

Society for Ecumenical Studies – Book Reviews, May 2005

Steele, William, *Ecumenism for Catholics: the story, the theory, the practice*, 2003, Blackfriars Publications. (£1.50 each including P&P. Make cheques payable to *Blackfriars Publications* and send to Giles Hibbert, 13 Laneside Close, Chapel-en-le-Frith, High Peak, Derbyshire SK23 OTS.)

We are greatly in William Steele's debt. In a brief space he manages what many would have found impossible: distilling a huge amount of history and presenting it clearly and eirenicly in an accessible form.

A short note on the fly-leaf states that 'this booklet is based on talks the author has given as part of the education programme for the Catholic certificate in Religious Studies'. I wish I had been present! And, as a National Ecumenical Officer from another tradition, I would have no hesitation in commending it within my own denomination as a very useful and thought-provoking introduction to ecumenical relations.

Here are a few of the many good things I appreciated: an opening paragraph which resonates with the work of modern Protestant missiologists and the school of David Bosch; starting the historical survey with the Acts of the Apostles; pointing up the key question 'What in this situation are the limits of legitimate diversity' when considering the First Millennium; reflection upon the way divisions have sometimes been caused by differences of emphasis resulting from problems between languages (and thus thought and culture); explaining exactly what the Second Vatican Council meant when it said that the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church alone, and, in discussing *One Bread One Body*, recognising honestly where hurts still exist. As a member of the Reformed family I was particularly grateful for his extremely fair and positive section on the Reformation. I also admired deeply his outlining of the principles behind the *Churches Together* ecumenical instruments and his willingness to note criticism of his own tradition where things have been expressed insensitively and 'the same points could have been made with equal honesty but more ecumenical charity and awareness'.

This masterly survey ends with a concluding reflection on recent English experience. It is clear-sighted and positive in locating hope in God's graciousness, but maybe I detect a hint of sorrow that more cannot yet be said.

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