

inspire, chiefly because of his humanity rather than his essentially ephemeral writing.

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Paul Avis, *The Anglican Understanding of the Church* (New Edition; (London: SPCK, 2013)), pp. 98. ISBN 978-0-281-06814-2, e-book: 978-0-281-06815-9.  
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There can be few scholars in the world today who have written so widely, deeply and richly on Anglicanism as Paul Avis. Avis is Canon Theologian of Exeter Cathedral, a Visiting Professor in the Department of Theology at the University of Exeter, and Editor-in-Chief of the renowned journal *Ecclesiology*. He is arguably the archetypal scholar-priest, and perhaps the pre-eminent academic and pastor who has contributed most to our understanding of Anglicanism in the world today. His writings on ecclesiology, ecumenism and Anglicanism are internationally renowned, and reflect a lengthy career at the forefront of theory and practice in ecumenical dialogue and intra-Anglican conversations and colloquia. Quite simply, if you want to understand Anglicanism – its theology and ecclesiology – you will not be able to travel far without encountering some of Avis's careful, thoughtful and perceptive writings.

The first edition of *The Anglican Understanding of the Church* was published in 2000, and has sold steadily since then. The original intention of that book was to offer a kind of primer for lay synod members, church wardens, vestry members, Parochial Church Councils and other groups. In short, it sought to introduce to the laity the layers of complexity, nuance and dense sophistication that have slowly accrued in Anglican identity over several centuries. And, moreover, it aimed to articulate an Anglican ecclesiology that is both appealing and challenging.

Few are as well-equipped as Avis to outline the shape of Anglican polity, and then fill in the key and essential details. And that he does so in this new edition bears testimony to the skill of an author who is in command of both the debates and sources that continue to determine how issues of theological identity and practice are resolved in a church that seems, at times, to both flounder and flourish with its own breadth of competing convictions. Such a church needs, I think, a skilled guide and interpreter of its history, tradition and identity to help readers and enquirers to see that where some would only see chaos, there is in fact a deeper coherence – rooted not only in diversity, but also in the generosity and capaciousness of God.

Much has changed in global Anglicanism since the first edition of Avis's book was published. It would have been easy, I think, to revise a book like this with references to faddish issues and other matters that currently preoccupy the Communion. But Avis is well able to rise above the passing soufflés of ecclesial fashion. Avis's passion for Anglicanism has always conveyed a characteristically understated tone. But the passion is there – be in no doubt. He brings a cool head and a temperate heart to a polity that can, at times, so easily (if momentarily) be overwhelmed by over-heated arguments. And it is Avis's tone, I think, that makes this book so valuable and enjoyable.

This book should really be bought in bulk, and be standard issue to all members of Vestries, PCCs, deaneries and ministry teams. It would complement Mark Chapman's *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2006). Read together, and before embarking on any contentious dialogue or debate, or indeed any sort of mission-action-plan, the books would bring that all-too-rare blend of insights to the shaping of the church today, namely wisdom and perspective. Avis's book is simple to read, highly engaging, and exceptional value for money. It also gives the reader a platform and vantage point, and from which one can develop an understanding of the church that will enrich all who engage with his careful and concise presentation of the essence of Anglicanism.

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Ian S. Markham, J. Barney Hawkins IV, Justyn Terry and Leslie Nuñez Steffensen (eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Anglican Communion* ((Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013)), pp. 780. ISBN 978-0-470-656341-1.  
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This book is a landmark reference publication, which should rightfully belong in every seminary and major college library. It is probably the first book of its kind to offer a comprehensive guide to the Anglican Communion, and as such, surpasses the rather dated (though still illustrious) *Study of Anglicanism* (1988) edited by Stephen Sykes and John Booty some 25 years ago. The editors set themselves a substantial task: to compose a comprehensive and ground-breaking volume, drawing from leading international scholars of different opinions and views, that provides an authoritative and up-to-date representation of the cutting-edge debates and issues that inform the study of global Anglicanism.

Such a book is bound to be broad, especially when the field as a whole is considered. There are 80 million members of the Anglican Communion in 164 countries; geographically it is the most widespread denomination after Roman Catholicism. As well as being the largest Protestant denomination through the legacy of the British Empire it is also the most influential – through schools, welfare and other initiatives. Nevertheless, more than half of the countries in the Anglican Communion have never been in the British Commonwealth. There are 38 Primates, 500 dioceses, 30,000 parishes and 65,000 congregations. There are four Uniting Churches in full Communion with the Anglican Church, as well as the Porvoo Churches, and relations with Mar Thoma, China, the Philippines and Old Catholics of the Union of Utrecht. So a global survey of a worldwide Communion is no easy feat. And the editors are to be congratulated on a rich collection of essays that constitute a broad, rich volume that is comprehensive, detailed, inclusive and diverse.

It is perhaps no surprise that the latter half of the twentieth century has seen a significant rise and expansion in the study of Anglicanism. Where this was once a subject that was merely implicit in theological formation and education (especially for seminarians), various and more recent studies have since begun to focus more explicit attention on a variety of issues. In Britain this has included Stephen Sykes on