

## The Society for Ecumenical Studies

### **The Gift of Authority**

Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission 1999

***A review by David Carter, September 2000***

This report touches on questions which have a relevance way beyond the two communions immediately involved. It may well be, as Sister Cecily Boulding stated at a recent meeting, that the Report is way beyond where either church currently is, but, in my opinion, that is no bad thing. Ecumenism is about being constantly challenged and moving on to new and deeper insights, and, if this report thus challenges us, as I think it must, it will have done a good job. Particularly impressive is the emphasis on a finely nuanced ecclesiology of the pilgrim church which accepts that 'the memory of the people of God may be affected or even distorted by human finitude and sin' (para 25) and the challenge to churches in imperfect communion to 'recognise in each other elements of the apostolic Tradition which they may have rejected, forgotten or not yet fully understood' (para 3i). The whole question of authority is also clearly located within an ecclesiology of *koinonia*, and there is a welcome emphasis on the duty of bishops to listen to the *sensus fidelium* and take account of it in their teaching.