



Revisiting Anglicanism's Vocation to Disappear

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ABSTRACT

In face of uncertainty about the Anglican Communion's future, this article attempts to rearticulate a vision of Anglicanism's vocation in terms of its incompleteness and provisionality. Drawing from the thought of Michael Ramsey, Ephraim Radner and Paul Avis, I suggest that Anglicanism's vocation, like that of any church, is to disappear. At the same time, it is a vocation tempered by the knowledge that, even in its incompleteness and provisionality, Anglicanism has a pastoral responsibility to provide care for the Christians within the Communion. Finally, this is a penitent vocation, and one which is held out as an invitation to all Christian churches.

KEYWORDS: Anglican Communion, Paul Avis, catholicity, ecumenism, provisionality, Ephraim Radner, Michael Ramsey

Introduction

The future of the Anglican Communion is uncertain. The debates over a variety of issues, but especially sexuality, within the Communion continue to rage and bear the bitter fruit of division both within and between national churches. The unanticipated and unprecedented decision by the 2016 Primates' Gathering to restrict the American Episcopal Church's role in certain structures of the Anglican Communion for a period of three years at first seemed to provide some indication of how matters pertaining to disagreement regarding sexuality and marriage might be handled moving forward. However, the 'reception' of this decision, and especially the conflicting accounts of how far the Primates' directives were followed at the Anglican Consultative Council meeting

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in Lusaka a few months later shows that it is unlikely that these questions will be definitively resolved anytime soon. Indeed, given the nature of these decisions, it is almost certain that they will not be resolved until the 2020 Lambeth Conference at the very earliest, and probably not even then.

This article is not directly about these issues of intra-Anglican division, but rather attempts to set them within a wider context. To be sure, the ongoing debates about sexuality are of obvious importance, and charting a way forward in the wake of the fallout from these debates must occur. Yet, a focus on such issues risks fostering a sort of Anglican myopia, which loses sight of the wider ecumenical reality of which the Anglican Communion is a part. The divisions that affect the Anglican Communion play out within a divided Church. Recovering a positive vision of Anglicanism's vocation within this wider reality may seem less pressing. In reality, though, if Anglicanism lacks such a vocation of service to the Church Catholic, there is little point bothering with keeping the Communion together. Indeed, recovering our proper ecumenical vocation may provide precisely the clarity needed for shaping our common future with one another as a communion of churches.²

In the service of such a retrieval, I endeavor in this article to revisit the question of Anglican provisionality within a divided church, and to do so through an examination of three primary interlocutors: Michael Ramsey, Ephraim Radner, and Paul Avis, all of whom provide key ingredients to a proper articulation of Anglicanism's provisional nature. While a statement of Anglican provisionality is not all that is needed for a positive statement of the tradition's vocation within the divided church, it is an important first step to such an articulation. It takes the focus off ourselves and our turmoil, and leads us to ask what we, both as a communion and as the constituent local and national churches of that communion, are here to do.

My consideration of Michael Ramsey's reflections on Anglicanism's incompleteness, and the complementary refinements of this insight by Radner and Avis, leads to a penitent (rather than triumphalist or self-effacing) articulation of the position that Anglicanism's vocation is indeed to

2. In the interest of avoiding cumbersome circumlocutions, allow me to simply clarify that any references to an 'Anglican Church' do not indicate that I am under the misapprehension that the Anglican Communion is a worldwide church. Rather, 'the Anglican Church' refers simply to any particular national or local church comprising this worldwide communion of churches. Similarly, references to Anglicanism as a 'church' refer not to a worldwide entity, but to the tradition that finds its expression in these churches.

disappear.³ However, this vocation is not unique to Anglicanism, and cannot be fully carried out until all branches of the divided church are called to repentance and recognition of their provisionality. In the interim, Anglicanism embodies a Catholic Church that recognizes its provisionality and longs for its disappearance as a discrete entity. Paradoxically, its vocation to disappear is the reason for its continued existence.

My appeal to paradox is neither a mark of intellectual laziness (I hope), nor of an illusory profundity (assuredly).⁴ Throughout this article, an *aporia* is manifest. On the one hand, I uphold the Catholic identity of Anglicanism.⁵ On the other hand, I suggest that Anglicanism's vocation is to penitently disappear. I suggest that Anglicanism's ecumenical viability hinges upon pointing to a vocation to disappearance, which is not unique to Anglicanism, but rather shared by all churches. Despite this, I see a distinctly Anglican character to this non-unique provisionality, which owes to Anglicanism's Catholic character. While some of these tensions might be ameliorable, they cannot be finally resolved, because they derive from the fact that the Church is divided. Ecclesial division represents a *surd*: a fact, but not an intelligibility.⁶ There is nothing

3. This way of putting things, of course, comes from Stephen F. Bayne, 'Anglicanism - The Contemporary Situation: This Nettle, Anglicanism', *Pan-Anglican* 5 (1954), pp. 39-45 (43). I do not engage with Bayne directly in this article because the triad of Ramsey, Radner and Avis is more germane to what I propose than he is, and I lack the space to adequately include him in my considerations. Similarly, Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Beyond Anglicanism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965) came to my attention too late to be adequately incorporated into this article, the argument of which was already fully formed by that time. As fruitful as further engagement with Hanson's important proposals would be, parsimony dictates leaving that for another context.

4. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue, leading me to refine my thought on the matter. The only profundity in view is, perhaps, the *mysterium iniquitatis*.

5. While I recognize that there are other ways of understanding Anglican identity, mine is unapologetically Catholic in the sense articulated by Ramsey: Anglican churches hold the Catholic faith, are informed by Catholic ministerial order, and worship God according to Catholic liturgical rites (see below). Of course, Anglican churches have also passed through the Reformation, but this does not efface their Catholicism, but rather reforms it. Admittedly, I am arguing from this particular perspective rather than for it. This is unavoidable, given the constraints of a journal article with its own distinct agenda.

6. These epistemological and metaphysical claims are informed by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran; Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, 3; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 45-46, 651-52, 689-90.

to understand, and hence, truly systematic thought is impossible regarding this subject matter. Nevertheless, our division is in fact a reality, and so must be dealt with. These provisos in place, I turn now to that task.

