

Orthodoxy, Angela Berlis (mentioned above) at relations with Döllinger, and the late Nigel Yates (to whom the book is dedicated) at relations with Old Catholics, Reformed Catholics and, in places where Anglican chaplaincies were established, Roman Catholics. While Chapman looks chiefly from the perspective of the Oxford leaders, Yates barely mentions them, preferring to regard such figures as Christopher Wordsworth, John Mason Neale and Henry Lascelles Jenner as representatives (in their diverse ways) of the Oxford Movement. Chapman and Yates therefore encapsulate the approach of the whole book: to look at new themes in the writings of the well-known leaders and to broaden our understanding of what the Movement was all about. This volume achieves both most admirably.

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Paul Avis, *In Search of Authority: Anglican Theological Method from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (London: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2014), ISBN: 978-0-5670-2648-4 doi:10.1017/S1740355314000102

This is an exceptional book by one of the world's leading authorities on Anglican theology and ecclesiology. Paul Avis has devoted several decades of his life to helping theologians, church leaders and ecumenical gatherings understand the rich nature and complex identity of Anglican ecclesial polity. His ground-breaking books have included *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church* (Mowbray, 1992), *The Anglican Understanding of the Church* (SPCK, 2000), *Church, State and Establishment* (SPCK, 2001) and *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (T&T Clark, 2008).

However, this reviewer still regards *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective* ([1989]; 2nd edn, T&T Clark, 2002) as one of the very best books to have been published on Anglicanism in the last half century. Avis carefully uses reflections on general ecclesiology to outline the dynamics of Anglican polity, and in so doing, explores, excavates and explains key thinkers such as Hooker. But crucially, he does so alongside less fashionable sources for the distinctiveness of Anglican identity, such as Taylor, Waterland and Stillingfleet. The book shows how widely indebted Anglicanism is, from the outset, to a broad range of thinkers and movements. It is this that gives Anglicanism character and depth – a polity that can be savoured on many levels. I first read the book in 1989 as an ordinand, and was immediately struck at the delicate blend of fresh insight and careful scholarly exegesis.

In Search of Authority is comfortably in the same league as *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, and the later and invaluable *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (T&T Clark, 2008). *In Search of Authority* therefore becomes, automatically, an essential book for every scholar of Anglicanism to own

and engage with. Avis gives us a clear focus on three arenas of authority for Anglicanism: sources, structures and dynamics. He is alive to the breadth and blend of 'authorities' that can shape polity – poetry, architecture, novels, drama, art and music, for example. But *In Search of Authority* focuses especially on authority in relation to Scripture, tradition, reason, conscience and experience, and mindful of prevalent questions on the probability of belief, certainty and the integrity of the church. That said, one of its most important features might be the tone of the argument. For Avis reclaims and re-engages with authors who drove the agenda of the Enlightenment, which has left them often being regarded as on the edge of orthodoxy. In Avis's thesis, however, they are treated with generosity. They are affirmed, and rightfully relocated within a broad, generous and orthodox Anglican polity that is hospitable to breadth and questioning.

Avis's thesis is laid out in nine clear chapters. The first deals with authority in the theology of the Reformation, and assesses the debates over the centrality of Scripture. Particular attention is paid to John Jewell, William Whitaker and Richard Field. The second chapter builds carefully on the initial argument, and explores the orientation of the Reformers in relation to the early church fathers, creeds and ecumenical councils. The third chapter, naturally, introduces and exegetes Richard Hooker's writings, with due attention paid to Luther, Calvin and the Puritans, enabling Avis to discuss the early (but crucial) gestation of proto-Anglican theology and ecclesiology, especially in relation to Scripture, tradition and reason. Once the reader has grasped this stage in the formation of Anglican polity and identity – it is really a leap, I think – it becomes possible to see the real genius of Anglicanism. And, moreover, to rescue the origins of the polity from any sense that the primary cause might lay with some sixteenth-century monarchical-marital spats with Rome.

