

recentering (albeit less critically) of theosis as a necessary part of communion theology.

The cohesive core of the book is found in the central four chapters, by Eric Gregory, Emmanuel Clapsis, Perry T. Hamalis and Nathaniel Wood. Gregory's is a rather dense chapter, focusing on debates within Augustine studies (and coming to different conclusions from Kaufman) but its strength is in its engagement with contemporary politics. Clapsis, from the practical perspective of an Orthodox churchman, is quite the opposite: an easy to read, confident, slightly preacherly exposition, rather than an angsty engagement with theory. Its optimism is grounded in theology and practice, though Onora O'Neill, for instance, would take issue with sweeping talk of shared values.

Hamalis's assured and creative essay is worthy of special mention as easily the most original: 'Democracy and the Dynamics of Death'. If the problem is how Orthodox thinkers can resource their engagement with democracy, the two most popular approaches are firstly to read actual history against its (imperial) grain, or secondly to rely on abstract theological principles. The latter runs the risk of being detached from reality as well as unconvincing to any but fellow Orthodox. Hamalis instead starts from something we all agree we have in common – not our 'summum bonum' or telos, but our 'summum malum', the reality of our mortality. He identifies a strand of 'thanatomorphic' theology in the Orthodox tradition and brings it into creative dialogue with the political theory of Hobbes.

But Hamalis's second-identified approach is also well represented in this collection, not least by Nathaniel Wood. The misleadingly named 'Russian politics' of his title is actually a particular theory of kenosis in the two natures of Christ. In an essay framed by the key tension between the necessity and limitations of politics, and resonating with Clapsis's ideal of true humanity found in relationship, he creatively applies a detailed analysis of this specific theological resource.

This is an encouraging collection which points towards the hope that the resources of the Orthodox tradition may contribute to political theology as they have in other areas, not only through greater confidence in restating the now-ubiquitous ideas of personhood, but in challenging and creative ways.

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Paul Avis, *The Vocation of Anglicanism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. xii + 191. ISBN 9780567664624.

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This is an important and much needed book. It comes to the Anglican Communion as a gift, from Paul Avis, one of Anglicanism's foremost ecclesialogists, at a time when clear thinking about the vocation of Anglicanism is needed. Paul Avis achieves this aim very well indeed.

Avis in this book aims to address the Anglican predicament of the modern era: the angst of our time about order and morals. He does this from the depth and strength of Anglican theology, rather than the specificity of the presenting issues,

drawing on the inheritance of faith with the understanding that this has much to offer us in the present difficulties of the Anglican Communion. The methodology he proposes is one of people working together with the aim that we do not become so fixated on our present difficulties that we miss the great riches we have together. At the same time, Avis recognizes that Anglicanism is no stranger to difficulty and so the present predicament is nothing new. Part of the solution for Anglicanism is to recognize that a particular church and its issues are part of the whole Christian Church and not an end in itself.

Avis believes that Anglicanism has a vocation involving a theology of the whole person, body, mind and spirit, seeking to know the truth found in Jesus and where faith seeks understanding. The outworking of this vocation Avis expresses in five elements of vocation: theological, ecclesial, missional, covenantal and peaceable. Each of these elements Avis believes are integral to the vocation of Anglicanism.

The theological vocation is a seeking after Christ and truth that distinguishes Anglicanism and gives it its theological vocation which expresses itself as a reformed and reasonable expression of the catholic faith.

The ecclesial vocation is not a product of empire or dependent on Anglicanism's international status, nor is the ecclesial vocation that of a loose federation. The ecclesial vocation is one based on communion (*koinonia, communio*), a notion that reaches far beyond institutional structures or the mere *ad hoc* collection of churches. The *koinonia* seen by Avis is an ecclesiology intimately linked to the Church universal and one focused on mutual recognition and commitment. This is an appeal to catholicity, recognizing that a church cannot exist in isolation from other churches. It is this relationship of communion or fellowship that defines the Anglican Communion in relation to the Church universal and to churches that make up the Communion since our communion with God and with other people constitutes us as Christians in Christ's Church.

For Avis it is communion, together with a missional vocation that defines the Church in its vocation of sharing in God's mission. It is not the Church but God who is seen to have the mission and it is the vocation of the Church to share that mission in communion with others.

Communion is also seen to be based on a covenant relationship and it is here that Avis declares his acceptance of the Anglican Covenant which has been widely debated in the Anglican Communion. It is this covenantal relationship that stands in stark contrast to possible fracture and break-up of the Anglican Communion and so Avis opts strongly for the adoption of the Covenant. Covenant, for Avis, does not begin from a principle of the autonomy of particular churches but from the credal confession of one, holy, catholic and apostolic church which binds people together rather than driving them apart. It is from the acceptance of such a covenantal relationship that Avis believes the Anglican Church can find the common good where there is inter-personal, communal and moral discernment working as a virtuous instrument of governance of the Anglican Communion. Such an aim must, states Avis, be set within the broader idea of communion and not focus on particular issues of church and moral order. Covenant is therefore not a legal mechanism but a way of working together for the common good.

