

There is every reason why Anglicans should take a careful interest in the development of the Ordinariate and its liturgical provisions, more than simply that Anglicans and Romans share a common liturgical tradition. Pope Benedict, by his formation of the Ordinariate, is clearly saying that the Anglican tradition and its liturgical expression have important gifts to offer the Roman Church. He would like to see that Anglican tradition fertilizing the contemporary life of the Roman Church alongside the renewed Tridentine rite. The Ordinariate may feel to many Anglicans like a back-handed tribute, but tribute it is nevertheless.

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Georgina Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England, 1850–1939* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), pp. xi+252, £55 (hbk).  
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In the opening pages of *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England, 1850–1939*, Georgina Byrne posits that the Church of England in the late nineteenth century was ‘essentially syncretistic’, in that ‘it engaged with ideas and language beyond itself in order to refresh and re-present what it taught as Christian belief’ (p. 3). Locating her study as part of the wider challenge to classic accounts of secularization, Byrne sees the Church’s reaction to spiritualism during this period as exemplifying the subtle ways it absorbed elements of English ‘common culture’ without consciously yielding to them. At the same time, she defines the historical range of her study according to specific texts that serve to demonstrate the evolution of discourse about the afterlife: F.D. Maurice’s *Theological Essays* (1853) on the front end, and at the other, both *Doctrine in the Church of England* (1938) and the Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Committee on Spiritualism (1939). Maurice famously challenged traditional Church teachings about hell and the meaning of eternity, and for his pains lost his professorial chair at King’s College London, for fear he would lead students astray with his unorthodox ideas. Yet by the late 1930s, the Doctrine Commission led by the then Archbishop of York, William Temple, could affirm such concepts as spiritual progress and universal salvation as lying within an acceptable diversity of views about the Christian afterlife. Trying to explain how the theological consensus within the Church of England could shift from one point to the other in the course of a short century is Byrne’s concern, and in spiritualism she locates the catalyst for this considerable change.

But what exactly is ‘spiritualism’? Byrne defines it as ‘a phenomenon whose central tenet was that the living and the dead could converse with one another and that people could indeed “know” what happened to the departed’ (p. 2). This exchange between the living and the dead was discernible in various ways, among them trance states, levitation, automatic writing, ‘materialisations’, ‘spirit photographs’ and so on. In its modern form it emerged in the USA in 1848, and by 1852 the first spiritualist medium had crossed the Atlantic to offer seances. Whatever the American spark, though, Byrne is quick to insist that spiritualism

resonated with long-established tropes within English 'common culture', and that this explains its immediate popularity at all levels of English society. Not least, it overlapped with a quasi-scientific fascination with paranormal activity, as exemplified by the founding of the Cambridge Ghost Club (1851) and the London Ghost Club (1862), both precursors to what became the Society of Psychical Research (1882). Membership of these organizations drew on the great and good: among the founders of the Cambridge Ghost Club, for example, were the future scholar and bishop Brooke Fosse Westcott, the future archbishop Edward White Benson, and the future prime minister Arthur Balfour. Perhaps not surprisingly, spiritualism likewise attracted a roll-call of celebrity devotees – precursors to today's Hollywood disciples of Scientology and Kabbalah – for whom it became the newest fashion to embrace. Yet Byrne also points to evidence of spiritualist practice in the crowded urban areas of northern England, where not a few working-class people also found their mediumistic voices.

Drawing on a range of periodicals, Byrne seeks to demonstrate that even as spiritualism was becoming a feature of everyday English life, its committed adherents were busy trying to invest it with the characteristics of a structured movement. Journals began to pop up with names such as *Two Worlds*, *Spiritualist*, *Medium and Daybreak*, and *Light* (the last of these still exists), all of which were devoted to lending spiritualism a kind of religious and intellectual respectability. Byrne explores the question of whether spiritualism possessed anything approximating a coherent theology and concludes that in focusing upon the experience of the individual soul, it tended to challenge exclusivist views of Christ and to emphasize his exemplary behaviour over his divine status. In this respect, spiritualism's claims about the subjective nature of the afterlife necessarily challenged creedal claims here on earth, asserting the need for a more generous conception of death and its possibilities. So long as the Church of England continued to strike many as pastorally unsympathetic and liturgically unimaginative in its handling of such matters, spiritualism remained an attractive alternative in making sense of the relationship between this life and the next.

Of course, the need to make sense of this relationship was never more urgent than during the First World War, when so many young Englishmen were killed before their time. More than anything else, it was the war that pushed the Church of England to soften its inherited teachings and practices, and the account of how army chaplains and others lobbied for changes in liturgical provision during this period is one of the best sections of the book. Matters of longstanding theological scruple, such as whether to pray for the dead, largely yielded to the pressing need to address widespread grief, and this shift is discernible in the prayer book revision process that continued throughout the 1920s. Furthermore, in the church reports of the late 1930s, Church of England leaders accepted the need not so much to adopt novel aspects of spiritualist thinking and practice as to reaffirm parts of the Christian heritage that had been downplayed or neglected in the recent past.

Byrne's work has much to recommend it as a contribution to the social history of the Church of England. She makes a convincing case that interest in spiritualism was more widespread at all levels of English life than might be commonly supposed and certainly more pervasive among clergy than the Church itself seems

to have realized. At the same time, her definition of 'common culture' remains tantalizingly inexact, and there are moments in the book when it would have been helpful to have a clearer idea of how she herself understands the term. She also does much to reveal the way in which spiritualism's appeal dovetailed with the broader movement toward subjective individualism in modern England, but this is a correlation she does not really explore. Nonetheless, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England* is well researched and clearly structured, and it will intrigue anyone concerned with the often elusive boundary between English church and society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto (eds.), *Religion and Change in Modern Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 424, ISBN 978-0-415-57581-2 (pbk), 978-415-57580-5 (hbk).  
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A colleague and friend of mine, the sociologist of religion Peter Clarke, recounted the following tale only a few weeks before he sadly and unexpectedly died. He had come to Cuddesdon for lunch, and he was recalling an overheard conversation between two female postgraduates shortly before he began to lecture. One turned to the other, and said,

'You know, I think you really should try Roman Catholicism'.

'Really? Why? I mean, why do you say that?'

'I don't know, really. I mean, I just think it's so totally *you*. I think you might find something in that, I guess. I think it would add something to your life – enhance, it maybe?'

'Gosh, really? I had never thought of it that way. It can't do any harm to try it, right? You know, I might give it a go...'

This is zeitgeist; and in a single exchange between two women before a lecture begins. Neither one of them was especially religious. But both saw religion as something that might add a dimension to their lives: an enhancement. Religion here is a commodity, a resource that can add value and meaning in much the way that other consumable gifts might. And here, the exhortation is try before you buy. And so in this remarkable book edited by Woodhead and Catto, the new landscape of religion, belief and change is narrated in careful and challenging detail.

We already know, I think, that secularization – whatever that contestable process is – does not produce secularity. Rather, it squeezes and compacts religion into new margins and zones. Faith still flourishes, but as private and personal spirituality. Religion moves from the mainstream to the orbit of leisure time. Consumerism enables individuals to choose their faith, and once chosen, to choose the terms on which they consume it. The customer is king (or queen). Even for those who adopt conservative Christian values and belong to more fundamentalist style