

Avis, Paul, ed., *Paths to Unity: Explorations in Ecumenical Method by members of the Faith and Order Advisory Group*. London: Church House Publishing, 2004. 160+pp. ISBN: 071515768X. £12.99.

In *Paths to Unity*, Anglicans from the Faith and Order Advisory Group assess the ecumenical model of “full, visible unity.” Without claiming to make “a definitive statement of Anglican ecumenical method,” each author problematizes a methodological concern in the trajectory of full, visible unity as it now stands.

The premise for *Paths to Unity* is that the ecumenical movement is at a moment of transition. Its theology must be reconstructed or risk slipping into a state of inertia. Though each author explores different aspects of this malady, the book’s thesis coherently develops throughout in the form of a call to action: Anglicans engaged in ecumenical work must further flesh out what their stated goal of “full, visible unity” entails. In so doing, they ought to take particular care for the ecclesiology which supports such a vision of church. The individual chapters offered by Anglican clergy and academics discuss important themes such as provisional and eschatological understandings of church, diachronic and synchronic diversity as they relate to the quest for Christian unity, and biblical hermeneutics as it undergirds modern ecumenism.

Martin Davie indicts the Church of England for glossing over significant differences in understanding regarding the importance of the episcopate and the papacy—divisive issues for disparate groups *within* one denomination. Joy Tetley warns against proof-texting and Paula Gooder offers a critique of the use of scripture in ecumenical documents such as *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry*, with its scant references to the Old Testament and overabundance of Pauline material. John Webster challenges *koinonia* ecclesiology and urges us to a greater emphasis on the Christological and pneumatological dimensions of this “full, visible unity.” Peter Fisher asks us to be more *realistic* about the diversity represented in ecumenical work (both synchronic and diachronic), especially urging us to remember those evangelical members of ecumenical consultations who are often underrepresented. Paul Avis argues for increased integration between our understandings of unity and mission. He also emphasizes how Christians who honestly acknowledge the breadth of diversity within the body of Christ are compelled to take a less absolutist stance in relation to denominational truth claims. Couched in the important framework of visible and invisible understandings of church, Christopher Hill reflects on the potentials and challenges of the historic episcopate within the Anglican tradition. Ultimately, Hill nods to Miroslav Volf’s ecclesiology, particularly as it emphasizes obligation to openness inherent in catholicity.

Though in some sense, this volume represents a “call to action” in ecumenism both *by* and *for* Anglicans, it makes an important contribution to the

ecumenical movement at large by its diagnosis of the problem of ecumenical inertia. More importantly, it highlights and refines the constituent elements of Christian unity. The strength of this work lies in its ability to make the implicit *explicit*. As a new generation of ecumenists is called to reconstruct ecumenical theology, this book provides great focus for those areas which must be handled with the utmost care. *Paths to Unity* witnesses to the need for a 21st century Renaissance of the Ecumenical Movement, helping us to see which aspects of the ecumenical infrastructure we must carefully guard, and which must be reevaluated.

Rachel Lyle
rachel.lyle@yale.edu