It is therefore Avis's belief that the Anglican Communion must work for a peaceable vocation where the Instruments of Communion (the Archbishop of

Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Primates Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council) must be seen for what they are: expressions of inter-personal involvement rather than objectified legal mechanisms. For Avis this is vital in the present predicament of the Anglican Communion since some at the present time see the Instruments to have comprehensively failed and desire coercive action on the part of the Instruments to satisfy particular interests. Avis is clear that the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GFCA) and the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), functioning as movements of protest, dissent and regrouping among conservative Anglicans, have not done the Anglican Communion any favours, and in fact have presented an understanding of salvation which is individualistic, and so working against the idea of *koinonia*. By concentrating on the presenting issues of church order and human sexuality, GFCA and GAFCON have sat in judgement on other Anglicans and misinterpreted the Instruments of Communion as decision-making bodies rather than instruments of consultation, and in so doing worked against *koinonia*. For Avis, the only reasonable approach for the Anglican Communion is one of mutual and respectful comprehension of others, attributes sadly missing in the voices of conservative protest and dissent. Any suggestion of breaking away is seen by Avis as having no support in the New Testament and so he distances himself from these unhelpful voices.

The last section of the book present four very helpful chapters looking at the credal marks of the Church (one, holy, catholic and apostolic) as these apply to the Anglican Communion. These chapters warrant careful reading. Quite simply, for Avis we cannot be Christian without being Catholic, where there is unity, continuity and sacramentality. The catholic dimension, focusing on the canon of Holy Scripture, the ecumenical creeds, the threefold ordained ministry with an ordered episcopal succession and the liturgical structure of the Eucharist, are the backbone of the Anglican Communion, coming as they do from the earliest witness of the Church. Catholic for Avis implies a single concrete and enduring community which eschews any desire for a club mentality according to individual preferences.

The legacy of the Reformation is also vital for Avis in his assessment of the vocation of Anglicanism but reformed is not seen as a mark of the church since the catholicity of the Church exists before any attempt at reformation. Reformed he sees as centring on the three themes of the relation between the Gospel and the Church, the authority of Scripture and the royal priesthood of the baptized. Even though Avis sees the Anglican Communion as being shaped by the Reformation he firmly declares that it does not derive from the Reformation since there is much more to Anglicanism than the legacy of the Reformation. Avis makes the important point that the sixteenth-century Reformers did not believe they were starting a new church, but rather reforming one that had its roots in Celtic Christianity and the early church.

Avis is also keen to point to the critical imperative as an aspect of the vocation of Anglicanism where there is critical application of learning to belief and practice. This leads to insightful judgement under the influence of the Holy Spirit rather than individual preference and certainty. For Avis, drawing on the heritage of Anglicanism, there is probability, not certainty. Probability allows the Anglican Communion to remain open to fresh light and truth from God which breaks forth from God's word as people continue humble seeking together, searching for a

collective judgement while listening to God. For Avis this is consecrated reason. This is not an individual process but a collective activity where we align ourselves with the mind of the church, renewed and reformed in Christ, to the service of God's truth. Such a creative process is seen to rise above sense impressions and intuitive glimpses and the movement of protest and dissent now present in the Anglican Communion.

With these dimensions of catholicity, reformed and critical enquiry in mind Avis considers the question of the authority of Scripture. For Avis, the authority of Scripture is vital but the concept of *sola scriptura* he sees as vague and slippery and as something that does not belong to the Anglican vocabulary. Avis is clear: the Bible holds an exalted place in Anglican theology and practice, but it cannot be asked to do work for which it was never intended. It is, declares Avis, on the basis of the early Church tradition that Anglicanism embraces the canon of Scripture, the ecumenical creeds, the threefold order with episcopal succession, the liturgical structure of the Eucharist and conciliarity. While the Bible is exalted it cannot work alone without the other dimensions. For the Anglican Communion such a vocation of recognizing and honouring these dimensions is vitally important.

Paul Avis's book is important for the Anglican Communion at the present time. He gives an excellent assessment of the special vocation or calling of Anglicanism in the providence and purposes of God. He also warns against conservative reactions, noting that the development of God-given truths into an aggressive system of protest and dissent, with an accompanying belief in the rightness of individual interpretations of truth, destroys the very *koinonia* which is the vocation of Anglicanism. In the place of any exclusive agenda he proposes the need for mutual understanding and rapport which will strengthen the determination of all Anglicans to hold together. Such a process depends on conforming to the four credal marks of the Church or more properly allowing God to conform the Church to these marks. In essence this is Avis's assessment of the vocation of Anglicanism: realizing the four credal marks and working towards the manifestation of these marks not only within the Church Universal but also within the Anglican Communion. Anglicans, he believes, have the vocation to try to hold together all that binds people as one and at the same time to eschew all that works towards unbalanced and polarized views. In so doing such a vocation is catholic and reformed, episcopal and synodical, universal and local, biblical and reasonable, traditional and open to fresh insight. In short, Avis argues that the vocation of Anglicanism is to hold truth together in theology and practice so that Anglicanism may hold people together. This can only be done, says Avis, when Anglicans practise the grace of walking together, not apart, and without coercive constraint imposed by special interests.

This book is full of wisdom and light. It speaks to the Anglican Communion and its predicament, moving past presenting issues and engaging the universal in a way that charts a way forward and seeks to hold Anglicans together in one fellowship and communion. It needs to be read at this time, but more than this its wisdom needs to be acknowledged and acted upon so that communion can be full as Anglicans seek to be one in Christ.

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