

**Note:** This Work has been made available by the authority of the copyright owner solely for the purpose of private study and research and may not be copied or reproduced except as permitted by the copyright laws of Canada without the written authority from the copyright owner.

Faught, C. Brad. Review of "*Anglo-Catholic in Religion*": *T. S. Eliot and Christianity*, by Barry Spurr. *Anglican and Episcopal History* 79, no. 3 (2010): 306-307.

Copyediting would strengthen this book. Although most of the errors of punctuation and incomplete sentences are only mild distractions, an editor might have helped eliminate repetition (e.g., *conversi*, 42 and 58; blessing of ashes, 82 and 91).

Overall, this is a welcome addition to liturgical history. By setting the development of ritual practice in the context of Christian understandings of sin and death, including contemporary ecofeminist perspectives, Sweeney invites her readers to think afresh about the Ash Wednesday liturgy and its meaning.

Ruth A. Meyers

Church Divinity School of the Pacific

*"Anglo-Catholic in Religion": T. S. Eliot and Christianity.* By Barry Spurr. (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2010, Pp. xiii, 325. \$52.50, paper.)

Forty-five years after his death T. S. Eliot remains as iconic a literary figure as he was during the second half of his life. Whether it be for his collection of poems, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939), which has served as the inspiration for *Cats*, the longest-running musical in West End and Broadway history; his cardinal poem, "The Waste Land" (1922), emblematic of modernism and a staple on undergraduate reading lists to this day; or his private life lived among a who's who of fellow literary modernists in London, especially between the First and Second World Wars, Eliot shows no sign of falling off the edge of the cultural cliff. Like his friends and contemporaries such as Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey, he has spawned a small library of studies, collections and biographies, to which the recently published second volume of his letters is the latest addition. (*The Letters of T.S. Eliot, Volume 2*, ed. Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton, London, 2009.) Given the plethora of such material one would be justified in thinking that there is not much, if anything, left to be said about the man. Barry Spurr, however, suggests otherwise, and does so convincingly in his new book on Eliot's religious faith.

Spurr's previous work on modernist poetry and on Strachey leaves him in an excellent position to take up Eliot's religion, which, he argues persuasively, has never yet been handled in a comprehensive form despite the many life studies written of him. Eliot was an Anglo-Catholic, Spurr says unequivocally, clearly and unreservedly so from 1927 until his death almost forty years later in 1965. As a transplanted American who arrived as a student in Oxford during the first war and subsequently

resolved never to return to the United States to live, Eliot's adoption of England as his new home brought with it a rejection of the Unitarianism and Puritanism of his Midwestern and Massachusetts childhood and youth. In Eliot's estimation, if one were going to be Catholic in England, the only properly attuned cultural form of it was Anglo-Catholicism. Revived by the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century, Anglo-Catholicism was extraordinarily robust at the time Eliot came to embrace it during the late teens and 1920s, and thereafter remained loyal to its theology and aesthetic, despite his troubled first wife's rejection of both.

This probing book charts in close detail Eliot's spiritual and cultural journey in which he became his version of the faith's best-known layman. Spurr is especially effective in recreating Eliot's own orthopraxis and the daily acts of devotion that defined his allegiance to Anglo-Catholicism. The author is less sure in his rather light coverage of the Oxford Movement's social impact in later-Victorian and twentieth-century England—no reference to Simon Skinner's important *Tractarians and the "Condition of England": the Social and Political Thought of the Oxford Movement* (Oxford, 2004), on this subject, for example. But quibbles aside, this book is almost surely the definitive study of Eliot's religion and superbly fills a lacunae in the fuller understanding of the poet's life that has existed for far too long.

C. Brad Faught

Tyndale University College, Toronto

*Conversations with Scripture: The Gospel of Mark.* By Marcus J. Borg. (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2009, Pp. xv, 140. \$18.00, paper.)

With this new volume in the *Conversations with Scripture* series, part of the Anglican Association of Biblical Scholars Study Series, Marcus J. Borg has added his expertise as a biblical and Jesus scholar to this accessible text for individual and group study. Too basic for the seasoned theologian or student of biblical treatises, this book is geared for the adult or high school student who desires to understand the gospel of Mark from a Christian and mainstream scholarly perspective, allowing them to delve into the gospel as a beginner or one seeking further insight. Written in a way that is both easy to follow and understand, while also being academically honest, it is an accessible but not watered-down approach. The reader may wish to read the first portion (109-12) of the study guide before starting Chapter One.