



The Society for Ecumenical Studies

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Dear Friends,

Astute colleagues will recognise from this Newsletter that at last I have my scanner running again. This means we are able to bring you two recent contributions from Societas Oecumenica, the European ecumenical study network to which we belong, as well as some fine must-read book reviews from David Carter, our past Secretary, courtesy of our friends at the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose newsletter he edits. They all come a little later into our journal, but are no less welcome arrivals to our discourse. Please note, however, that the survey of Belgian ecumenism by Fr Thaddée Barnas was written before the controversy over abuse that has deeply dented its Catholic Church's confidence and reputation. It always strikes me how much the English Church's journey to unity owes historically to the Belgian Church – Mercier, Beauduin and his disciple Couturier, de Smedt, to name but four – and now is a chance to “strengthen the brethren” as they persevere and rebuild. A very hopeful sign was the re-inauguration of the prestigious ecumenical study forum by Père Thaddée at his monastery at Chevetogne, on *Spiritual Ecumenism and Leadership in the Churches*, in which Professor Nicholas Sagovsky and I participated.

June saw a splendid event at Westminster Abbey, at which Dame Mary Tanner and Dr Oliver Rafferty SJ led us in thinking over the Ecumenical Theology of Rowan Williams. We hope to bring you the papers (as well as those from Chevetogne) in our next Newsletter. Here is our next event, which will be preceded by our **2011 AGM at 5pm**, papers for which are at the end of this Newsletter.

Fr Mark Woodruff, Secretary

The Ecumenical Significance of the King James Bible

Professor Pauline Croft MA (Oxon) DPhil. FSA FRHistS
Professor of Early Modern History, Royal Holloway,
University of London

in

The Chapel of Methodist Central Hall Westminster

Monday 26th September 2011

6.30 p.m.- 8.00 p.m.

Refreshments from 6 p.m.

Invitation is by free ticket, please apply to ecumenical@urc.org.uk

ECUMENISM IN BELGIUM

Fr Andrew Joseph Barnas, Benedictine Monastery of Chevetogne

From *Signalia*, the annual review of Societas Oecumenica 2009

Belgium and the Belgian Outlook

The regions which make up Belgium today have been linked by a common destiny for several centuries, but the Belgian state only came into existence in 1830. The provinces which seceded from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to form Belgium brought together a highly diversified population. But in every part of the new state, the overwhelming majority of the population belonged to the Roman Catholic church.

The founders of the Belgian state endowed it with a liberal constitution, which assures the separation - without hostility - of Church and State, and guarantees freedom of religion. The first King of the Belgians, Leopold I, himself a devoted Protestant, strove for the protection of the rights of the Protestant, Anglican and Jewish religious minorities. As a result of the demographic distribution of confessions, and legal safeguards for minorities, religious differences never came to be seen as major issues for Belgian society.

Questions of language, on the other hand, tend to be seen as highly divisive, and to overshadow other issues in Belgian politics. Three languages are recognized officially: Dutch., spoken by the Flemish in the north, French, spoken by the Walloons in the south, and German, spoken by a minority along the German border. Questions related to the balance between the major language groups, and to the defence of the rights of each of them have caused major strains on Belgian society, particularly in recent decades. The churches have not always managed to respond to their call to act as a sign of reconciliation in the face of such problems.

Linguistic diversity, however, has also been a blessing for Belgium. A small country at the geographical crossroads of western Europe, it has been able to become a European meeting ground, a place of hospitality, as well as the seat of many international organizations. The fact that Belgians share the languages of their neighbours gives them special insight into political, social and cultural developments in surrounding countries. They have thus been able to play an important role in the movement for European unity.

The Churches

The Roman Catholic Church remains the majority church in Belgium. With its eight dioceses, 4,000 parishes, 5,000 priests, and numerous religious orders, it has a rather high profile in Belgian life. A large majority of Belgians identify themselves as Roman Catholic. While Belgian Catholics hold a numerically privileged position, they acquired a lively interest for ecumenical matters, long before the Roman Catholic Church entered the international ecumenical scene.