Michael Ramsey and Anglican Incompleteness

Arthur Michael Ramsey's *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* remains a classic statement of Anglican ecclesiology.⁷ The hallmark of Ramsey's ecclesiological vision is the conviction that to understand the Church we must understand the gospel, encapsulated in the Pauline diptych: 'One died for all ... Therefore all died' (2 Cor. 5.14).⁸ It is in the passion of Christ that the Church's inmost reality is found. The further our understanding of the Church drifts from these moorings, the more completely it will be distorted. The reality of the Church is found *in* 'Calvary and Easter', rather than 'beyond' them.⁹ Further, the Church's unity must be understood as a unity born in and borne by the death of Christ. It is expressed sacramentally in the one baptism and the eucharistic celebration of the one body, while underlying this sacramental expression of passional unity is the unity of God's own life.¹⁰

7. Michael Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (Cambridge: Cowley, 1990 [1936]). On Ramsey's ecclesiology see Rowan Williams, 'Theology and the Churches', in Robin Gill and Lorna Kendall (eds.), *Michael Ramsey as Theologian* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995), pp. 9-28; Douglas Dales, '“One Body”: The Ecclesiology of Michael Ramsey', in Douglas Dales (ed.), *Glory Descending: Michael Ramsey and his Writings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp. 223-38; Peter Webster, *Archbishop Ramsey: The Shape of the Church* (The Archbishops of Canterbury Series; Farnham: Ashgate, 2015). Webster's treatment helpfully places Ramsey's ecclesiological thought within its historical context and traces its development over the course of his archiepiscopate.

8. See especially Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, pp. 3-42. Rowan Williams notes that these chapters of *Gospel and the Catholic Church* 'are really a long meditation on 2 Corinthians 4 and 5' ('The Lutheran Catholic', in Dales, *Glory Descending*, p. 212).

9. Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, p. 9. On this passional understanding of the Church's essence, see, e.g., Williams, 'Theology and the Churches', pp. 11-12; 'The Lutheran Catholic', pp. 221-22; Dales, 'Ecclesiology of Ramsey', pp. 224-25.

10. Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, pp. 43-50. On this see Dales, 'Ecclesiology of Ramsey', p. 229.

The Episcopacy as Necessary, Yet Incomplete

It is within this passional context that Ramsey's lively defense of episcopal order is properly understood. His insistence that the historic episcopate is essential to the Church's proper being and his affirmation that this catholic order is expressive of the evangelical truth of salvation by and as union with and in Christ, reframes the terms of debate regarding the faith and order of the church. The faith of the church is expressed in its order, and its order serves as the structure wherein faith can grow and flourish.¹¹ The episcopate exists in order to maintain a vital connection to the Church's passional essence.

While such a robust affirmation of episcopal order could easily have led Ramsey to a chauvinist triumphalism, according to which Anglicanism retains an essential component of the church that Protestants lack, he instead embodies a humble stance toward other segments of the Church. Any sector of the divided Church is, necessarily, incomplete, lacking its full integrity. While non-episcopal churches will ultimately need to embrace this catholic instrument of faith and order, those churches which have retained the episcopate retain a distorted version of it.¹² Episcopal order is meant to embody evangelical truth, which is fundamentally the message of salvation as union with and in Christ's death and resurrection. Hence, the episcopate must serve the unity of redeemed humanity with and in Christ. In the absence of this unity, the episcopacy's *raison d'être* is thwarted.¹³ Though non-episcopal Protestants have departed from the order of the one Church, division undermines that order even where it is retained: 'Hence all Christians [including those with bishops in historic succession] need the restoration of the one Episcopate.'¹⁴

Ramsey's affirmation of the episcopate and its opaque character under conditions of division clarifies his account of Anglican incompleteness. If the Church is the community of salvation, and if salvation is union with Christ, then a divided Church represents an experiential and performative contradiction of the gospel. Having established this point, we are in a better position to understand his treatment of Anglican incompleteness.

11. Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, pp. 55-67.

12. Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, pp. 85, 221-23.

13. Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, pp. 174, 219-20.

14. Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, p. 223. Dales, 'Ecclesiology of Ramsey', p. 227; Louis Weil, 'The Liturgy in Michael Ramsey's Theology', in Gill and Kendall, *Ramsey as Theologian*, pp. 146-47.

Anglicanism's Place in a Divided Church

Ramsey's passionate understanding of the Church also frames his discussion of the Church's division and the task of reunion. Throughout, he calls upon readers to deal with the reality of the Church in its division, rather than appeal to ideals of what should be.¹⁵ Even in division, Ramsey sees 'the Passion of Jesus', and hence, 'the power of God', at work; leading him to aver that since 'the problems about schism and reunion mean dying and rising with Christ, they will not be solved through easy humanistic ideas of fellowship and brotherhood, but by the hard road of the Cross'.¹⁶ I shall return to this notion of division and reunion playing out as participations in the cross. For now, though, I focus on how this passionate understanding of the Church illuminates Ramsey's thought on Anglicanism's incompleteness.

Ramsey writes comfortably and confidently as an Anglican, convinced that the Anglican Church has maintained both the recovered gospel of the Reformation, which gives life to the Church's order, and the Catholic order which fosters the gospel's full flourishing.¹⁷ Nevertheless, he recognizes crucial ways that the Church's passionate essence has been obscured within Anglicanism. Erastian entanglements with the State are one such distortion, as is a Tractarian clericalism, which reverses the relationship between the gospel, the life of the Church, and valid orders.¹⁸ Ramsey's understanding of the Anglican Church's place within the ecclesial landscape is best encapsulated, though, by his evaluation of the Branch Theory of the Church. Concerning this theory that the Church subsists in three branches, Roman, Eastern and Anglican,¹⁹ Ramsey notes:

The claim of unity is made, while the fact of schism is acquiesced in and rationalized by a theory. Church order is used defensively to buttress the Church's claims, but the crucial corollary, that the meaning of Church order is maimed by disunity is never faced. The 'Branch theory' seems, in fact, to be an unconscious attempt to make the best of both unity and of

15. Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, pp. 5, 174.

16. Ramsey, *Gospel and the Catholic Church*, p. 7. See further Williams, 'Lutheran Catholic', p. 221; Dales, 'Ecclesiology of Ramsey', p. 229.

