Book Reviews

Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire c. 1700–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 336. ISBN 9780199218042 (hb). RRP US$194.95.
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The interrelation of Anglicanism and the British Empire has long been apparent. But the contours of that interrelation have been presumed without being examined closely. In recent years various historians have published revised accounts of this link. It is no longer possible to present the Church of England as an apologist for empire or to assume that it was inherently distinct. Through recent research, varieties of Anglican experiences in different times and settings of empire have surfaced. Notably, it is now clear that the experience of empire often affected English people in colonial settings as profoundly as it did the peoples who were subjected to imperial influences. In the field the intentions of the church, as of empire, were reshaped by the unanticipated force of local culture. Anglicans were compelled to consider indigenous forms of church life. Yet conflict ensued when they struggled to balance continuity with the English past with faithfulness to contextual realities. Imperceptibly, Anglicanism began to splinter into a myriad of local versions, a fact that would later become starkly apparent.

Rowan Strong understands that a new historiography has begun to reframe the Anglican relation to empire, and grounds his own effort in an appreciative relation to it. It is now clear that religion was not causative of empire, but was closely linked to its rise and development. J.C.D. Clark and Linda Colley have emphasized the integration of religious worldview and British national identity. Their works have spoken to the motivation for empire, though not clearly from the perspective of church leadership, as Strong intends. Much recent scholarship also considers the impact of empire upon subject peoples. Catherine Hall has distinguished between the view of the organizers of empire, or the metropole, and actual experience in the colonies. Inevitably there was a gulf between intention and reality. Under the banner of empire, missionaries and colonial church leaders set out to transform indigenous life in particular ways. Historian of mission Andrew Walls has written insightfully about the intention and outcome of mission with special emphasis on the Evangelical role in fostering a humanitarian view that distinguished religion from empire. Brian Stanley has probed the late nineteenth century divergence between mission and empire while Andrew Porter has assessed this parting of ways from the perspective of imperial policy. Jean and John Comaroff have opened an important inquiry by showing how the encounter with indigenous peoples altered the shape of mission and changed the missionaries themselves. As discussions of empire advanced, the voices of indigenous people

remained silent. But their presence was felt in ways that reconfigured Britain's presence and the shape of mission.

Strong reflects his appropriation of this historiography in his ways of linking religion and British national purpose, and in the distinction he makes between the intentions of the metropole and colonial realities. But he also parts company at key points. First, this historiography, he notes, focuses on the high Victorian period, when the shape of empire and of the church's relation to it came sharply into focus. Strong takes a strikingly different tack. He tracks the Anglican intention for empire from 1700 to 1850. His interest lies in how the church's view of empire took shape, and how it developed in relation to the contextual realities it encountered. What was the motivation of church leaders? How did motivation translate into public articulations of purpose, and how did this sense of purpose play out? Such questions, and the juxtaposition of intention and reality, have been presented for later imperial and mission experience. But Strong's focus on early stages is an important addition to the literature, for it allows a clear sense of how the church did, and did not, intend to reflect imperial purpose.

It is also helpful because of the emphasis on public discussion. Strong calls his work 'a history of the public views of both metropolitan leaders of the Church of England, and of Anglicans in these British colonies regarding the church and empire, and about the colonizing and colonized populations to be found there'. He seeks to discern 'what were the components of a public Anglican discourse of the British Empire — a discourse developed by Anglicans at the center and at the peripheries of empire'. He intends to show that the church's internal discussion set it apart from empire in lasting ways. Yet the church would realize its own tension between metropole and colony, and so face its own version of what imperial power encountered. The church's early views of empire, and responses to imperial realities, frame Strong's narrative. His source material comes from sermons and other discussion published by the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*. From its inception at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the SPG enlisted the support of key Church of England leaders to promote the church's mission. SPG records are an abundant and early gauge of the church's imperial intention.

In highlighting the SPG's role, Strong takes an emphatically revisionist turn. The preponderance of mission historiography has emphasized the initiative of British Evangelicalism. But before the Evangelical awakenings, there was the SPG, launched a century before the *Church Missionary Society* and intent on mission in the emerging empire. Given Strong's emphasis on the rise of the church in empire, he has taken a natural and important turn. He presents the emerging outlook of key Anglican leaders on empire, thus framing Anglican mission in a broader compass and clarifying its intent. Christian mission has always emphasized conversion and the salvation of souls. But for Anglicans, mission also meant transplanting the church. An emphasis on the church pressed Anglicans on two fronts: their distinctiveness from empire and their relation to indigenous culture. Strong depicts the emergence of this tension with unprecedented clarity.