From 1921 to 1926, the Malines Conversations, under the presidency of Cardinal Mercier, brought together Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians in what might today be called a bilateral theological dialogue. In 1925, Dom Lambert Beauduin founded the Benedictine Monastery of Amay (later moved to Chevetogne), the aim of which was to draw Christian churches closer together in depth and in fairness, through prayer, and an objective study of all questions related to Christian unity. Ecumenical awareness became quite evident in both research and education at the Catholic University of Louvain from the time of the Second World War. The work of such professors as Charles Moeller, Gustave Thils, Gerard Philips, Roger Aubert and others showed a real ecumenical

concern, and helped to prepare the way for the Catholic Church to take part in the ecumenical movement.

Since Vatican II (1962-1965), Belgian Catholic ecumenical efforts have grown more numerous. National and diocesan commissions on ecumenism were set up to further good relations with communities of other confessions and to arouse interest in ecumenical matters among Roman Catholics. Today, Belgian Catholics are ever more grateful to Christians of other confessions for their specific contribution to the Christian presence in Belgium.

The roots of Belgian Protestantism go back to the Anabaptist and Calvinist movements which had tremendous importance in the Spanish Low Countries at the time of the Reformation. Violent repression on the part of civil and church authorities led to thousands of Flemish and Walloon Protestants emigrating to the Netherlands, England, Germany, Sweden, etc. By the end of the religious upheavals of the 16th century, only the Roman Catholic faith enjoyed legal status in the provinces which make up Belgium today. A handful of clandestine Protestant congregations survived as the "Church under the Cross".

Only after Joseph II's Act of Toleration in 1781, the Dutch period (1814-1830), and especially Belgian independence in 1830, could Protestantism develop unhampered. The communities which had been part of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands set up the Union of Evangelical Protestant Churches in the Kingdom of Belgium in 1839. A Belgian Evangelical Society was founded in 1837; it became the Belgian Christian Missionary Church (BCMC) in 1849. Other Protestant movements - Methodists, the Brethren, Baptists, etc. – helped to form Protestant communities in Belgium.

The quest for unity appeared early on among Belgian Protestants. In 1923 a Federation of Protestant Churches in Belgium was formed by the Union of Evangelical Protestant Churches and the BCMC; other churches joined later. The University Faculty of Protestant Theology was founded in Brussels in 1950 by the Union of Evangelical Protestant Churches and the Methodist Conference; the BCMC joined in 1955, and the Reformed Churches in Belgium (Gereformeerde Kerken in Belgie) in 1970.

The Union of Evangelical Protestant Churches revised its statutes in 1957 to allow congregations not recognized by the state to join, thus providing for mergers with other churches. At the same time, the name was changed to Evangelical Protestant Church in Belgium (EPCB). The EPCB merged with the Methodist Conference in 1969; the new church was called the Protestant Church in Belgium. From 1970, talks were held with the Reformed Church in Belgium (the new name of the BCMC), and with the Reformed Churches in Belgium. Negotiations for merger were concluded in 1978, and the United Protestant Church in Belgium (UPCB) was inaugurated on January 1, 1979. At present, the UPCB has about a hundred congregations, organized into six districts. It is a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Conference of European Churches (KEK).

In recent decades, the United Protestant Church has deepened its relations with the Roman Catholic in an atmosphere of growing confidence. An important development was the mutual recognition of baptism, in 1971, between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches which were later to form the UPCB. Other Protestant churches and movements are also active in Belgium, for example, Baptists, the Free Evangelical Churches, Mennonites, Pentecostals, the Salvation Army. Some of them take part in ecumenical activities on all levels. Others hesitate to attend large national meetings, but participate occasionally in local ecumenical initiatives.

The Anglican Church enjoys legal status in Belgium since 1975. Today, the Archdeacon of Anglican parishes in the Benelux countries is based in Brussels. There are four parishes in Belgium, and Anglican worship is celebrated regularly in eleven towns.

The presence of Orthodoxy in Belgium goes back to 1885, when a congregation connected with the Russian embassy was formed. A century later, in 1985, Orthodoxy was officially recognized by law.

The Metropolitan of Belgium for the Ecumenical Patriarchate is the spokesperson for the Orthodox congregations before the Belgian state. At present there are two orthodox bishops and about forty parishes in Belgium. In 1990, a Joint Orthodox-Roman Catholic Committee was established to deal with the various pastoral matters which concern the two confessions.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches are represented in Belgium by Armenian, Coptic and Syrian congregations.

