

BOOK REVIEW

Ann Loades & David Jasper (eds.), *India and the End of Empire. Selected Writings of Daniel O'Connor* (Sacristy Press, Durham, 2023) Pp.214 Pbk. £19.99
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The twentieth century witnessed major upheavals in the world in which global Anglicanism, and the Church of England in particular, operated. Two world wars, the processes ending the British empire, and the development of major streams of migration into Britain from former colonies changed almost beyond recognition the social, political and spiritual world in which Anglican missionary activity had developed in the previous two centuries as well as the domestic world of the 'mother church'. Daniel O'Connor's working life, as an Anglican priest trained in England, working in post-independence India, and then back in the United Kingdom, particularly in his time as Dean of Mission at the Federation of Selly Oak colleges in Birmingham, and Principal of the USPG College of the Ascension, immersed him in these changes. This selection of his writings shows him to be an acute and sympathetic analyst of many of these changes. They range in time from his earliest work (1967) on Bishop John Cosin, whose 'Devotions' deeply formed his own spirituality, to his central role as author and editor to a new history of the USPG (2000), and his contribution on India in the second volume of *The Oxford History of Anglicanism* (2019). They have been sensitively chosen and edited by the late Ann Loades and David Jasper, who recognized their spiritual importance and also their testimony from an eye witness to a rapidly changing world.

India lies at the heart of this volume and of O'Connor's continuing interest and affection. Ten years of his early ministry (1963-72) were spent as chaplain and lecturer at St. Stephen's College in Delhi, one of the premier colleges of Delhi University and flagship of Christian Higher Education. Here Dan and his wife, Juliet, made their home, raised their young family, and forged many friendships which have lasted well into the 21st Century. (A distinguished Indian academic, Harish Trivedi, who first met Dan as a colleague in Delhi, writes an illuminating and moving 'Afterword'.) Chapter 7 is specifically about the college and its student body of 'Stephanians' at a time of political turbulence, taken from his 2005 account of his years in India. India became independent in 1947 and among the many streams of political thinking and action as the new nation state was forged was a radical and violent Communist-inspired movement particularly in some of the poorest parts of India, whose exponents were known as Naxalites. St. Stephens' students were highly

privileged in many ways, and though many of them remained politically disengaged or vaguely sympathetic at this time, some were deeply involved and went underground for a time. Dan made it his business to try to understand them all and to keep in touch with those who had left the college.

Several other chapters deal not with current or very recent events in India but with two interesting English one-time missionary priests of the earlier part of the 20th century who moved away from the comforts of an expatriate community and an Anglicanism heavily implicated in the British *raj* – C. F. Andrews (1871-1940) and Verrier Elwin (1902-1964). Andrews was deeply influenced by Gandhi and became a major campaigner for the abolition of indentured labour – a system within the British empire which took some of the poorest Indians to work in sugar plantations after the abolition of slavery, but in circumstances almost as degrading. (An early historian of this system called it ‘A new system of slavery’.) Andrews engaged at a deep spiritual and emotional level with both Gandhi and another ‘reformist’ Hindu, Mahatma Munshi Ram. By contrast the younger Elwin engaged with the tribal world of western India and accompanied by an Indian friend went to immerse himself in tribal life. He became a serious anthropologist and eventually advisor on tribal life to India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. It is important to note the very significant difference in the engagement of these two men with the Indian spiritual world. It is implicit but could have been made more explicit in these chapters. Andrews never really explored the daily life of ordinary Hindus. His was a dialogue at the level of theology and spiritual vision with a version of ‘Hinduism’ considerably removed from the local level worship of gods and goddesses, and a struggle against malign forces which formed the religious environment of most of the rural Hindu population. Elwin by contrast was personally immersed in the world of India’s tribal populations as well as seeking to understand that world at an intellectual level.

One of the author’s interests is the ‘changing face of Anglican mission’, as indicated in his major contributions to the new history of the USPG. How former ‘missionary societies’ transformed themselves into ‘partners’ in global mission is an important strand in the history of late 20th century Anglicanism. As significant, however, is the response of the Church of England in particular to the post-colonial phenomenon of large-scale migration of people from former colonies into Britain, making it a far more ‘religiously mixed’ society. In this collection of essays, we do not find much about changing Christian attitudes in England to Muslims and Hindus who were now their neighbours. Nor is there mention of how Christian migrants found or failed to find a home in British Anglican churches. These are urgent issues in our post-imperial situation.

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