17. Ramsey, *Gospel and Catholic Church*, pp. 2-4, 217. In this connection see especially Williams, 'Lutheran Catholic', pp. 211-22.

18. Ramsey, *Gospel and Catholic Church*, p. 218. Note Avis's similar judgment below.

19. See, e.g., William Palmer, *A Treatise on the Church of Christ: Designed Chiefly for the Use of Students in Theology* (2 vols.; London: J.G.F. & J. Rivington, 3rd edn, 1842).

schism, and the relation between Church order and the Gospel is obscured.²⁰

The problem with the Branch Theory, then, is that it fails to take seriously the fact that schism wounds the Church. The three branches of the Church are able to more or less carry on business as usual, complete in themselves and without essential need for the others. In contrast to this, Anglicanism's 'credentials are its incompleteness, with the tension and the travail in its soul. It is clumsy and untidy, it baffles neatness and logic. For it is sent not to commend itself as "the best type of Christianity," but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died.'²¹

This judgment tempers the suggestion, which Ramsey endorses elsewhere, that Anglicanism's particular ecumenical charism is its ability to interface with both Roman Catholics and Orthodox on the one hand – because it has maintained episcopal order²² – and the churches of the reformation on the other hand.²³ There is, perhaps, some truth to this claim, at least insofar as it holds forth the possibility of how Anglicans could bridge an ecumenical gap.²⁴ However, the great ecumenical potential of Anglicanism is its existence as a Catholic Church that recognizes its own incompleteness. Among the three 'branches' of the Catholic Church, Anglicanism is alone in this recognition.

Since the 1960s, and especially the Second Vatican Council, there has been movement in this direction by the Roman Catholic Church.²⁵ Chief among these developments is Rome's terminological shift from

20. Ramsey, *Gospel and Catholic Church*, pp. 217-18.

21. Ramsey, *Gospel and Catholic Church*, p. 220. See further Dales, 'Ecclesiology of Ramsey', p. 234.

22. Indeed, Rome denies the major premise of this syllogism.

23. E.g., E.S. Abbott *et al.*, *Catholicity: A Study in the Conflict of Christian Traditions in the West* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1947), pp. 49-56. Note Paul Avis's remark that 'the claim that Anglicanism possesses a unique gift for fostering synthesis between Christian traditions will be greeted with amused incredulity by some of our ecumenical partners and is not generally supported by the internal experience of Anglican churches.' *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), p. 23.

24. One instance of this actually occurring is the Concordat between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, according to which the Anglicans agreed to recognize Lutheran ministries, while Lutherans agreed to, henceforth, be folded into historic episcopal succession. A similar agreement between the Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church has also recently been proposed.

25. Nevertheless, *Gospel and Catholic Church* predates these developments by nearly three full decades.

'est' to 'subsistit in' to describe the relation to the Catholic Church and the Communion centred on the bishop of Rome.²⁶ This shift opens up the possibility that other churches may indeed be churches. Previously, the Catholic Church of Christ was the Roman Church (full stop, and, apparently without remainder). Now, though, while claiming a particularly privileged relationship with the Church Catholic, Rome is not *simply* and completely identified with that Church.²⁷

Nevertheless, this more generous assessment is attenuated by two basic facts. First, the formal recognition that a church not in communion with the pope is really a church is extended only to the Orthodox. Anglicans, for instance, lack valid orders in Rome's eyes, and hence, lack something essential to being the Church.²⁸ Second, while some recognition of incompleteness is discernible in Pope John Paul II's statement that the Church needs both its lungs (i.e., the Western and Eastern Churches),²⁹ the language of *subsistit in* prevents a full-blooded affirmation of Roman incompleteness. This is because while the terminological shift *does* aim to allow the possibility that other ecclesial communions may be Church, it *also* aims to deny that Rome lacks anything proper to its own being as the Church because of their absence.

In other words, while there are gifts and graces operative in other communions, which can and should enrich the Roman Catholic Church's life, they are, in reality, supported by and belong to the Roman Church.³⁰ The clearest evidence that *subsistit in* prevents an articulation of incompleteness of the sort that Ramsey provides is the fact that Vatican II happened at all. The Roman self-understanding is such that, even after the divisions of the sixteenth and eleventh centuries, it is still Church enough to hold ecumenical councils. The point here is not to criticize Rome's self-understanding.³¹ Rather, it is to show

26. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium* (November 21, 1964), no. 8 (in Norman Tanner [ed.], *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* [2 vols.; Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990], II, p. 854). Pius XII's 1943 Encyclical, *Mystici corporis* had used the simple copulative 'est' (no. 13).

27. See, e.g., Francis Sullivan, 'Response to Karl Becker, S.J., on the Meaning of *Subsistit In*', *Theological Studies* 67.2 (2006), pp. 395-409.

28. Avis makes a similar point (*Identity*, pp. 3-4), though I reached this conclusion independently of him.

29. See his 1995 Encyclical, *Ut unum sint*, no. 54.

30. So, *Lumen gentium*, no. 8 (Tanner, *Decrees*, II, p. 854). This principle is even more strongly stated in the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* (November 21, 1964), no. 3 (Tanner, *Decrees*, II, p. 910).

31. Indeed, this self-understanding may be an aspect of Rome's particular ecumenical vocation, though I cannot address that question here.

that Anglicanism embodies ecumenical promise not primarily because of what it positively possesses, but precisely because of what it knows it lacks. And it suffers this lack until such time as *all* Christian bodies – Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestants of various stripe – are all reunited in one body. If Anglicanism has an ecumenical future, I would contend that it lies in the development of this conviction.

The Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican Churches recognize the essential character of full, visible unity, expressed in the catholic order of episcopal ministry. Among them, Anglicanism is alone in fully acknowledging its incompleteness. Conversely, the Protestant churches generally recognize that they have no corner on the ecclesial market. Yet their particular ecclesologies soften the blow of this incompleteness,³² as from the outset Protestantism has existed in a context of churches co-existing without full visible communion. Anglican churches, though, can embody both of these ideals.