A Common Approach to Other Faiths

There are about 40,000 Jews in Belgium, and the Jewish-Christian dialogue plays an important part in Belgian ecumenism. Commissions on Jewish-Christian relations were appointed by both the United Protestant and the Roman Catholic Churches; the two commissions work in close collaboration. A Documentation Service, staffed by the Sisters of Zion, is managed by a joint group composed of Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Jewish-Christian relations have undergone serious tensions in recent years. The hope has been expressed on all sides that the frankness with which issues have been raised might lead to a deeper and more candid dialogue' in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

Recent immigration of large numbers of Muslims has raised a serious challenge to the Belgian churches. On the one hand, in the name of justice they must actively resist the rise of anti-Muslim prejudice, and to strive to create a dignified place in Belgian society for the immigrants. On the other hand, the churches have the opportunity to take part in the dialogue between Islam and Christianity in new and creative ways. Ecumenical cooperation among the Churches on this level has already begun and will surely take on greater importance in coming years.

New Initiatives

In early 1990, the Anglican, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and United Protestant Churches in Belgium decided to create a joint body called the "Consultation of Christian Churches in Belgium". This consultative body, conceived as an embryonic National Council of Churches, was set up to express the fellowship which exists among the members churches, and to promote both greater unity and a more effective Christian witness. It is to encourage Christians to pray together, and to work together for witness, service and Christian presence in the world.

The Consultation has twelve seats, three for each of the four member Churches. The presidency rotates, changing annually, following the alphabetical order of member churches. Decisions are made unanimously and submitted for approval to the member churches.

A Working Group was appointed, even before the inauguration of the Consultation, for the Ecumenical Process of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. The goal of the Working Group is to promote reflection and action on JPIC theme on all levels of Belgian Church life.

Free Ecumenism

Despite the lack of proportion among the various Christian confessions in Belgium, non-institutional ecumenism has become very popular. In all parts of the country, Bible study groups, ecumenical prayer and study groups have sprung up. The charismatic movement has had a very positive influence on ecumenism in every-day life. Activities, such as ecumenical retreats and charismatic prayer meetings for unity, contribute substantially to ecumenical progress through prayer, fellowship and mutual understanding. There are also a number of experimental ecumenical communities in Belgium, such as the *Chemin Neuf*, and ecumenically oriented youth movements like *Jeunesse Lumière*.

XVI Academic Consultation of Societas Oecumenica, Belgrade, 26 - 31 August 2010

From *Signalia* 2011

MISSION AND UNITY - COMMON WITNESS OF SEPARATED CHURCHES?

This report is a revised and translated version of a German text by Julia Lis and Maria Wernsmann in September 2010

This year the consultation (26th-31st August) of the Societas Oecumenica took place in Belgrade and attracted approximately 70 participants. The conference theme was: "Mission and Unity - common witness of separated churches?" The speakers' contributions showed that the relationship between mission and unity is still as topical as it was in 1910. However, many lectures also pointed out that the understanding of mission has changed significantly since 1910: Mission is no longer seen as a movement "from the west to the rest", for which the denominations have to join together.

Today mission is understood as an integral part of Christian existence, as a common search for God and as participation in His mission toward the transformation of the world. Churches and Christians are called to share in this search of God and the work of transformation with all men and women. This understanding of mission shifts the focus of attention from the missionary object to the missionary subject. Therefore the diversity of all people must be respected. From an ecumenical perspective this leads to an understanding of mission that allows for more diversity than is the case in many confessional conceptions of unity.

The opening lecture of Peter De Mey, president of the Societas, thus pointed out the relationship between unity and diversity. He focused on the understanding of unity and mission in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and presented approaches for an understanding of catholicity in *Lumen Gentium* that does not equate catholicity with unity, but allows for diversity and is built on inclusion. De Mey pointed out the close relationship between mission and unity as an important insight of Edinburgh 2010.

Mission and the Churches in the Balkans

The Societas conference resulted from an invitation by the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Serbia. The participants were impressed by the warm hospitality and good organization in Belgrade. The conference venue was the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Belgrade, in which Patriarch Irinej I (Gavrilovic) himself welcomed the participants. The Dean of the faculty and Bishop of Novi Sad, Dr Irinej Bulovic, and the Catholic Archbishop of Belgrade, Stanislav Hocevar, personally invited the participants to receptions. In Novi Sad, the capital city of the north-Serbian province Vojvodina, the participants were cordially welcomed by church leaders and ecumenical representatives of the region.

