



The Unity We Have and the Unity We Seek: Ecumenical Perspectives for the Third Millennium, Jeremy Morris and Nicholas Sagovsky (Eds.), Edinburgh:T & T Clark Ltd, 2003, pages 208, ISBN: 0567088790 £16.99

The majority of the essays in this book are a collection of papers presented at a conference to launch the Centre for Ecumenical Studies at Westcott House, Cambridge in September 1999. The book is divided into two parts – a retrospective view of how ecumenical relations developed throughout the twentieth century and a more forward-looking section on what the future shape of church unity might be. In fact the distinction is not as clear-cut as suggested in that the first essay sets out a future shape for a united Church from an Old Catholic point of view and some of the prospective essays map the path that has been travelled before setting out points for the future.

It is acknowledged that there is an inevitable weight given to those denominational traditions with which the Anglican churches have particular and longstanding ecumenical relationships – Old Catholic, Roman Catholic and Lutheran. An additional contribution by Peter McEnhill on the Reformed Tradition and by David Carter on Methodism helps to give a broader perspective, as does the contribution of Valentin Dedji on Christianity in Africa and its struggle to find an authentic African expression while maintaining relations with the Churches in the West. From the conference itself there is a helpful chapter on local ecumenism by Jeremy Morris and one on the European context by Keith Clements of the Conference of European Churches.

In the second half of the book there is a valuable restatement of two contrasting approaches to the ecumenical future. On the one hand there is Michael's Root's concept of 'living into new relations of communion' through agreements that spell out what is held in common while respecting social and cultural differences without moving towards structural unity. On the other hand there is Mary Tanner's reiteration of a structural model of unity. A gem in this section must be the chapter

by Jean-Marie Tillard, one of the greatest Catholic ecumenists of the twentieth century. This was one of the last papers he gave before his death and it is fitting that the book has been dedicated to his memory.

In a way there is nothing new about this book. The title of Michael Root's paper, "Once More on the Unity we Seek", and of Mary Tanner's, "The Goal of Visible Unity: Yet Again", suggests tiredness and perhaps frustration. The same themes are noted as have been noted elsewhere before. The same arguments are rehearsed. It seems that we can draw up agreements on the necessity of Christian unity and find common language to express much in relation to faith, but there is no agreement on the extent or means by which unity as a gift of Christ needs to become visible, if it is to hold any sense of integrity within the context of a broken and often violent world.

It is Jean-Marie Tillard's paper that seems to offer the smallest glimmer of hope that we might be able to emerge from the incessant circularity of the current position. Not for nothing does he call his chapter *Ex Tenebris Lux*, a refrain throughout his text. It is when there is a sense of crisis, of deadlock, of the need for things to be different that a way forward will begin to emerge. New divisive forces across, rather than between churches, are formed by 'a strange coalition of all the groups which share a dissatisfaction or a profound anxiety in the face of what they consider the too timid, too liberal or too conservative official position of their own church.' (p.193). These coalitions can threaten confessional cohesion and the work of years of ecumenical progress. They can also be the source of renewed work as the churches are forced 'to act on the basis that what unites them is stronger than what divides them. Ecumenism needs this new phase.' (p.196). This new phase is based on the recognition that all the churches have changed considerably in the past 50 years. There are new similarities, e.g. the participation of lay people in the life and ministry of the community. Jean-Marie Tillard outlines two tasks that need to be done. Each confessional family must trace in its own confessional life the features of the Church of God that is the only One Church present in the world since Pentecost. These are the things that unite them all in spite of their differences (p.201). The second task is to work together against the erosion of the basic

realities of the Church of God. ‘No church, no confessional family, is today able to work alone or in isolation for the preservation and growth of its faith. It needs others. This is certainly a ‘sign of the times’. An ecumenical sign. *Ex tenebris lux*’ (page 202).

But it is only a glimpse. As Charles Hill says in his paper, ‘the trouble about route-planning the future ecumenical journey is that we don’t know where we want to go.’ It seems that we know the issues – and Charles Hill introduces the whole question of relating to people of other faiths – but where we are going with them seems to be shrouded in mystery. The best we have to offer is patience, a running with the different models – whether by agreements that reconcile the churches to one another while maintaining their confessional identities or by continuing to seek a more visible coming together of structures. It is to be hoped that out of the darkness will come the light of a convergence of vision, almost certainly brought about by the eventual acknowledgement that the recognition of elements of the Church in each other has consequence for how we organise ourselves in a world in which, as Mary Tanner says, we are called ‘to be a living and credible sign of reconciliation.’

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In the Footsteps of Saint Paul, Edward Stourton, London:
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034086186X

In 1936 the travel writer H. V. Morton published his immensely popular and well written travelogue, *In the Steps of St.. Paul*. Copies of the original edition still show up in second-hand bookshops as the ageing widows of clergy get rid of their husbands’ libraries. Morton’s pursuit of the Apostle to the Gentiles is a cracking good read, but is spoiled by his naive and uncritical approach to scripture. Morton treats the Acts of the