

ANGLICANISM AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: Theological resources in historical perspective by Paul Avis. T & T Clark, 1989. Pp xviii + 335. £19.95.

Paul Avis is vicar of Stoke Canon outside Essex, a member of the Church of England Doctrinal Commission, and a considerable theological historian. This book is the most recent of a developing series he has been writing over the last decade and a half, covering the period from the Reformation to the present day. The early part is dealt with in *The Church in the theology of the Reformers* (1982). The nineteenth century is taken on in *Gore: construction and conflict* (1988). The contemporary period is dealt with in *Ecumenical theology and the elusive doctrine* (1986). The present book serves to answer a more recent question, what is the Anglican identity? What does Anglicanism stand for? In some places the author draws on his former articles, 'Richard Hooker and John Calvin', 'The shaking of the seven hills'. The Tractarian challenge to consensus and the identity of Anglicanism', 'The Church's one foundation' and 'What is Anglicanism?', these covering the years 1979—88.

Earlier books covered periods: this covers the whole period of this 'chronically pluralistic Communion' since the reformation; attending particularly to the Tractarians of 1833—45 and exploring the thought of other major Anglican theologians. The book has been a decade in the making. Reviewers are agreed as to its worth: Michael Saward began by declaring it 'a quite outstanding book'; and Stephen Sykes (recently removed from Regius Cambridge to Bishop of Ely) called it 'a very important piece of work, written with outstanding facility'. Dr Robert Runcie welcomed the book as 'a further sign that study of Anglican ecclesiology is firmly on the doctrinal agenda'. My only essential grumble is that it might well have been entitled *Anglican ecclesiology and the Christian Church*, since it argues a coherent, if tacit, Anglican consensus on the nature of the Church in an ecumenical setting today.

Dr Avis, summarising *The Reformers* (1982), settles to the study of the ecclesiologist, Richard Hooker—in his eye 'unquestioningly the greatest Anglican theologian'. While admiring Calvin's achievement, Hooker suspected the Puritans' uncritical acceptance of his teaching. For Puritans John Calvin had 'all the authority of papal decretals: three lines from Calvin were enough to damn a man throughout Europe'—and some say the same occurs among the neo-Puritans of today. Hooker saw Calvin as having decided that his form of government in Geneva was called for by circumstances, after which he searched scripture for justification. Dr Avis devastatingly concludes that Hooker admitted 'that there might be something, somewhere in the entire sacred volume that might perhaps be capable of being developed into a probable opinion of likelihood that the will of God might be somewhere inclined to the Presbyterian programme'.

With Hooker Dr Avis brackets Richard Field as together the architects of Anglican ecclesiology. In an age when Anglican clerical scholarship became the *stupor mundi*, the world's wonder, the most learned within it was Field. He stood middleground between Rome's

condemnation of new Churches as schismatic and Puritan oversimplification. Thus placed, Field called Tridentine Rome itself schismatic and Puritans jejune. At the time of his death Field was working on a book intended to clarify the points of contention between Rome and the Church of England.

Taking us through the seventeenth century with its liberal Protestants, through the eighteenth century with its Liberal Catholics, through the nineteenth century with its High Church tradition, Dr Avis settles to three paradigms: the Erastian (a single Christian commonwealth), which reached its height before the Civil War; the Apostolic, which came to its reformed apogee in the Anglo-Catholic movement (derided by Arnold and Hare as 'episcopolatry'), and the Christological or Baptismal, which now hold the ring by holding a reductionist doctrine of the Church. He approves of the Catholic and Evangelical wings as balances to the centre, and does not want to see 'a dominant liberal consensus' drive them to the margin or beyond. In a word, Dr. Avis asks for a full spectrum in which he places his own easel near a moderate middle. 'Not too little, not too much, but just right' was the great Erasmic advice—in a nutshell, common baptismal faith of all professing Christians.

Reading this book of amazing range and judgment, written by an Essex vicar, I am reminded of Mandell Creighton, sitting in his Northumberland vicarage of Embleton composing his five volumes *History of the Papacy*. By way of the Cambridge Dixie professorship and Peterborough, he ended as Bishop of London. And Dr. Avis?

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MODERN CATHOLICISM: Vatican II and After edited by Adrian Hastings. *SPCK*. Pp xvii + 473. £20.

The sub-title of this book is a salutary reminder that there are now children being baptised into the church whose parents were not born when the Second Vatican Council ended twenty-six years ago. This large, but very readable book therefore begins with historical introductions. There are introductions to the period between Vatican I and II, and to the place of councils in church history, brief biographical introductions to popes Pius XII, John XXIII and Paul VI, and more detailed introductions to the main documents of the Council. Each section ends with a brief selected bibliography for further reading, producing in less than 200 pages a reliable guide to those approaching the subject for the first time, or for those who teach the history of the period. It could well become what Adrian Hastings intended—a handbook.

Having dealt with the period of the Council, the book now moves on to the impact of the Council and the changes which it has brought about at all levels, institutional, liturgical, ethical, devotional. Or does it? I believe at this point there is a subtle transition from the descriptive to the prescriptive, from the sub-title to the main title, from the historical to the theological, even ideological. If I may put it in an uncharacteristically