The five days in Belgrade, the excursion to Novi Sad and the great number of Orthodox participants provided a better insight into Serbia and Orthodoxy. The excursion included a trip to the Orthodox monastery Kovelj, which (according to legend) was founded in 13th century by Saint Sava. Today the monastery has a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts.

The first panel of the conference dealt with the ecumenical situation in Belgrade, regarding also the painful history of the last few decades. The title of the panel was: "Dealing with Memories - The Mission of the Churches in the Balkans." The Anglican theologian Miroslav Volf provided theological

insights into the topic. The main question of his contribution was how to cope with memories of suffering in a reconciled way, in order to make sure that sufferings from the past do not become a new source of aggression, but offer a better protection of the weak in the future. Volf pointed out that from a Christian perspective, truth and memories are closely connected.

Thomas Bremer, Catholic theologian at the Ecumenical Institute in Münster, provided insights into the situation of the churches and the ecumenism in the former Yugoslavia from a historical perspective. In the communist period the churches were ignored and marginalised. This changed abruptly with the end of the Communist period and challenged the churches to find a new role in society. During the Yugoslavian wars the churches were implicated in the conflicts on both sides on the one hand; on the other hand they succeeded in establishing ecumenical cooperation that led to a common plea for an end of violence; even though this plea remained without any consequences.

Radovan Bigović of the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Belgrade talked about the meaning of the dimension of memories in face of the current situation of the Orthodox Church in Serbia.

Christendom and its essence represent an anamnestic culture that is expressed through liturgy. Therefore, the tradition has to be considered as lively and dynamic and must not lead to dead traditionalism. Bigović described the present situation as a renaissance of the church in Serbia that assigns her to the task of healing of memories.

Change of Mission-Understanding since 1910

The developments of mission since 1910 were described by four theologians from different denominations and regions in Europe. The Swedish theologian Kajsa Ahlstrand claimed that Protestant churches in Europe turned "left", "soft" and "green" in the last decades. She brought all developments into an image of mission that does not serve for the Christianization of the world but helps to heal the rifts between mankind, nature and God. Orthodox archpriest Vladimir Fedorov from Russia called for a model of "Mission as prophetic dialogue" between believers and non-believers. Fedorov paid attention to the image of mission as "Liturgy before Liturgy" that was mentioned in Edinburgh 2010 and stressed the meaning of mission as a reconciling and also as a sacred practice.

The Pentecostal theologian Veti-Matti Kärkkäinen found the key for an understanding of the complex identity of Pentecostals and their attitude towards mission in their spirituality. Pentecostal spirituality shares with post-modern consciousness the affirmation of religious experiences, the importance of embodiment and the principle of free decisions for group memberships. Tim Noble, Catholic theologian at the International Baptist theological seminary in Prague, focused on the "question of grace" in "addressing the other". The remaining of Christians in their denominational perspectives is defined by drawing dividing lines toward the other. Today mission challenges to bring the gospel of Jesus to the other, without questioning his or her otherness and trying to make him or her the same.

The ensuing discussions drew attention to the global perspective. Globally, we can find developments in missionary activities which do not correspond with the dominant understanding of Christian mission in Europe. Furthermore, the discussion showed that a professionalization or clericalisation of the ecumenical movement is noticeable: The interest of lay persons in the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh 1910 was stronger than 100 years later, even though the grassroots movements were involved in the preparations for 2010.

Mission and Unity in a theological perspective

Three contributions and the closing lecture about the theological understanding of mission and unity completed the conference. Clare Amos from the Anglican Communion Office talked about mission

as a challenge for unity. She pointed out that the common mission and cooperation of the churches challenge Christians to search for unity. The missionary perspective leads to the question of how unity has to be achieved – mission challenges us to move away from any understandings of unity which are not prepared to allow for diversity. Teresa Francesca Rossi explained a Trinitarian understanding of the relationship between unity and mission. Reflecting the four *notae ecclesiae* (unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity), she described how they influence the understanding of mission in order to stress the link between a “theology of unity” and a “theology of mission”. The retired bishop of the Methodist Church in Germany, Walter Klaiber, called for a missionary ecumenism. He pointed out that an increasing cooperation of the churches in Europe should promote the unity between them. On the one hand the search for a common understanding of the gospel is important for Klaiber, due to a common basis for mission. On the other hand an awareness of a common responsibility in mission could help to deal with differences, which should no longer be understood as church-dividing.

