

Society for Ecumenical Studies – Book Reviews, May 2005

Chapman, David. *In search of the Catholic Spirit - Methodists and Roman Catholics in dialogue*. Epworth, 2004, £19.99. ISBN 0-71620588-2.

David Chapman is now a member of the international Roman Catholic Methodist Committee for dialogue alongside another very able younger theologian, Fr. Paul McPartlan, himself well known to us for his papers on various occasions and themes and as our past President. David is also co-secretary of the British Roman Catholic-Methodist Committee.

This book is unique in the sense that it is, I believe, the first book to survey the total context of a bilateral ecumenical dialogue quite so thoroughly. It begins with a survey of Methodist and Roman Catholic evaluations of each others' traditions all the way from the time of the Wesleys and Bishop Challenor through to Vatican II, the Decree on Ecumenism and its call to dialogue being the spur to the beginning of the formal international dialogue in 1967, now in its eighth successive quinquennium. As well as his survey of the international dialogue in all its first seven stages, he adds a valuable chapter on the four national dialogues, in Britain, the USA, Australia and New Zealand, all of which have contributed to better mutual understanding and rapprochement. This book represents a very judicious appraisal of the development of the dialogue, noting both areas of progress and areas where there is continuing disagreement. It is honest about the difficulties of reception and indeed expresses the opinion that both churches might have done more to promote effective knowledge and reception of the dialogue. It is good to record that the Methodist Faith and Order Committee is now able to make more frequent appraisals of the dialogue than occurred in the past.

David Chapman writes with great clarity, making this a very readable book despite the considerable complexity of the topic. It will be a "must" for anyone seriously interested in ecumenical dialogue.

David Carter