Book Reviews

John Maiden, *National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy 1927–1928* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 210, ISBN 978-1-84383-521-9 (hbk).
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The Prayer Book crisis of 1927–28 saw one of the great set-piece debates in twentieth-century parliamentary history. Parliament's refusal – twice – to let the established Church change its liturgy was also the last battle in a much longer turf-war between Church and State in England. And yet it is likely that if one asked a class of history undergraduates about the Prayer Book crisis today, not one of them would have heard of it. They would not get much help if they looked it up in a textbook. A.J.P. Taylor's *English History 1914–1945* (1965) dismissed the episode as 'the echo of dead themes', while more recent histories of twentieth-century Britain have ignored it altogether. So did Callum Brown's *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (2006). While the crisis has spawned a handful of articles and chapters, it has not – until now – been the subject of a dedicated monograph.

And yet there are two particular reasons why the crisis is worthy of study. First, it demonstrated just how potent religious controversy could be in inter-war Britain, generating a furious parliamentary debate and a vast slew of pamphlet material. Secondly, the crisis left the Church of England with wounds that took a long time to heal. Many senior bishops after the Second World War, Michael Ramsey included, felt a lingering grievance at the way that the Church had been treated by Parliament in 1927–28, which made them keen to distance it from the state. As late as 1983, Owen Chadwick could still claim that, in Church–State relations, 'the problem of today stems from December 1927'.

John Maiden's excellent monograph means that there is at last a proper study of the Prayer Book crisis. Maiden offers an exemplary account of the genesis of Prayer Book revision, explaining how it began in 1904 as an attempt to end the interminable ritualism wars by permitting a number of moderate Anglo-Catholic practices. But as he points out, so protracted was the revision process that the main issue at stake changed; the rise of Anglo-Catholic sacramentalism meant that what had begun chiefly as an argument about vestments increasingly became one about reservation and communion rubric. The complexion of the bishops' bench also changed over the intervening decades, with the rise of a 'centre-high' party that saw the Church as a via *media* between different traditions, and the concomitant eclipse of the evangelicals. All this meant that 'by the 1920s Anglican evangelicalism appeared moribund in comparison to a flourishing Anglo-Catholic party and was in no position to challenge the Centre-High consensus over the direction of revision'.

Maiden also points out more fully than earlier accounts the extent of divisions within the main church parties – Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical and Modernist – on revision. As he points out, the 'bishops' narrative of an overwhelmingly united church bullied by parliament', was a distortion of the truth, because the Church was deeply divided. Although the author's taxonomy of the different sub-groups in each party occasionally errs on the side of exhaustiveness, it does allow him to give a properly nuanced and complex account. He also unearths some marvellous oddities, such as the anti-Catholic Anglo-Catholic, Canon E.G. Wood, who commented that 'he would rather cut off his right hand than enter a Roman Church', or Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar, suggesting a telegram to the Pope from the 1923 Anglo-Catholic Congress, saying '16000 Anglo-Catholics, in Congress assembled, offer respectful greetings to the Holy Father, humbly praying that the day of peace may quickly break'. The conflict made for some strange bedfellows; the leading episcopal opponent of revision, Bertram Pollock, Bishop of Norwich, found himself in alliance with A. Hope Patten, the Anglo-Catholic parish priest of Walsingham, who was normally a thorn in his flesh. Their new-found affinity had its limits, though, as the Bishop refused to enter Patten's house, insisting on conversing in the garden.

The author's main argument is that much of the Prayer Book debate was really about conflicting versions of the Christian nation. As Maiden rightly points out, the Prayer Book was a powerful symbol of Protestant national identity. This was not just an English identity, but also a British one, which helps explain why so many Scottish MPs were moved to oppose revision. Most 1920s Anglicans, and many non-Anglicans, still held that national character had been shaped by the Reformation, and opponents argued that, by tampering with the Reformation settlement, revision risked altering national character. But proponents of revision countered that national character (as embodied in the Elizabethan via *media*) was about compromise, a virtue embodied in the revised book. That all sides (with the exception of a few extreme Romanist Anglo-Catholics) were so wedded to the idea of the national church helps explain the abject failure of Hensley Henson's disestablishment agitation in 1928.