Ioan Sauca, Romanian Orthodox theologian and director of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, claimed that mission should rather be seen as a theological than as a functional issue. For Sauca, mission is not an activity but an ontological reality that emerges from joy over the gospel. Christians should not understand mission as a competition or business; but should try to remain faithful to themselves and leave the growth of the Church to God.

A successful Conference opening new and inspiring perspectives

Beside the main lectures the participants had the opportunity to present and discuss their own research projects in small groups. The wide thematic range of these workshops included aspects of bilateral ecumenical dialogues, theological-conceptual considerations towards ecumenism and the ecumenical situation, and dealing with memories in different countries of south-eastern Europe. The opportunity to present their own research projects was mainly good for younger participants of the conference, who were represented in great numbers. All in all the participants were very pleased with this inspiring conference that offered them new perspectives.

BOOK REVIEWS

David Carter

Yves Congar, Joseph Famerée and Gilles Routhier. Editions du Cerf, 2008, ISBN 97 8-2-204-08566-3.

This book, a study of the great French Dominican theologian, is by two leading Francophone theologians neither of whom is French. Joseph Famerée teaches at the Belgian Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve and Gilles Routhier at Laval University in Quebec. They amply demonstrate the immense significance of Congar for the renewal of Roman Catholic theology in the twentieth century and his as one of the foremost influences on the work of Vatican II.

Central to the ecumenical and ecclesiological work and thought of Congar was the concept of catholicity and it is most particularly with this aspect of the book that I want to engage. The concept is a very rich one and goes far beyond the purely geographically global scope with which it has sometimes been rather limitedly associated. Rather it refers to the Spirit-filled capacity of the Church to proclaim the fullness of Christ, unbounded in the universality of his salvific purpose and capacity. As the British Methodist ecclesiological statement of 1999 puts it, the Church is catholic because the one God has declared his love for all creation and, one might add, in the spirit of St Cyril of Jerusalem who gave the classic patristic account of catholicity, that the one God has endowed His

Church with the capacity in His name and power to offer a remedy to every human ill.

Central to the English ecumenical scene has been the claim of the reformed churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church to be truly catholic in that sense. In differing ways, the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church all claim to be both catholic and reformed and to hold a proper place within the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. This is in contrast to many continental Protestant churches which have sadly abandoned the ancient and credal title of catholic, preferring to call themselves part of the universal or the evangelical Church. These two words however lack the full richness of the term catholic.

Of course, the Roman Catholic Church has never abandoned the claim that it alone possesses all the necessary structures within which catholicity should be embodied and developed. Congar loyally maintained this witness throughout his long and distinguished career. However, he increasingly came to see that important elements of catholicity had been preserved in other communions and that catholicity was thus not the exclusive property of his own communion. He also came to recognise that, in certain respects, important truths that had been preserved elsewhere had been undervalued within his own church which was thus, to use the phrase later adopted at Vatican II, 'wounded' in its own catholicity. He recognised, as had Paul Couturier also, that there were genuine Christian values within the heritage of the other communions from which his own church needed to learn.

Congar was an immensely prolific scholar with almost a thousand articles and books to his credit. One may legitimately wonder how he ever found time to do anything other than write; but he also had a very considerable gift for friendship, including with people with whom Catholics of his generation did not normally associate. These included the Protestant friends of his Alsatian childhood and also the Jewish and Communist prisoners with whom he rubbed shoulders in wartime Germany. Famerée cites Congar as stressing that nothing can replace direct personal contact in ecumenical understanding. He also cites Congar as saying that each time one has a new experience one becomes another person. It is clear from the account that the two authors give of Congar's career that he was a man who, like my own beloved teacher, the late Alec Vidler, went on learning and developing throughout his life.