The first issue was more apparent to Anglicans in the early stages of empire, as Strong's focus on the SPG reveals. The SPG was a key example of a resurgent Anglicanism. It sensed mission opportunity in colonial North America. The church was providentially placed to promote the spread of civilization, key SPG supporters

argued. They were especially intent on commerce as the doorway both to the Gospel's spread and to the nation's enhancement. Trade became something of a metaphor for mission, and not simply a rationale. Seeing the church as the heart of English civilization, church leaders saw their task as imparting the benefits of English civilization and the Gospel, which they presumed to be compatible. In turn, England expected to benefit from the resources it discovered in host lands. At first, theory did not readily translate into reality. Mission to Native Americans made little headway. Worse, the ideals of mission faced the moral bankruptcy of slavery. Slavery seemed to be an opportunity for evangelism and for urging slave owners to mind the welfare of their charges. But such intentions begged the underlying issue: how could the church identify mission and commerce when the manner of trade was immoral? Was evangelism ultimately a subterfuge for enforcing an oppressive system? These are not new questions. In Strong's hands, however, the issue of religion and empire coalesced around slavery. SPG leaders began to diverge from the intentions of empire as they concurred that slaves were human beings. No religious activism to overturn slavery took immediate shape; however, a wedge between empire and church became increasingly apparent as the church followed in the footsteps of Britain's expansion.

Strong frames his narrative around the fact of expansion, tracing the church's fortunes chronologically from North America to Bengal to Australia and New Zealand. In each locus he finds pressing issues of indigenization that diverted the church from identification with empire, and compelled it to create a distinctive identity of unprecedented proportions. The consistent factor in this progression was that imperial intentions met unanticipated contextual realities. The most apparent was the difficulty of translating English political and religious establishment into colonial circumstances. Still intent on conveying the English form of a Christian nation, the SPG fostered the creation of bishops for India. Collaboration with Evangelical Anglicans on this intention gave it persuasive power. Indeed, India became the locus of notable collaboration between church parties, because they continued to focus on creating India in England's image. But Anglicans would be squeezed both by frustrations with imperial authority and by irresistible cultural forces. Gradually missionaries gained appreciation of Hinduism and of India's religious complexity. But no depth of understanding could obscure the difficulties faced by converts, with the caste system proving almost impenetrable. The church tried to level social distinctions with modest success.

In response, the church extended its institutional forms to create some measure of establishment. But the creation of the Colonial Bishoprics Fund under the guidance of Charles James Blomfield reinforced colonial reality rather than imperial intention. As Bishop of London, Blomfield inspired the building of churches across England, on the theory that people would participate in the church when it was made accessible. He also presumed that making the episcopate present in colonial areas would enhance the church's missionary appeal. But growth of the episcopate did not enhance the prospect of colonial establishment. In fact, expansion of the episcopate helped to turn the church toward innovative forms of self-direction. Increasingly, Anglicans sought their identity not in relation to empire but by distinctive offices. Strong compares Gladstone's changing sentiments about religious establishment with Henry Venn's pursuit of indigenous, self-sustaining

offspring of the Church of England. Near the middle of the nineteenth century it was clear that the church was still cooperative with empire to a degree, but was intent on pursing a distinctive, religious course. Mission remained linked to imparting English organizational ways, but now the church's ability to direct its own life mattered most.

Some aspects of the Anglican approach to mission remained intact until later in the nineteenth century. Trade continued to be the metaphor for mission. Indigenous religions, especially Hinduism, were viewed as corrupt, and cultural makeover in an English mode was an expected fruit of conversion. But now the colonial English population could be found morally wanting, and estrangement from colonial government could be palpable. Sensing these trends, Strong shifts his focus from Bengal to Australia and New Zealand in the first half of the nineteenth century. For a time what he terms the 'old paradigm' persisted there. The colonial church tried to replicate the English religious establishment. Yet again it fell short.