Two other powerful themes emerge from Maiden's book. The first is the simultaneous strength and weakness of Protestantism in early twentieth-century Britain. On the one hand, the fact that the Revised Book could twice be defeated in Parliament demonstrated the residual strength of the idea of the Protestant nation. The Evangelicals were formidable campaigners, using traditional means such as the 300,000-signature petition and the mass meeting, as well as sedulously lobbying MPs. As Maiden demonstrates, a surprisingly large number of Tory MPs were susceptible to appeals to defend Protestantism. It turned out that there was still life in the old dog of 'No Popery'. Indeed, Maiden argues, contrary to existing accounts, that there was a 'strange resurgence of anti-Catholicism' in 1920s Britain. Maiden's account is a useful and persuasive corrective to historians (me included) who are guilty of underplaying the strength of twentieth-century Evangelicalism. But his book also hints at evangelical weakness. By the author's own account, the near-total exclusion of Evangelicals from the upper echelons of the Church of England meant that it was easy for the Bishops to ignore them. Maiden's portrayal of a cross-denominational alliance against the Prayer Book also prompts the reflection that

such an alliance was bound to be less effective than its mid-nineteenth-century predecessors, because of the incipient decline of Nonconformity (a factor Maiden does not really address).

A second theme, which Maiden brings out very well, is the lack of connection between church leaders and rank-and-file clergy and laity. The bishops and their allies in the House of Commons did not present the case for revision particularly effectively, blithely assuming that everyone would just agree with them. They could be arrogant in their dismissal of their opponents, as in Henson's belittling denunciation of a 'Protestant underworld' of 'illiterates generalled by octogenarians', a reference to the retired Bishop of Manchester, E.A. Knox. This made it all the more of a shock when the illiterates bit back. The bishops were ultimately undeterred by this insolence, finding a backdoor way of implementing the book in defiance of Parliament. But their self-confident refusal to listen to grassroots opinion set a worrying precedent for their successors. It is arguable that the Church's implementation of liturgical reforms from the mid-1960s onwards demonstrated some of the same failure to listen, suggesting that nothing had been learnt from the debacle of 1927–28.

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Joseph Gnanaseelam Muthuraj. *We Began at Tranquebar*. I. *SPCK, the Danish-Halle Mission and Anglican Episcopacy in India 1708–1843* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010) pp. 237, £10 or Rs 400/-. ISBN 978-81-8465-071-6 (pbk).
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In 1972 ISPCK published a volume to celebrate the achievement of churches planted in the Anglican tradition in India in colonial times which, now fully fledged dioceses, joined the Church of South India in 1947 and the Church of North India in 1970. *The Anglican Church in India 1600–1970* by M.E. Gibb, presents a more balanced account in some ways than this volume under review now because Miss Gibb begins the story with the East India Company chaplains who founded churches at the Company's trading posts, later the cities of Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai, and integrates the story of their efforts and those of a number of influential lay people for mission work with that of pioneer missionaries and those commissioned exclusively for 'overseas missions'. Muthuraj starts with the arrival of two German graduates of the University of Halle, Bartholomeus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Pluetschau, who were sent by the King of Denmark to found a mission in the Danish colony of Tranquebar and after much hostility from the Governor and some of the foreign merchants, succeeded in doing so. Muthuraj does not discuss the problems created by having two parallel systems, chaplaincy and mission, and skates over the tensions created when missionaries were hired, deployed and paid (in this period rather erratically) by one dedicated agency and after 1822 were licensed by Anglican bishops. (See the correspondence between Bishop Middleton [1817–22] and the Society for the