

Society for Ecumenical Studies – Book Reviews, January 2003

***The Unity we have and the unity we seek: ecumenical prospects for the third millennium*, ed Jeremy Morris and Nicholas Sagovsky, T and T Clark, 2003.**

The publication of these stimulating essays, coming so soon after the St. Albans's conference highlighted in the last *Pilgrim Post*, provides a written "litmus test" as to where some forms of ecumenical dialogue have got to. The essays began their life, in the main, as conference papers given to launch the Centre for Ecumenical Studies, based in the Cambridge Theological Federation, in 1999. The editors are to be congratulated that they have persuaded both the original contributors to update their material to the current day and to include new contributions not heard at the conference itself. So for instance, in the second part of the book on prospects for the future, Mary Tanner and Michael Root have an accessible dialogue about models of church unity and there is a quite superb piece by Valentin Dedji from an African perspective. Just as I was about to ask of the book, in the same vein as Bishop Joe Aldred in St Albans, "Who is not represented here?" up comes Valentin's profound and politically rooted essay.

The book tells the story of modern ecumenism in its frustrations and joys. The Introduction notes that the signals of ecumenism are contradictory so it is no surprise that a tension runs through the book between theology done from a local context and theology painted on a broader canvas. I personally found the material which engages with European culture (Keith Clements) and Christopher Hill's final chapter on route planning within a multi-cultural society the most satisfying because this is where unity and mission co-exist. Nevertheless, Jeremy Morris has written a stimulating piece on the integration of local ecumenism and theory from his perspective as a teacher and Nicholas Sagovsky's piece on the possible shape and detail of Anglican-Roman Catholic agreements is the kind of resource which dialogue scribes cry out for. The editors rightly acknowledge the absence of some major Christian traditions but there is good breadth from Old Catholic, Methodist and Reformed authors. I would have enjoyed more reference to ecumenism in practice to overcome the old divides between academy and church but the language is accessible and non-technical on the whole. The book draws to an end with a seminal piece from the late Jean-Michael Tillard, typically robust but a heartfelt plea that although the church is veiled, hidden, divided and decadent, the Spirit does not erase the church or the fruits of salvation.

The Rev'd Dr. Ian McIntosh has been a very part-time Director of the Centre for Ecumenical Studies in Cambridge since April 2002. The rest of the time he shares with Nicola McIntosh ministry in three Bedfordshire villages.