

THE SOCIETY FOR ECUMENICAL STUDIES

Remixing the Church, Towards an Emerging Ecclesiology, Doug Gay, London, SCM, 2011

A review by Donald Norwood

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Doug Gay adds a Scottish and Reformed voice to the Anglican-dominated discussions of other ways of being Church. It is so well reviewed on its covers that I hardly need do more than suggest you let the covers whet your appetite for what's inside. The author has worked in deprived communities in Hackney and Glasgow, has read Karl Barth, Moltmann and Miroslav Volf and is critical of people like John Milbank and Martyn Percy, who are too much inclined to sneer at experiments that are bold but may not always succeed. Sometimes he quotes people too readily without venturing to challenge such authors. He prompted me to read Alistair McGrath, even his criticism of the WCC; but he could have told me that McGrath's model of successful ecumenism is the American Right, which only made me love the WCC even more!

The strength of the book is its attempt at careful analysis under five headings: Auditing, Retrieval, Unbundling, Supplementing and Remixing. These can serve as guidelines for our own more open-minded consideration of new ventures and experiments, which he does not really like to hear constantly described as 'fresh expressions'.

Too many writers about the church never tell us what church, if any, they belong to and where they are coming from. Doug Gay does. He grew up with the Exclusive Brethren; by age 16 he had moved over to the Church of Scotland and subsequently influenced by evangelical radicalism, Jim Wallis and the Sojourners, Taizé and Iona. Because he values good traditions, he says he sometimes is the one who has been 'dragging anchor on the journey'. He need not apologise. If we are to carry folk with us when we are more

adventurous, for example in worship, it helps to be able to sympathise with parishioners who may need convincing that that this time change is for the best. And, back to Barth again, he notes that our 'credo ecclesiam' needs always to be a critical credo. Gay is critical and constructive. I warmly commend this book.