque*, I cannot recommend it to those who want to understand the doctrine or to know why they should believe it to be true.

THOMAS CREAN OP

ENLIGHTENED MONKS: THE GERMAN BENEDICTINES 1740–1803 by Ulrich Lehner, *Oxford University Press*, Oxford, 2011, pp. 266, £55.00, hbk, and **MONASTIC PRISONS AND TORTURE CHAMBERS: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN MONASTERIES, 1600–1800** by Ulrich Lehner, *Cascade Books*, Eugene, Oregon, 2013, pp. xi +105, \$15.00, pbk

These two recent books by Ulrich Lehner, Associate Professor of Historical Theology and Religious History at Marquette University, admirably fill a lacuna in monastic studies and make German scholarship accessible to English-speaking readers. In his introduction, Lehner rightly acknowledges two important historical works related to his own: Derek Beales' *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic Monasteries in the Age of Revolution, 1650–1815* (2003) and Geoffrey Scott's *Gothic Rage Undone: English Monks in the Age of Enlightenment* (1992). While Lehner's focus is certainly narrower than Beales' s wide-ranging study, it is also somewhat broader than Scott's. According to Lehner, whereas Scott 'investigated predominantly the institutional and intellectual history of the English Benedictines', his book 'attempts to give an insight into the social, cultural, and intellectual history of the Benedictine monks in the German-speaking lands'.

As a result of this avoidance of institutional history, which is understandable given the estimated 150 monasteries comprising 3500–4000 monks, *Enlightened Monks* takes a thematic rather than chronological approach. This can sometimes leave the (false) impression of unity of belief and practice across the period studied.

Judging *Enlightened Monks* solely on Lehner's own stated intention to explain 'why the Benedictines produced more Catholic enlighteners than any other order', his book must be counted a failure. Above all, it seldom draws comparisons with other orders, but focuses almost exclusively on Benedictines without putting them into a wider context. Neither has any attempt been made to estimate numbers of enlighteners by order. Moreover, many of the topics Lehner explores, especially those on runaway monks and monastic prisons, do little if anything to support his argument. Instead, they serve more to undermine it by showing a lack of enlightenment. Elsewhere he hints at the anti-scholastic underpinnings of Enlightenment thought. A more fruitful line of approach might have been to show the lack of, or tenuous attachment of, Benedictines to scholasticism, in contrast to the Jesuits and Dominicans. Two running themes throughout *Enlightened Monks* are friendly Benedictine relations with Protestants and enmity towards the Jesuits. In respect of the latter, the German monks were no different than their English counterparts.

As a book describing the experience of German-speaking Benedictines in the eighteenth century, *Enlightened Monks* is far more successful. It describes not only those monks who endorsed Enlightenment ideas, but also those who actively opposed them, as well as the more ambivalent. Such differences of opinion could lead to discord and disobedience, sometimes resulting in years of litigation, monks running away or being imprisoned, or even the complete breakdown of community life. In Chapter 4, 'The Challenge of a New Liberty', Lehner singles