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Faught, C. Brad. Review of *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c. 1880-1939*, by S.C. Williams. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. *Anglican and Episcopal History* 70, no. 1 (2001): 135-136.

he was in reality. This is workman-like study which is a valuable exposition of Liddon's role in the Catholic revival in Anglicanism, but which never quite succeeds in bringing Liddon to life. It would seem that there was something about the man that makes him more elusive than one would wish.

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S. C. WILLIAMS. *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c. 1880–1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. x + 206, appendix, bibliography, index. \$70.00.

S. C. Williams has written an engaging and important book about working class religiosity in London that challenges the secularization thesis. This thesis holds that from about the mid-nineteenth century British society began to display clearly a move away from institutionalized, organized religion. This move, spurred by a corpus of reasons, illustrated Victorian society's gradual rejection of conventional religious norms and forms, and their replacement by the "liberal" principles encompassed by statism and science. Essential to the secularization thesis (as expounded by Jeffrey Cox, A. D. Gilbert, Patrick Joyce, et al.) is the equating of conventional churchgoing and confessional practices and institutional health with individual religiosity. Once these public indices of religiosity fell into decline, then, the secularization theorists contend, so too did religious belief. Williams, however, in measured, lively and well-documented prose, rejects this argument in favor of the manifest resilience of religious belief as a form of popular culture.

"Formal outward signs," Williams suggests, are merely the tip of the iceberg as far as individual religiosity is concerned. Seeing them as explanatory of religious life is simplistic, as she discovers in Southwark, the working class London borough that she has chosen to study intensively. Williams relies heavily on oral history. Therefore, her study is replete with the grit of history, the stuff of personal experience, that defies the conventional wisdom on the assumed pervasiveness of alienation and irreligion amongst the fin-de-siècle working classes. The voices of the interviewed are heard loudly in this monograph as they recount their variegated religious

practice, which most often did not include regular church attendance, but did include participation in selective rites of passage. On baptism and the churching of women, for example: "You had to be christened to thank God for getting you over your confinement in those days, you know," as one woman remembered who otherwise did not darken the door of a church (p. 96). Likewise, Sunday school was seen as a necessity for children, even though the adults interviewed no longer went to church themselves.

Written with verve and clarity, and superbly edited, the monograph makes the case for the persistence of private and semi-public religious belief and expression in the face of evident institutional decline. Williams integrates her interviewees' words well with the large historiography on the subject to offer up a persuasive argument for the ways in which religious belief maintains itself over time. The only significant weakness in this otherwise excellent book is its failure to examine adequately inter- and intra-denominational differences in the dynamic of institutional decline and popular persistence. This is a book for historians and sociologists—and perhaps especially, beleaguered (Anglican?) church planners.

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A. J. HOOVER. *God, Britain, and Hitler in World War II: The View of the British Clergy, 1939–1945.* Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999. Pp. xiv + 148, select bibliography, index. \$55.00.

A glance at the notes and bibliography of A. J. Hoover's new book on the British clergy in the Second World War is enough to reveal that he has done a considerable amount of original research on a topic that was crying out for discussion. He has painstakingly compiled the utterances of a wide range of (primarily English) theological commentators, and this will undoubtedly make the book a useful resource for students of the period. Unfortunately, however, the author's own theological perspective is so heavily imposed upon the documentary evidence that his analysis can scarcely be described as historical; this is, rather, a conservative Christian dogmatic manifesto, and an essay in praise of the resilience of the English people and clergy in time of war.