I do not necessarily suggest that no other church fits the bill here, only that Anglicanism does. And even if no other church currently corresponds to this vision, other churches may come to share in this outlook. Indeed, I am suggesting that the Anglican task is to invite them to do so. Such a vocation is, to my mind, the most viable future for Anglicanism. In the remainder of this article, I shall round out this consideration with two additional voices, who, in concert, provide the contours of what the development of this conviction must involve.

Ephraim Radner and the Suffering of Division

Ephraim Radner's writing on the divided Church has been controversial, to say the least. His claim that the divided Church is a dead Church, abandoned by the Holy Spirit like Christ on the cross, and devoid of the ability even to repent,³³ positions him as a fringe character in ecumenical circles, and is readily subject to misunderstanding.³⁴

32. I lack the space to develop this contention in this context. In a future article, I hope to more fully explore the ecclesiological assumptions that animate the various communions and their bearing on the ecumenical task.

33. This is the main thesis of Ephraim Radner, *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

34. E.g., David S. Cunningham, 'A Response to Ephraim Radner's *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West*,' *Anglican Theological Review* 83 (2001), pp. 89-102. To my mind, a significant amount of this criticism stems from a failure to grasp Radner's central point and/or a misreading of that point, though these misreadings are perhaps exacerbated by a somewhat melodramatic style and a tendency towards hyperbole on Radner's part. At the same time, while the

Nevertheless, Rowan Williams has suggested that Radner is a significant heir of Ramsey's ecclesiological perspective, particularly on the question of the divided Church's incompleteness.³⁵ Radner takes this inheritance and pushes it in a far more explicitly penitential direction, one which seeks to foreclose any avenues for wriggling off the hook of culpability for schism.

Radner's consistent refrain insists that the Church really is divided, *and* that this reality has not been taken fully seriously.³⁶ Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiologies skirt the issue by denying that other communions are really the Church.³⁷ Protestant appeals to an invisibly united Church likewise gloss over the reality of division. Absent owning up to the reality of division and its deleterious effects on the Church's life and health, ecclesial reunion will always thwart us. Reunion depends, above all, upon repentance, and failure to face facts short-circuits repentance.

For this reason, even ecumenical theologies, whose commitment to restoring broken unity one might expect Radner to laud, are deemed inadequate. Ecumenical celebrations of the diversity of the divided communions and affirmations of their various 'integrities' do not adequately reckon with the fact that division damages the Church's integrity.³⁸ The problem is that these diversities were often developed in the explicit service of justifying division among the divided

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hyperbole can get in the way of clarity, it is nevertheless an appropriate literary form for Radner's subject matter. His elegiac writing corresponds to the lamentable state of affairs to which he tirelessly seeks to call our attention, namely that the Church is divided. For better readings of Radner's argument see, e.g., Joseph L. Mangina, 'Review Essay: The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Division in the West', *Pro Ecclesia* 9 (2000), pp. 490-96; Bruce D. Marshall, 'The Divided Church and its Theology', *Modern Theology* 16 (2000), pp. 377-96.

35. Williams, 'Lutheran Catholic', pp. 220-21. Williams writes with particular reference to Radner's *Hope among the Fragments: The Broken Church and its Engagement with Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004). In that book, Radner briefly interacts with Ramsey and notes his debt to Ramsey's passionate reading of the Church (pp. 232-33), though elsewhere in his oeuvre engagement with Ramsey is lacking.

36. Radner, *End*, pp. 25, 278-83; *Hope*, p. 24; *A Brutal Unity: The Spiritual Politics of the Christian Church* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), pp. 127-40.

37. Though, per above, this is not an accurate statement of contemporary Roman Catholic ecclesiology.

38. This perspective appears as early as Ephraim Radner, 'The Cost of Communion: A Meditation on Israel and the Divided Church', in Ephraim Radner and R.R. Reno (eds.), *Inhabiting Unity: Theological Perspectives on the Proposed Lutheran-Episcopal Concordat* (Grand

communions. Hence, they are themselves implicated in the state of schism that pervades Christendom as a whole, and, in some measure, must be repented, rather than affirmed.³⁹

I do not wish to defend Radner's position on this matter in all its particulars. My instinct is that reunion will always elude us unless we find a way to transform our manner of imagining these diversities, including their ambiguous etiologies,⁴⁰ while also maintaining Radner's penitent bite. What I wish to highlight at this point is that Radner's thoughts on the loss of ecclesial integrity are, at base, an intensification of the account of Anglican incompleteness we have already seen in Ramsey.

Radner applies this account of incompleteness and provisionality across the ecclesial landscape. There is no stable ecclesial ground upon which to stand. Rather than seeking the true Church, the Christian must attend to the providential ordering of her life and suffer alongside that fragment of the Church to which she belongs.⁴¹ Yet the reference to 'suffering' signals a distinctive element of Radner's approach. Consonant with his goal of attending to the distortive effects of ecclesial separation,⁴² Radner's take on the matter has a far more devastated quality to it than we find in Ramsey. He writes:

The communion of the church, as we have it in our control, is already broken; it has been broken for many centuries; its fragments are no longer amenable to further breakage. One cannot excommunicate the already excommunicated. The Christian world is populated by the excommunicated. Who is a Christian today, but one who is also an excommunicate? What we today call a communion within the Church, among any set of churches, is really the linkage of what is already broken, the gathering up and holding together of what is already torn apart.⁴³

A significant reason for this more penitential strain in Radner's thought is his adoption of a passionate understanding of the Church's existence. Following a soteriological deduction along the lines of what we have already encountered in Ramsey, Radner locates the Church's

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Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 135-53 (135). It is reiterated in *End, passim*; *Hope*, pp. 30, 36, 71-75; *Brutal*, pp. 155-65.

39. Radner, *Brutal*, pp. 135-38; *End*, pp. 6-8, 278.

40. Hence my appeal to Avis, below.

41. See especially, Radner, *Hope*, pp. 23-76. His reflections there are a development of his call in *End*, to 'some profound kind of staying put' (p. 352).