The pretension of establishment lingered in the style of ministry and in the church's public, ceremonial role. But the reality proved otherwise. For Strong, William Grant Broughton embodied the shift to the 'new paradigm'. The man who became Australia's first bishop arrived with establishment ideals. But fueled by Australian realities and by Tractarian-inspired emphasis on the church's unique identity, Broughton changed his view. The result was a turn to church synods as the means of self-government. Anglicans would direct their own life, framing the church's authority along contextual lines. Australia was not the first, of course; the American Episcopal Church had been forced to self-organize in the wake of political upheaval. In the South Pacific and then elsewhere, the fulcrum was the solidification of Anglican identity in novel circumstances. The political link to Britain was intact for the time being, but contextual disparity was apparent. To secure their future, colonial Anglicans turned to their own priorities and to the structures needed to realize them. They modified precedent to face contextual realities.

The translation of the episcopate and the creation of synods to facilitate self-government seem modest steps in light of cultural adaptations that lay ahead. Given Strong's periodization it is not possible to consider the full engagement of the church with local cultures, including the rise of indigenous clergy, and liturgies adapted to cultural sensitivities. Strong hints at what was to come but these trends would not blossom until later in the nineteenth century. More striking, Strong's time frame permits no consideration of Anglicanism in Africa. It seems a bit strange to speak of Anglicanism in the empire without considering Africa. In close proximity to his time frame, Strong could have cited South Africa. At the Cape, the tenure of Bishop Robert Gray was marked by the Long Case, which became an appeal to the Privy Council protesting the notion that a colonial branch of the Church of England could govern itself.

Despite the omission of Africa, Strong's periodization is viable as a focus on the rise of a sense of the church in empire, and the turn toward a more contextually defined identity. The focus on SPG sources is an important corrective, and works well, because the SPG consistently took a high view of the church and its role in the nation. Strong ably reveals how imperial circumstances forced the church to distinguish itself in unprecedented ways. This is an important historiographical

turn that should encourage considerable discussion. But in emphasizing the SPG as he has, Strong has not found the needed historiographical balance. Clearly he seeks to correct the assumption of Evangelical prevalence. Fortunately, he cites Evangelical influence at key points, notably the initiative of Henry Venn. But more points of comparison with the Evangelical view of the church could have been made. Thus, Strong has not fully presented Anglicanism in relation to empire. Nevertheless, he has traced the rise of a key discussion of this relation and with rare skill has revealed a pivotal change in outlook. This is a valuable, groundbreaking book, which will be a key reference point in future inquiry.

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Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory: A Rahnerian Theological Assessment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 256. ISBN 1-4039-7070-X.
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This work of political theology is the published version of the doctoral thesis of Susan Abraham, who describes herself as a 'third world woman' hailing from India, and who studied for her doctorate in the 'metropole' of Cambridge, Massachusetts under the supervision of Frances Schüssler Fiorenza. The thesis attempts to set Indian postcolonial theory into a dialogue with modern Roman Catholic theology, and, in particular, the work of Karl Rahner, with the occasional side-trail into John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Abraham engages with the work of three postcolonial theorists from India, successively Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ashis Nandy, and argues that Rahner's account of freedom, love and the mystical quest can 'expand the contours of postcolonial theory through a reexamination of notions of subjectivity, gender, and violence'. Her underlying thesis is suggested to her by Robert Schreiter, when he questions the moral claims of postcolonialists who critique the 'otherness, racism and violence' of colonial and postcolonial relationships between 'elites and subalterns' and 'metropole and periphery', but who present no alternative ontology of peace and nonviolence. What Abraham attempts then, is to present a Rahnerian ontology as just such a peaceable and nonviolent alternative to the postcolonial mainstream and in so doing, questions the postcolonial denial of religious agency.

Abraham reviews a wide range of interlocutors in postcolonial theory and Catholic theology. She succeeds in her aim of engaging these interlocutors in a dialogue, and in suggesting that Rahner's Christian universalism presents an important echo chamber for postcolonial theory. The book is, however, heavy going and laden with jargon. But the biggest problem is a stylistic one. Throughout the book the subjects of sentences include 'postcolonial theory', 'revanchist Roman Catholic theology' and 'postcolonial theology', and so we find that theology 'calls for', postcolonial theory 'needs to take note' and 'Roman Catholic postcolonial theology will continue to grapple'. Does theology announce or compose itself