

Society for Ecumenical Studies – Book Reviews, 2003

***Apostolicity and Unity: Essays on the Porvoo Common Statement*, ed Ola Tjørhom, WCC publications, 2002, pp288, £18.90, ISBN 2-8254-1375-5**

Ten years on from the signing of the Porvoo Common Statement, it is good to see the publication of these stimulating essays. Whilst they are geared to those with some knowledge of the theology which undergirds dialogue documents, there is enough here to introduce the newcomer and to provide evidence of how dialogues work in practice. This is no mean feat for ecumenical writing often fails to mediate between the national and the local. A number of shorter pieces on how the Statement has been put into practice around Northern Europe enliven the work and are not afraid to confront the “No” to Porvoo declared by some churches. A wider ecumenical commentary at the end of the book from Roman Catholic, Methodist, Orthodox and Reformed perspectives gives the encouraging sense that this bi-lateral process is being received multi-laterally.

Further breadth is given with some excellent contextual perspectives from Africa to counter the all too often Eurocentric focus of dialogues. The highlights are three superb essays in the middle of the book which attend to “portraits” of the church which are painted by the dialogue process. Those familiar with the original statement and essays which accompanied it will not be surprised at the space given over to the focus on episcopacy which is detailed and technical but with which many will have to wrestle further. They might share with this reviewer a certain frustration, also shared with the original text, that apostolicity is never really considered in its missionary context and the book cries out for some connection with studies of the sociology of religion in Europe. With this, it would have come closer to the primary focus of the Statement which was to demonstrate the missionary imperative to work towards unity.

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