42. See the previous section for how this same reality is expressed by Ramsey.

43. Radner, *Hope*, p. 75.

state of division within the gospel itself. This allows him to acknowledge the reality of ecclesial division without thereby falsifying the gospel's message of saving union with Christ. The Church's division does not falsify the gospel because it is a participation in the gospel's events, figured in divided and exiled Israel, and gathered up into the crucified Christ. 'The only place in Scripture, after all, where the body of Christ is explicitly described as broken is on the cross, that is, as the actual body of Jesus.'⁴⁴

The net effect of these moves on Radner's part is to yield an account of the Church as sharing in Christ's death and resurrection, and whose particular sharing in that death and resurrection, at least in its divisions, takes the form of death's bitterness and the obscurement of the Holy Spirit's activity. This is not too far removed from Ramsey's idea that the episcopate is marred by division, nor his notion that the Church lives its life under the judgment of God, and that the passion is the proper place to consider the Church's division. However, Ramsey never countenanced the idea that the Holy Spirit would take leave of the Church. While it is important to note that Radner qualifies this pneumatic abandonment,⁴⁵ it is undeniable that his particular way of parsing the Church's passional nature is starker and goes farther than Ramsey's ever did, with the result that it takes on a particularly penitential quality.

So, then, according to Radner, all the churches are incomplete; all stand in need of divine healing with nothing they can do to cause that healing. Repentance is the result of grace, rather than the cause of it, with the implication that penitent reunion remains 'maddeningly antiprogrammatic',⁴⁶ The best one can do is submit oneself to the formal structures of one's own ecclesial location, and to cultivate proximity to those from whom one is divided, apart from whom one will always remain incomplete and devoid of integrity.⁴⁷ All this is undertaken 'in the service of the larger church's healing ... [in] repentant

44. Radner, *Hope*, p. 72.

45. Radner, *End*, p. 342. See also Mangina's clarification of Radner's intent with language of pneumatic deprivation ('Review Essay', pp. 490-92).

46. Radner, *End*, p. 352.

47. Subsequently, Radner has developed his vision of what this involves, and done so with particular reference to conciliar procedure. Conciliar proceduralism is no substitute for the charity nor for the Holy Spirit who gives that grace, but it does provide a form which can be inhabited over time in hope that this charism would be bestowed by the Spirit. See Radner, *Hope*, pp. 39-54; 'Conciliarity and the American Evasion of Communion', in Ephraim Radner and Philip Turner (eds.), *The Fate of Communion: The Agony of Anglicanism and the Future of Global Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 220-40; *Brutal*, pp. 186-217, 257-64, 300-307. Radner's actual

readiness to be healed'.⁴⁸ The Church endures its own brokenness, its own divisions, its own incompleteness, awaiting the eventual healing of the Church.

In this healed Church particular denominational identities will almost certainly be lost, for such identities were developed to sustain divisions.⁴⁹ Radner is particularly susceptible to misinterpretation at this point. The loss of denominational identities can sound as though what he has in view is some version of the ecumenism of return: find the true Church and then have everyone revert to it. However, such a viewpoint is impossible for Radner's ecclesiology because *all the Church* is affected and wounded by division. Only the excommunicate remain. Neither is it a flattening out of all difference into uniformity. Indeed, for Radner, Christian unity is not even necessarily agreement, but rather the sort of unity enacted at the cross, a unity that reaches across difference, indeed, a unity that embraces even one's enemies, even the blasphemous.⁵⁰

Radner never specifies precisely how this loss of identity might work, because this cannot be anticipated in advance.⁵¹ The churches are not the shapers and determiners of their destinies. God is. Indeed, an outcome which could be determined ahead of time would be particularly susceptible to self-interested manipulation, which seeks to do an

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positive proposals for the shape of such a common life are most explicitly articulated in *Brutal*, pp. 462-68.

48. Radner, *Hope*, p. 207.

49. E.g., Radner, 'Cost of Communion', pp. 144-45, on the loss of denominational identities; *End*, pp. 67-102, 154-71, 238-57, on the division-justifying logic of these identities' development.

50. This is the major burden of the argument in Radner, *Brutal*, where Radner puts it forward as the only workable theory of Christian unity available, and as the only one adequate for a phenomenological analysis of the concrete entity, Church, which is also confessed to be 'one' (see especially pp. 1-15, 396-99, 443-47).

51. For my part, I suspect that it might take the form of something along the lines of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral with its minimal formal requirements, and (in the form adopted by the Episcopal Church's House of Bishops in 1886) disposition to 'forego all preferences of [one's] own' in the interest of union (*The Book of Common Prayer* [New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979], p. 876). The proposed Anglican Communion Covenant, with its focus almost entirely on relational (rather than doctrinal or moral) matters also shows promise in this regard. With or without a formal adoption of the Covenant, I suspect that the way forward would look a lot like relating in the ways the Covenant proposes. See Paul Avis, *The Vocation of Anglicanism* (London: T&T Clark, 2015), pp. 61-79, for a commendation of the Covenant.

end-run around repentance. It would presume that the churches are in a position to negotiate, rather than one of utter dependence upon grace. Instead, as the Church patiently (in the full sense of that term) waits for God's restorative act, it simply endeavors to learn, once more, how to love. For ultimately, our divisions stem from a failure of love, and only restoration of that love can lead to or sustain reunion.⁵²

Paul Avis: A Broken Home Is Still a Home

From Ramsey, we have gained a basic articulation of the provisionality or incompleteness of Anglicanism. While Anglican churches are truly churches, they are not the only ones. Moreover, given the relationship between Church and salvation operative in Ramsey's thought, any church that does not include all of those who belong to Christ is necessarily incomplete. Radner pushes the recognition that this incompleteness leads to a woundedness that is often not considered in its full seriousness. The Church's vocation is a penitent one, and since the Church has lost the ability to repent, it is also a vocation to die, but in union with Christ's death.⁵³

Stated thus, it can appear that we are left with little more than a counsel of despair. While I do not believe that this would be a fair reading of Radner, his perspective does need supplementation. To this end, I introduce the contemporary ecumenist and ecclesialogist, Paul Avis. Whereas Radner is astringent in his appraisal of ecumenical theology, Avis inhabits and champions it. The result is a far more optimistic evaluation of the state of affairs than one finds in Radner. Avis allows us to round out the foregoing considerations in two primary ways. First, as with both Ramsey and Radner, he applies the idea of provisionality and incompleteness across the ecclesial landscape, but in such a way as to sustain hope. Second, he provides a 'baptismal paradigm' for understanding the Church, which at once intensifies the soteriological impetus for unity we discerned in Ramsey and allows for a more optimistic appraisal of God's work within a broken Church than

52. After all, notes Radner, if unity is dependent upon consensus, then all it will take to sunder any reformed unity is the emergence of new disagreement. *End*, p. 170. It is for this reason that he propounds a unity grounded in the love of even one's enemies, rather than in agreement. For an attempt to think through the liturgical conditions for the re-emergence of charity within the context of divided Anglicanism see Eugene R. Schlesinger, 'The Fractured Body: The Eucharist and Anglican Division', *Anglican Theological Review* 98.4 (2016), pp. 639-59.