The fourth and fifth chapters are therefore concerned with the emergence of 'classical' Anglicanism. Francis Bacon features prominently in the discussion, but there is an excellent short section at the end of Chapter 4 (pp. 165-68, 'a critique of a critique') to enjoy, which features the work of Jean-Louis Quantin, who argues that the confessional identity of Anglicanism was being constructed throughout the seventeenth century. This leads us neatly into the fifth chapter – the half-way point of the book – which discusses Hobbes, Latitudinarians and the Cambridge Platonists. Avis concludes the pivot of his book with a brief note on Herbert Thorndike's vindication of the emerging Anglican 'tradition'.

Chapter 6 moves the reader into slightly different territory. As the advances of the Enlightenment began to take hold, any national polity needed to develop a behavioural capaciousness and intellectual generosity within itself that could make room for questions and doubt. Here, Avis offers a helpful exploration of Montaigne, Charron, Pascal, Descartes and Spinoza – as a prelude to the discussion of emerging liberal Anglicanism, and in particular John Hales, Jeremy Taylor and Thomas Browne. The possibility of 'the Anglican Enlightenment' takes centre stage in Chapter 7, with Hume and Gibbon, featuring strongly. In Chapter 8, Locke and Newton along with less well-known figures such as John Toland, complete the character and details of the portrait that is revealed in the ninth and concluding chapter.

It is from this vantage point that we can see the scope, skill and sagacity of Avis's work. The ninth chapter discusses William Law, John Wesley, Joseph Butler and Edmund Burke. But these figures now emerge as key contributors to an Anglican polity and theological methodology that has taken account of the Enlightenment, and been shaped by it too – but at no stage subsumed within it. The Anglicanism that Avis wants us to see is resilient and faithful. It can be true to Scripture and tradition, as well as reason and experience. It is a polity secure in its identity, yet strangely open and unresolved – though not exposed, in spite of this. That is why, I think, Avis can confidently claim that Anglicanism has something of a restless character about its search for truth and authority. Sometimes, this causes the polity to search its own soul, and engage in rather negative introspection. But Avis takes a different view – a blend of the sanguine and the sagacious, but which is nonetheless cautious.

Ultimately, Avis does not believe that Anglicans are always seeking and never finding. Nor does he think the polity has collapsed into a kind of exhausted despair, as it seeks a form of authority that would govern putatively across cultures and issues. Rather, he sees Anglicanism as a faithful polity that mirrors the theological enterprise itself: unceasing exploration into the 'unsearchable riches of Christ' (Eph. 3.8). For Avis, the point of method is that it is a principle of continuous progression; that progress is deeply dialectical, containing controversy, conflict and even contradictions. Here, Avis agrees with William Blake: there is no progression except through contraries. The turbulence of Anglican tradition is its very strength. As Luis Bermejo SJ points out in *The Spirit of Life: The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1989), all our creeds were formed through fractious meetings that were rooted in controversy. Christians – and perhaps especially Anglicans – sometimes forget that the Holy Spirit works through meetings (often taking a long time, and over many years); it is how we arrive at truth. Bermejo therefore argues that there are four stages of ecclesial life: communication, conflict, consensus and communion. Issues in the Anglican Communion tend to get refracted through this four-fold process. We sometimes forget that without conflictual meetings, we would make little progress in understanding the mysteries revealed to us.

This is how the Holy Spirit moves the church; it is not the case that only the last of these stages – communion – is the 'spiritual' stage. The Holy Spirit is also manifest in pruning; and the church is clarified and refined in conflict. So, Anglicans agree on what the Bible says – but not always on what it means. The polity is usually more relational more than it is propositional. Anglicans are often more interested in how to disagree well over a sustained period, rather than holding to unity at any price. That is nothing less than a mature polity. Perhaps Avis would agree with another scholar – the eighteenth-century French essayist, Joseph Joubert, who quips that 'It is better to debate a question without settling it, than to settle a question without debating it'. And so we wait, with great keenness, for Avis's sequel to this volume. The next book will take us from the Enlightenment to the tumult of the present times. For this reviewer, that volume is eagerly anticipated.

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