

## The Society for Ecumenical Studies

### Receiving the Vision – Anglican-Roman Catholic Reality Today

David Bird and others, Liturgical Press, 1995

*A review by David Carter, June 1996*

George Lindbeck, the prominent American Lutheran ecumenist, hails this book as 'representing a new and much needed genre of ecumenical literature'. It is a study by six highly experienced American ecumenists of twenty years of Anglican-Roman Catholic rapprochement at the local level. The authors represent a happy blend of local experience and academic skill. They have worked extensively over the text in common, so that each can fully own the final product. Certainly the book reads as an harmonious whole. The last named contributor is one of our own members, Emmanuel Sullivan, the episcopal vicar for ecumenism in the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

The authors trace key developments in the two churches that have impacted on their relationship over the last twenty years. A comparative study of *episkope* and episcopacy in the two churches highlights contrasting emphases and forms a useful backdrop for the discussion of particular issues. Not surprisingly, the impact of the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church is discussed. Less well known will be the impact of the Curran affair on many Anglicans, who came to question whether dialogue should be sustained with a church that repressed freedom of expression.

A very thorough analysis of the Anglican concept and practice of authority is given. A concluding chapter, 'Receiving the Vision - the Spirit at Work', emphasises the importance of the sharing of gifts. It says,

'The Holy Spirit has led the Christian Churches to discover a rich variety of gifts in the centuries of separation ...But (they)..are meant to be shared with

the whole Church... theologians and church leaders ought to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying in the daily experience of Christians growing together'.

This is a valuable and encouraging book. More such studies are needed, on both sides of the Atlantic, of how ecumenism is being received and how the experience of faithful Christians is being reflected back into the thinking of theologians and church leaders. Facilitating this process is a task we have set ourselves in this Society.