53. Radner, *End*, p. 332.

is immediately discernible in Radner. At the same time, Avis's sanguine perspective needs to be attenuated by the more sober evaluation embodied by Radner. Avis's optimism, coupled with Radner's penitence, will allow me to articulate what I believe is a viable vision of Anglican provisionality.

The bedrock of Avis's ecclesiological thought is twofold: a recognition that the Church of England – and by extension the Anglican Communion's member churches – is an expression of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church; and a recognition that it is not the only such expression.⁵⁴ If the first affirmation were not true, members of Anglican churches would be obliged to depart therefrom and join with some other church that does embody the Catholic Church of Christ.⁵⁵ If it is true, such departure is ruled out. Were the second affirmation false, Anglicans could reasonably ignore other Christian bodies, and remain content as ecclesiological solipsists. In such a case there is no problem of division. If, however, the Church of Christ finds expression in other communions, then it is incumbent upon Anglicans to seek and find union with them,⁵⁶ otherwise we are left with the performative contradiction of salvation noted above.

Pastoral Confidence in View of the Provisionality of All Churches

These ecclesiological suppositions lead at once to confidence in the integrity of Anglicanism and to a non-triumphalism. This combination yields a distinct manner of parsing the idea of Anglican provisionality. Commenting on Stephen Bayne's famous statement that Anglicanism's vocation is to disappear, Avis opines, 'I find this statement ... rather disturbing. What Stephen Bayne asserts of the Anglican Communion is no more and no less true than any other part of the Church catholic ... all parts of ... [which], stand in this position of incompleteness and fragmentation.'⁵⁷ In other words, while disappearance is indeed an Anglican vocation, it is also the vocation of any church. All parts of the

54. Avis, *Identity*, pp. 2-4, 8-11, 165-68; *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective* (rev. and expanded edn; London: T&T Clark, 2002), pp. 344-54.

55. So Avis, *Identity*, p. 140.

56. See especially Paul D.L. Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole?* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), pp. 188-89.

57. Avis, *Identity*, p. 2. Note the further judgment in *Ecumenical Theology*, 107. For the original statement from Bayne, see 'This Nettle', p. 43 (Avis footnotes *From Power to Partnership* [London: Church House, 1991], p. 113).

Church need to recognize their provisionality and incompleteness. Anglicanism is no more or less incomplete than the others.

And so, instead of self-effacing confessions of provisionality, Avis suggests that Anglicans should instead rest assured 'that Anglicanism is an estimable expression of the Christian Church; that it has all the resources, by the grace of God, to meet the pastoral and spiritual needs of its members; that it has the authority to call to its ministry those whom the Holy Spirit is calling and to bestow on them the authority of the Church'.⁵⁸ I fear that, in the form in which Avis puts it, this statement obscures the incompleteness of Anglicanism for which I am arguing, and risks failing to take seriously the deleterious effects of schism upon the Church.⁵⁹ It is, nevertheless, a salutary point, counterbalancing some of Radner's more extreme pessimistic flourishes.

On the one hand, Avis rightly notes that all the churches suffer from and share responsibility for schism.⁶⁰ On the other hand, though, something of a pastoral realism also dominates Avis's ecclesiological vision. Yes, the Church is divided, and we must tirelessly work to remedy that lamentable state of affairs, but still there are women and men to baptize and catechize, disciples in need of formation, souls in need of care. The Christian Church must and can continue to carry out this mandate as well. We might say that Avis reminds us that a broken home is still a home. And this is a rather important point, for apart from some such recognition, the sort of incompleteness and provisionality for which I am arguing could easily devolve into despair. While the divided churches have much for which to repent, they can also be confident that divine grace is still operative within them.

The Baptismal Paradigm of the Church and Non-triumphalism

Just as Anglicans should not be self-effacing in their affirmations of provisionality, neither should they be self-important. They can confidently know that they are part of the one Church of Jesus Christ and carry out the worship and mission entrusted to them by their Lord, even as they recognize that they have fellow-laborers outside their ecclesial confines. This brings me to another significant feature of Avis's thought: his generous appraisal of other churches, and especially those

58. Avis, *Identity*, p. 5.

59. This is not to suggest that Avis does not take division seriously as something to be overcome. He obviously does, and his ecumenical work bears this out. See especially Avis, *Ecumenical Theology*.

60. Avis, *Identity*, p. 4.

communions that lack episcopal order. While Anglicans have never abandoned the historic episcopate, they have also, historically, assumed the validity of the ministries of the other reformed churches, especially on the continent.⁶¹ While I am not persuaded that this judgment holds quite so strongly after 1662, once more, the precise question of episcopal ordination's necessity is not the point, but rather the recognition of other churches as Church.

As Avis notes, there exist a vast array of Christian bodies, and 'each has its own integrity after a fashion'.⁶² Because this is so, the churches must find ways to recognize each other as authentically Church. Avis notes a succession of ecclesiological paradigms within Anglican history, beginning with a now-defunct Erastian paradigm, which no longer applies to the Church of England and never applied to most other portions of the Anglican Communion.⁶³

From the Tractarians, Anglicanism picked up an 'apostolic paradigm' according to which ministerial succession was the *sine qua non* of the Church. However, this paradigm is also inadequate because it is (1) 'ecumenically offensive', and (2) because it 'takes an aspect of catholicity for the whole ... mak[ing] the life of the whole body dependent upon one particular instrument of that life - the ordained ministry'.⁶⁴ Note the similarity with Ramsey's evaluation of Tractarian clericalism. Given this similarity, it is surprising that Avis faults Ramsey for claiming too much for the episcopacy.⁶⁵ I suspect the real cause for demurral to be Avis's ecumenical connections, which make Ramsey's statements to the effect that non-episcopal orders are 'gravely deficient' seem too strident.⁶⁶ However, given Ramsey's recognition that churches who have retained the episcopate suffer their own episcopal

61. Thoroughly substantiated in Avis, *Anglicanism and Christian Church*, pp. 1-58. See also Avis, *Identity*, pp. 15, 64-67.