In 1943, Henry Bett wrote his classic work, *The Spirit of Methodism*, a work almost contemporary with de Lubac's *Catholicisme*, both works aiming at giving the distilled essence of the tradition concerned. In his book, Bett maintained that Roman Catholicism, characterised in his eyes as a religion of authority, was poles apart from Methodism as a religion of experience. Had Bett been acquainted with the work of Congar he would never have been able to make such a simplistic opposition. Congar stressed the need to re-emphasise the lived experience of the Church as a theological resource. If the Roman Catholic Church and Methodism have drawn so much closer since 1943, it is not just due to the work of Vatican II and the subsequent Roman Catholic Methodist dialogues; it is also due to the work of such pioneers of *ressourcement* as Congar from the Catholic side and Albert Outler from the Methodist - and the profound process of re-reception of the patristic and Wesleyan traditions that came in their wake. Between them and their collaborators and disciples, they reawakened their respective churches to forgotten or at least neglected aspects of their fully catholic heritages. As Roman Catholics rediscovered the importance of the lived experience and communion of the Church, Methodists rediscovered the riches of tradition. The process remains incomplete.

The authors stress Congar's openness to all forms of truth, not just those coming from the other Christian communions but also those coming from the insights of the modern world. Congar believed that the Church could and should guarantee and purify human diversity. It has a duty to express itself in terms of every human culture without necessarily affirming everything within any one culture, all cultures of course being conditioned in some degree and some aspects by the frailty

of the sinful human beings involved in them. Congar was a pioneer in developing a correct understanding of unity in legitimate and enriching diversity. We can trace the development of his thought between two poles, his first major work, *Chrétiens Désunis* of 1937 (English translation *Divided Christendom*, 1939) and his last big ecumenical work *Diversity and Communion* of 1982. In the first we see the beginnings of a very real appreciation of aspects of the main Orthodox and Protestant traditions, combined however, still with some traditional Catholic reservations; in the latter, we see a much fuller affirmation of the possibility of affirming and receiving elements of other traditions, one essay being entitled a possible reception of the Augsburg Confession. Congar became increasingly insistent that to be truly Church, to be truly catholic necessarily involved being ecumenical. He came to assert that the Roman Catholic Church was not closed to the idea of a margin open to the unforeseeable activity of the Spirit beyond ecclesial realities, a *theologoumenon* that may yet bear fruit in Roman Catholic dialogues with the more radical Protestant churches and the Pentecostals and which seemed to have received endorsement from the late Pope John Paul II in his assertion that the Holy Spirit makes surprising discoveries possible.

Congar's work led him into trouble with the pre-Vatican II Church and he suffered a sentence of exile for a time. His famous work, *True and False Reform in the Church*, particularly attracted disapproval, the irony of this being that in it he maintained that true reformers always work patiently within the existing structures and do not resort to schism. For all his emphasis upon legitimate diversity, Congar stressed the vital preservation of unity. His work was a seamless whole. The two authors have done us a valuable service in stressing this and in their production of this book which is a most admirable introduction and guide to the work of one of the key figures of the Church Universal in the twentieth century.

Harvesting the Fruits - Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue, Cardinal Walter Kasper, Continuum, 2009

This book contains a close analysis of the key questions discussed in the dialogues of the Roman Catholic Church with four communions that have been deeply influenced by the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The four concerned are the Anglican and Methodist, Lutheran and Reformed churches.

The Cardinal's aims are threefold: to inform, to encourage and to point to key questions that demand further consideration. The four major chapters deal, respectively, with Christ and the Trinity, with Salvation, Justification and Sanctification, with the Church and with the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, the section on the Church being by far the longest, partly because it deals with the issues of ministry and teaching authority where there are still significant and difficult differences to be addressed. Extensive quotations are given from all four dialogues, sometimes accompanied by the Cardinal's comments of the differing perspectives adopted in the separate dialogues.

The Cardinal aims to encourage us by recording the very considerable degree of convergence already registered, a degree which, as he remarks, goes further than would ever have been imagined fifty years ago. He notes in particular advances in the understanding of the relationship between Scripture and tradition, the particular trilateral achievement of the Joint Declaration on Justification plus the Methodist annex to it, common new approaches to the sacrament of the eucharist, based on convergent understanding alike of anamnesis and epiclesis and a deemed common understanding of Church, particularly in terms of communion.

