

even allowing for the wide collection of editorial advisers. Nonetheless, overall, there is a remarkable sense of balance and proportion and this new edition clearly continues to stand within the tradition established over eighty years ago by Leslie Cross and Betsy Livingstone. The marks of its Oxonian beginnings are still there and Andrew Louth is to be congratulated on the remarkable achievement manifested in this amazing pair of volumes. It is ample evidence not only of the existence of ‘development’ within theology but now more clearly too of ‘evolution’ within the wider discipline.

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Paul Avis, *Reconciling Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2022), pp. 256. ISBN 978-0334061380
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Paul Avis goes to the heart of the matter in his book *Reconciling Theology*, when it comes to the first principles of a biblical theological *raison d'être* for ecumenism today. He asks what should actually drive, and inspire, inter-church dialogue and closer recognition and synergy now. He stresses that a momentum in the very heart of God, a movement of God's reconciling Spirit which moves through all things ultimately and eschatologically is the sacred source. Rather than placing most of the emphasis on the well-known and important agendas of the churches in this area, which Paul describes very carefully, he places these in terms of the essence of God's dynamic nature and mission, and then describes and assesses them in this light. As is often recognized, God has a mission which needs a church, rather than having a church which needs a mission.

Notwithstanding the above, Paul's ecumenical analysis is comprehensive and accurate. In my own field of Anglican–Roman Catholic dialogue, Paul has thoroughly researched, summarized and understood the work. He notices that ‘receptive ecumenism’, as deployed by the dialogue of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission in its third phase (ARCIC III), could be shared more widely across the mainline ecumenical world as a useful tool, to overcome some doctrinal impasses that seem to be resistant to change at this time. This does not mean giving up on the scholarly theological quest for a full or at least a viable core-teaching rapprochement, since Paul's whole book focuses on that. However, receptive ecumenism does mean that there is much to be achieved by asking how can we learn from each other in ministry itself at this time, and where can we each offer to the other healing gifts for wounded hands, holding each other closer in a conversation about missional learnings, solidarity and cross pollination together, even if we don't agree on everything? Not to be moved by this form of grace is to risk becoming a counter-sign of the kingdom Christ came to inaugurate.

Receptive learning from each other might actually increase our trust of each other as we burrow under theological differences, and transcend dogmatic contrasts. We might begin to re-prioritize the healing of a wounded church in the practical, theological and ecclesial sense. To be found on the frontiers of mission together in common cause, and or assisting each other in our different missional approaches is also a great witness in itself in a divided world. We, of all communities, ought by God's grace, to be able to strive convincingly for a deeper communion and interdependence within a variety of unique shapes, gifts and expressions: witness God's creation itself.

ARCIC III's own experience would appear to vindicate this approach, since there is now a balance between receptive ecumenism as above, and the ongoing attempt at further scholarly doctrinal and ethical synergies. An agreed common mission where it is possible, or an agreement to learn across our different missions, provides the context for deeper communion. The very act of envisioning a reconciled and reconciling community is of our biblical nature as faith communities. That means we are called constantly to reach out to others to become who we actually are in Christ. In doing this we are accompanied by a mysterious – not always recognized – presence, which moves us within, and who turns out to be the host of a messianic banquet to which we were called from the beginning of Easter faith itself. This is the experience of the road to Emmaus. Paul asserts that nothing less than this kind of pilgrimage is acceptable.

Paul is also very practical and asks how we might achieve mutual recognition between us now, as a gateway to reconciliation. He makes some challenging and achievable suggestions about how we might strengthen our resolve here. Failing to move in a reconciliatory way as church, results in a failure of credibility. In this book there is a chilling reference to one of the most disturbing challenges different churches face, where Paul speaks of the credibility damage some churches have suffered over the paedophilia crisis. He asks how we might overcome the justifiable perception, in some places, where representatives of the church have fallen beneath basic standards of human decency, accountability and human rights. The crisis is now widely recognized as an urgent justice issue within and outside faith communities. Recognition, repentance and restorative justice is the only way within the healing, reconciling movement of God. This applies to us all, all the time.

Paul concludes by arguing that divine revelation in Scripture teaches us that Christians and their churches cannot be reconciled to God in separation from other churches. God's act of reconciliation in Christ and within the Eucharist offers a communion that will only be fully consummated when this implicit unity of Christ is not compromised by radical dogmatic disagreement and indifferent or even frosty distance. A unity in a diversity is the essential meaning of the life of the triune God, and therefore of the church which seeks to witness to God's personal and sacred love and grace within the world. A pithy way of putting this synergized variety, which Paul commends, might be to suggest that we are called by our very nature as Church, to sail as a flotilla (drawing on the 'nave/navy' image of the Body of Christ) in some kind of formation without

losing our essential freedom, overall direction or buoyancy. We are not being asked to look at an interesting ecclesial option in *Reconciling Theology*, we are being drawn back to our very essence as Christians, as a matter of integrity and urgency.

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Geoffrey Wainwright and Paul McPartlan, *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 668. ISBN 978-0199600847 (hardback)

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The Ecumenical Movement is one of the most significant developments of modern Christian history. Its goal is full communion, the concrete realization of unity among people of faith through sharing the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, as well as the full interchange of ordained ministers and priests across denominational boundaries.

The purpose of this volume is to educate a variety of individuals dedicated to this cause: heads of denominations, officers charged with inter-Church relations, participants in inter-Church dialogues, theologians, historians and seminarians. The volume's greatest strength is the richness of its content. At 668 pages, it is an unparalleled compendium. The six sections cover different phases of the Movement: Part I (History) gives an overview from the early nineteenth century; Part II (Traditions) reviews the ecumenical evolution of seven world families of Churches from the Orthodox to the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches; Part III (Achievements and Issues) covers progress and challenges in ten theological areas, from Christology to Ecology; Part IV (Instruments) reviews the place of institutions, such as the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; Part V (The Global Scene) reviews the current state of ecumenism on five continents; and Part VI (Debate and Prospects) looks to the future and assesses progress and setbacks.

The essays included within the volume are the work of 50 scholars representing two generations, as do the two editors of the volume. Geoffrey Wainwright, a Methodist, was born in the 1930s and participated in the golden age of the Ecumenical Movement from the 1960s. Wainwright died in 2020 and the *Handbook* is dedicated to him. Paul McPartlan, a Roman Catholic, was born in the 1950s and has represented the Catholic Church in dialogues in a more complex era. Both editors have published major books and articles on the close relationships between the liturgy and ecumenism.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the significant scholarly groundbreaking achievement of the *Handbook* is to make the case for the leading role of the Liturgical Movement in furthering ecumenism from the early nineteenth century