62. Avis, *Anglicanism and Christian Church*, p. 346. See also *Ecumenical Theology*, pp. 1-4, 16-17.

63. Avis, *Anglicanism and Christian Church*, pp. 344-47.

64. Avis, *Anglicanism and Christian Church*, p. 347. I should note that, while it is surely prudent (and charitable) to avoid causing ecumenical partners unnecessary offense, that is hardly a criterion for evaluating theological claims. Indeed, it is question begging to suggest that we cannot hold the historic episcopate to be essential to the Church because it offends ecumenical partners. The proper ordering of the Church is precisely what is in question. If the threefold ministerial office is essential to the Church, then the ecumenical offense this causes is not unnecessary.

65. Avis, *Anglicanism and Christian Church*, pp. 351-52.

66. Ramsey, *Gospel and Catholic Church*, p. 219. For Avis's citation see *Anglicanism and Christian Church*, p. 351.

defects as a result of divisions, it seems that the offense ought to be attenuated, particularly if the outlook is informed by the recognition that *all* churches are provisional.

In any case, neither the Erastian nor the apostolic paradigm are adequate in Avis's view. Instead, he suggests a 'baptismal paradigm', which has never been absent from the Anglican outlook, but which has emerged with vigor in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. At its root, the baptismal paradigm allows a way to affirm the two claims that Anglicanism is a true expression of the one Church, and that there are other expressions of this one Church.⁶⁷ Because the baptized are united to Christ, they are, necessarily, members of his body, and, hence, part of the Church. Insofar as other communions validly baptize, they too must be recognized as Church.⁶⁸

This is the same logic that undergirds Ramsey's argument in *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*: salvation is union with and in Christ, of which the Church's unity is the expression. Indeed, Ramsey gestured towards this baptismal parsing of the matter when he wrote, 'the Episcopate is of the *esse* of the universal Church; but we must beware of mis-stating the issue. All who are baptized into Christ are members of His Church, and Baptism is the first mark of churchmanship.'⁶⁹ So, though Avis does not express his ecclesiology in quite the passionate terms that Ramsey does,⁷⁰ still the underlying soteriological impetus for unity is present, and finds its expression in the baptismal paradigm. The baptismal paradigm gives us something more than just an impetus for unity, though. It also forces the issue of ecclesial recognition. If Anglicans claim to be Church on the basis of union with Christ's death and resurrection, and if others are so united to Christ, then it follows that their claim to be Church is not qualitatively different than the Anglican claim.⁷¹

67. Avis finds support for this paradigm in the Sixth Lambeth Conference's 'Resolution 9: Reunion of Christendom', *Lambeth Conference Website* (August 15, 1920), <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-9.cfm> (see *Anglicanism and Christian Church*, pp. 352-54). The emergent baptismal ecclesiologies, which are especially evident in the American Episcopal Church also gesture towards such a paradigm.

68. Avis, *Anglicanism and Christian Church*, pp. 348-54. Note the similar judgment of Colin Davey, 'The Ecclesial Significance of Baptism According to Anglican Ecumenical Documents', *One in Christ* 35.2 (1999), pp. 131-42.

69. Ramsey, *Gospel and Catholic Church*, p. 84.

70. Avis does come close to this in Avis, *Ecumenical Theology*, pp. 151-53.

71. This leaves unaddressed the question of whether some communions more closely approximate the Catholic Church as ultimately intended by Christ than

Nevertheless, the mere fact of valid baptism neither constitutes a communion as Church nor validates its ministry. This judgment extends at least as far back as Augustine, who recognized the validity of Donatist baptisms, but denied their fruitfulness outside of Catholic unity, and utterly repudiated Donatist claims to be the true Church.⁷² Moreover, lay-administered baptism has long been recognized as valid, making this an inadequate basis to contend for ministerial recognition. The two issues are conceptually distinct.

That said, two factors ameliorate this criticism of the baptismal paradigm. First, we must recognize, as Radner pushes us to, that all the churches are schismatic now. There is no one locus of Catholic unity from which the rest have departed. In a state-of-affairs where the Church as a whole is divided, then the logic by which one denies the ecclesiality of schismatic groups is impossible to enforce, because it implicates *all of the churches*. The validity of all churches is in question, not just a schismatic sect here or there.

Second, the issue at hand is ecclesial recognition, not the validity of particular ministries, and, while the two are related, they can be conceptually differentiated. The historic episcopate can be seen as of the Church's *esse*, with the result that non-episcopally ordered ministries are defective, without unchurching non-episcopal churches precisely because schism now affects *all the churches*. Even the episcopate is defective. No church and no ministry makes it through unscathed.

These considerations make the baptismal paradigm attractive for the issue of ecclesial recognition. We cannot look to a valid ministry for confirmation of ecclesial status (ours or anyone else's) because, due to the distortive effects of division, we are all invalids.⁷³ The only claim any of us can make to being the Church is that we have been united to Christ in a death like his (Rom. 6.5). Different communions will have different features that belong to the Catholic fullness of the Church as it

(F'note continued)

others. Insofar as my argument is pressing provisionality and incompleteness, this more quantitative approach is immaterial. Qualitatively, we all stand on level ground: either incorporated into Christ or not. Quantitatively, some may be in more desirable positions than others, but the qualitative dimension is of such importance that quantitative questions simply do not enter into consideration *at this point* (though there are other contexts where they need to be addressed).

72. See the classic judgment of Augustine in *De baptismo* (*Traité anti-donatistes* [ed. G. Bavaud, trans. G. Finaert; vol. 2; Bibliothèque augustiniennne; Oeuvres de saint Augustin 29; Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1964]).

73. This particular turn of phrase was suggested to me, in another context, by Philip Anderas.

should and finally shall be (among them the episcopate), but none have them completely or undamaged. All we truly have left to which we can cling is this soteriological reality, which is, likewise, all any communion has to lay hold of. This recognition amplifies the exigency of pursuing unity. If the sole remaining ecclesial criterion is membership in Christ, we dare not forgo the embrace of any of Christ's members.

