

At the risk of importing an analogy which has no place here but is simply an enthusiasm of mine, I'd like to say a little more about that marvellous area of scrub a few miles to the north of us which is heaving with birds, many of which can no longer be found, or are very rare, around Turvey, and the countryside generally. It's an area which was formerly farmland but has, literally, been allowed to go to seed. It's now, after thirty or so years, an almost impenetrable 'jungle' of bushes and trees with a tangle of bramble underneath to keep out, not only humans, but even several species of deer which we've unwisely introduced and allowed to run riot elsewhere. The temptation, now, is to preserve it as it is, for if we continue to leave it alone, it will naturally grow up into woodland and, although this has its own richness and diversity, the richness and diversity of the scrub community of birds and the wildlife will be lost or, at least, lessened; keeping it as it is, however, will be expensive. It will need deer and other herbivores such as sheep and cattle, to keep it trimmed and prevent young trees growing to full term and all the fencing and management of stock which goes with this. A much simpler and cheaper way would be to allow it free rein and, over time, allow other areas to go to seed and take over its role as scrub. The sticking point, ironically, in this time of planting trees deliberately in order to counter climate change, is a deep-seated fear among both farmers and conservationists and, one might add – bureaucrats, of allowing nature just to get on with it. We all, perhaps, have a deep-seated fear of finding ourselves in a dark wood.

Now, I wonder whether something of this isn't what the Holy Spirit is all about. If there's any one factor that leads to Jesus' death it seems to be the great personal freedom he exercised in his ministry, freedom which allowed him – indeed, *compelled* him – (if that isn't a contradiction in terms) to challenge the religious structures and strictures of his day. And, it's this Spirit which enables him to enter the dark wood, one might say, and which Jesus wishes us to enter too, each in our own individual and yet time-bound generational way, so that we too can grow up in Christ; becoming part of a free biotic community of competitive and cooperative characters constrained only by one another. Where this goes is the idea that the diversity and yet unity hinted at in these different accounts of the coming of the Spirit is perfectly natural in the sense that God, as trinity, wants us, too, to enjoy the task of co-creating Church and world in a dynamic of freely evolving relationships constrained only by the dictate of love. If that sounds complicated, it is, if we stand outside a fence looking in, outside the possibility of entering the dark wood itself. But, if we dare to enter it, and perhaps indeed dare to remove the fences altogether, we will find ourselves in an entirely different story: part of a body on the move which will delight us forever more and encourage us to plant seeds of this same process elsewhere.

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