He is, however, very clear that major work still remains to be done on certain aspects of ecclesiology, particularly ministry. He reminds us that one of the fundamental questions still to be

explored in depth within these dialogues is the fundamental relationship between Christ and the Church, with the remaining tension between those who stress the apartness of Christ, *Christus solus*, and the Augustinian stress, so important in later Roman Catholicism, on the whole Christ, head and members. This is indeed a key question and one where Scripture would seem to hold the two in tension, with Christ standing apart and in judgement upon the churches in Revelation but in other places being very closely associated with His church, as in his question, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He is also right in pointing to divergences, despite the Joint Declaration in theological anthropology on such matters as *simul iustus et peccator*, human co-operation with God and the question of entire sanctification (where Methodism would give a different answer to classical Lutheran and Reformed theology, a point Kasper does not note).

This is an extremely useful book and deserves to be very widely used. Teachers and students alike will find it an extremely helpful guide, summary and, indeed, stimulus to deeper study of particular dialogues. It ought, in particular, to help county and denominational ecumenical officers, clergy and all involved in the local reception process.

Reshaping Ecumenical Theology – The Church Made Whole? Paul Avis, Continuum, 2010

In this book, Paul Avis lays particular stress upon three points. First and very much foremost, he emphasises the ascetically demanding nature of all ecumenical dialogue which must be profoundly spiritual and relational, stretching testingly our generosity of spirit. Secondly, he argues that the sheer diversity of the Church Universal and the many expressions of the one faith in Christ must be taken more seriously than hitherto. Finally, he argues that it is in shared mission that we will realise most fully our unity. Unity and mission are inseparable as, of course, they are in our Lord's High Priestly prayer in John 17.

As always, Paul Avis writes clearly and attractively. However, in this book, one feels that he reveals not just the depth of his learning but a heart set on fire for the unity of Christ's church. To read a book by Paul Avis is always a delight intellectually, but this one is also spiritually moving.

His chapter on the hermeneutics of unity is particularly important for its emphasis upon the deeply spiritual and relational nature of all ecumenical activity. It stresses the bedrock of common faith in Christ that unites all Christians, however much they may differ on other matters. Avis stresses that 'the experience of ecumenism enriches us, transforms us and in the end makes us different people', a point that needs emphasising as it is not always realised that true ecumenism means change for all those churches and Christians that are involved.

He also stresses that whole churches have to be changed. It is not enough for dialogue commissions or others to agree. There must be a 'critical mass' in the churches to be changed, a point that challenges our denominations at every level as to their willingness to be changed and to be involved in what one might call 'whole church ecumenism', rather than leaving things just to specialist ecumenical officers and/or church leaders. Reaching this critical mass continues to be a key challenge in reception that confronts all denominations, our society as well.

Paul stresses that in ecumenism we seek understanding of texts, cultures, communities. I stress the latter two, since it is to the whole living community that we must relate in any particular, case not just to its formalised theology. The relating to communities and cultures that are very different from our own can be considerably more difficult than relating to the theology in the abstract. Paul stresses that ecumenical reception means churches taking one another to themselves, taking their members, their traditions, their spirituality (p.66). It involves empathy and a real wrestling with the otherness of the other, 'if we cannot know what it is to be like the other, to stand in their shoes...understanding will elude us' (p.69).

Another particularly interesting chapter is that on episcopacy. While, as an Anglican, he naturally commends it, Avis is very sensitive to the reservations about it entertained by many in the non-episcopal churches. He mentions the 'Lima' stress on oversight as communal, collegial and personal; and the chapter might have benefited from a somewhat more extended discussion of the problems involved in establishing a true balance between all three forms of oversight.

There is a very important chapter on the problems raised by recent disputes both within churches and between them over ethical issues in which the author stresses the importance of maintaining conversation and patient mutual listening with every attempt being made to stay together. There is also a very good chapter on recent thinking and developments in reception.

Not everyone will agree with everything in this book and I suspect that some Roman Catholics will have difficulties with his stress on diversity as inherent in the human response to the Gospel and, in particular, with the idea that our responses are always relativised. However, no one can fail to be stimulated. This is an important book and should be read by all seriously engaged in ecumenical activity.