That the churches continue to baptize helpfully tempers some of Radner's rhetoric about pneumatic abandonment. That the churches continue to baptize indicates that God continues, even through this broken body of Christ, to draw women and men into saving union with Christ. On the one hand, this recognition is not unique to Avis. It can be found, somewhat mutedly, in Radner's theology.⁷⁴ Similarly, Ramsey noted that though the Church's division corresponds to the passion, 'There has been in the midst of it the power whereby saints are made ... Hence, the broken history of the Catholic Church is not a mere parody of Catholicism, but a manifestation in flesh and blood of the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'⁷⁵ On the other hand, Avis throws the reality into bolder relief, and in this way, staves off ecclesial despair.

This can be done without subverting the penitential vocation or the recognition of damage done to ecclesial integrity by schism. To begin with, this is a recognition of *grace's* operation in the fragmented Church. Recognizing oneself to be on the receiving end of grace is by no means at odds with penitence or with recognizing one's miserable estate. Instead, these are all of a piece. Additionally, Avis's baptismal paradigm is explicitly developed as a strategy for ecclesial recognition. In other words, it is a paradigm for evaluating the status of churches other than one's own. This is a crucial distinction. As Radner notes, many denominational distinctives arose for the purpose of justifying and sustaining division. The proper response is repentance, but this is a repentance to which each communion must call itself, rather than one which they can impose upon one another. When looking at another communion, the most important thing one can do is recognize the work of the Christ's grace.

A Vocation to Disappear and to Call Others to Disappearance

A penitent recognition of one's own communion's damaged status, coupled with a grateful recognition of divine grace operative in other communions, might be precisely the sort of ecumenical disposition that

74. See, e.g., Radner, *End*, p. 342.

75. Ramsey, *Gospel and Catholic Church*, p. 174.

is needed.⁷⁶ This would neither deny the grace in one's own church, nor the damage suffered in the other. Rather it would promote the humility needed to let go of one's own denominational claims, even while embracing a new and costly unity.

Because all churches are incomplete and provisional, because all are damaged by division, this cannot become a mere ecumenism of return. If, for instance, Anglicans were to let go of their distinct identity for the sake of union with Rome or Constantinople – and the fact that the contrastive 'or' must be used only underscores this point – we will not have fulfilled our ecumenical calling. The various sorts of Protestants who continue to baptize would not have been embraced by this move. The same results would obtain if this loss of identity for the sake of new unity occurred on the Protestant side of the Tiber (or Bosphoros). All the churches are ultimately called upon to disappear, leaving only the credal one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, without denominational modifiers.

Until such time, the Anglican Communion's constituent churches have the opportunity to embrace their own provisionality as a witness to the provisionality of all churches. It can and must do so without surrendering its own Catholic order, which provides a complementary witness to the catholic destiny of all churches. This need not be a unique calling. Any and all churches are invited to enter into this Catholic order and to embrace their own incompleteness and provisionality. But as a Catholic communion, aware of its own incompleteness, Anglicanism is indeed positioned for such a task.

Disappearance is the vocation of Anglicanism because it is the vocation of every church. And by the nature of the case, this vocation cannot be fully carried out until all the churches have embraced it. This much we gain from Radner, and it is an indispensable horizon. What we gain from Avis, though, is equally indispensable. It is the pastorally motivated assurance that, as the churches await this destiny, they are indeed still outposts of salvation, communities in which God is accomplishing his purposes. Anglicans can be confident that theirs is a community which can sustain the sort of 'profound kind of staying put' to which Radner gestures,⁷⁷ because, though division is death, 'The divided Church is still Christ's Body.'⁷⁸ Christ remains faithful to his

76. I articulate something along these lines in Schlesinger, 'Fractured Body', pp. 651-59.

77. Radner, *End*, p. 352.

78. Radner, *End*, p. 195.

saving promises, whether or not his people do, which 'is the most important thing a Christian can understand about ecclesiology'.⁷⁹

Conclusion: Anglicanism's Penitent Vocation to Disappear

In all this I have suggested that, in the face of uncertainty about the future of the Anglican Communion, the way forward lies along the path of an even more radical uncertainty. Preserving the Communion is not an end in itself because the Communion is not an end in itself. Its vocation, like that of any portion of the fractured body of Christ, is to disappear, not fissiparously into new divisions, nor into the obscurity of secularism's wake, but into the fullness of the Church Catholic. Embracing such a vocation of ecumenical service affords us the opportunity to refocus our myopic vision away from our own internal squabbling. If getting sexuality 'right' is the only thing we have going for ourselves, we have very little to offer the world. Such a vocation further deflates our ecclesiastical narcissism because it need not be unique to us. Any church can embrace Catholic faith and order and its own wounded provisionality.

The Catholic Church of which Anglicanism is a part and which forms its destiny, is the saving union of all women and men with and in Christ, which is embodied in the Church's order, as we saw with Ramsey's thought. Under the conditions of division, the means by which the Church's participation in Christ's saving work are structured, suffer obscurity. While Ramsey affirms this, it is from Radner that the call to lament this consequence of our division and to face it in full, suffering, honesty emerges most clearly. When the Church is divided, its participation in Christ's saving work is obscured, and its integrity is compromised. Because this division affects the Church as a whole, there is no safe haven immune to this obscurity. Instead, one must weather the storm in whatever compromised communion one has been providentially placed.

At the same time, as Avis reminds us, a broken home is still a home, and Anglicans are equipped, within their fragmented portion of Christ's body, to weather this storm, even as they learn to recognize the grace at work in the other broken pieces of Christ's body all around them. And here, in this broken home, part of a landscape of similarly broken homes, Anglicans can learn to embrace their vocation to disappear, and to pray for these fragments to be gathered up so as to once more form one body. If Anglicans can embrace this vocation, our

79. Radner, *Brutal*, p. 447.

Communion may well be worth preserving, for its preservation would be a provisional one, done in the service of the Communion's ultimate disappearance into the one body of Christ. If we cannot embrace this vocation, I am hard pressed to imagine why our continued existence is of any consequence at all.⁸⁰

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