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The Great Church Crisis and the End of English Erastianism, 1898–1906

"WAKE HIM UP!"

Farmer Bull. "IF THAT DOG OF YOURS CAN'T KEEP THE SHEEP FROM STRAYING, I MUST GET YOU ANOTHER!"

Bethany Kilcrease

The Great Church Crisis and the End of English Erastianism, 1898–1906

This book traces the history of the "Church Crisis", a conflict between the Protestant and Anglo-Catholic (Ritualist) parties within the Church of England between 1898 and 1906. During this period, increasing numbers of Britons embraced Anglo-Catholicism and even converted to Roman Catholicism. Consequent fears that Catholicism was undermining the "Protestant" heritage of the Established Church led to a moral panic.

The Crisis led to a temporary revival of Erastianism as Protestant groups sought to stamp out Catholicism within the Established Church through legislation while Anglo-Catholics, who valued ecclesiastical autonomy, opposed any such attempts. The eventual victory of forces in favor of greater ecclesiastical autonomy ended parliamentary attempts to control church practice, sounding the death knell of Erastianism. Despite increased acknowledgment that religious concerns remained deep-seated around the turn of the century, historians have failed to recognize that this period witnessed a high point in Protestant–Catholic antagonism and a shift in the relationship between the Established Church and Parliament. Parliament's increasing unwillingness to address ecclesiastical concerns in this period was not an example of advancing political secularity. Rather, Parliament's increased reluctance to engage with the Church of England illustrates the triumph of an anti-Erastian conception of church–state relations.

Bethany Kilcrease is an Associate Professor of History at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has written and spoken on late-Victorian Anglicanism and parliamentary politics, Protestant responses to the Boer War, anti-Catholicism in popular literature, and the role of Victorian Catholic apologists in popularizing science.

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Dedicated to Dr. Peter Weiler, Professor Emeritus of History at Boston College

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Terminological preface

For the most part, I have attempted to use ecclesiastical terminology as it was used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, an Anglican was—and still is—a member of one of the sister churches within the worldwide Anglican Communion under the nominal headship of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In the Victorian and Edwardian United Kingdom, these included the Church of England, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Church of Ireland. In common parlance, however, Anglican primarily refers to members of the Established Church of England. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Anglicans could define themselves as either Protestant or Catholic (or both!). "Catholics" saw themselves as Christians who took their identity primarily from their claim to be part of the ancient apostolic and undivided church. "Protestants," on the other hand, identified themselves as Christians who were followers of sixteenth-century Reformation theology, in contradistinction to that of the Catholic Church.

Confusion lies in the fact that "Catholic" and "Protestant" were obviously categories that extended far beyond the institutional confines of Anglicanism. Within Victorian England, Protestants could be either an Anglican, who belonged to the Church of England, or Nonconformist, like Methodists or Baptists, who dissented from the Established Church. Since English Nonconformists were Christians outside of the Church of England, Roman Catholics were technically also Nonconformists, although the term was very seldom used to refer to Catholics of any kind. "Nonconformist" is also usually synonymous with Dissenter in this context, although the term "Dissenter" was used less frequently in the twentieth century. Additionally, some Methodists would take offense at the term "Dissenter." Most British Nonconformists and many Anglicans were also Evangelicals. I have adopted historian David Bebbington's now standard definition of Evangelicalism as a form of Protestantism with four marks: conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism.[1]

However, some Protestant and even Evangelical Anglicans would not have seen it as a contradiction to also describe themselves as "Catholic," in the sense that they believed the Established Churches were reformed, but nevertheless remained in continuity with the early church. To further complicate matters, a good number of Protestant Anglicans and most Nonconformists

were also political Erastians, believing the state had absolute authority over an Established Church in all matters. This view was generally—although not always—opposed by Anglo-Catholics, who stressed the spiritual independence of the church.[2]

When one thinks of "Catholicism" the Roman Catholic Church first springs to mind. However, there were obviously also many Anglicans who considered themselves fully Catholic without acknowledging the supremacy and spiritual authority of the pope as the Vicar of Christ on earth. Roman Catholics, however, usually did not consider Anglo-Catholics to be in full fellowship with the Catholic Church. To the great disappointment of many Anglo-Catholics, Pope Leo XIII's bull *Apostolicae Curae* (1896) declared Anglican orders null and void, effectively speaking the final word on Anglican Catholicity from a Roman perspective.

In any case, Anglo-Catholics were members of the Church of England who identified themselves, and were seen by others, as theologically and historically Catholic, not Protestant. While many Anglicans were content to see themselves as both Catholic and Protestant, self-described Anglo-Catholics rejected the Protestant label. Prior to the twentieth century, Anglo-Catholics were commonly called Ritualists, although the term "Ritualist" is more properly liturgical than theological. The conflation occurred because Anglo-Catholics tended to express their theological opinions through liturgical ritual. Since contemporaries often used the terms Ritualist and Anglo-Catholic interchangeably, I have followed this convention. Puseyite was yet another name for a Ritualist or Anglo-Catholic. Edward B. Pusey was one of the leading lights of the Oxford Movement and seen by many as a founder of the Anglo-Catholic movement, although he repudiated extreme forms of Anglo-Catholicism and Ritualism.

It is worth noting that some scholars classify Victorian and Edwardian Anglo-Catholics as Protestants because they were not members of the Roman Catholic Church. I find this to be anachronistic since both Anglo-Catholics and their British Protestant critics saw Anglo-Catholicism as a Catholic religion. Moreover, this stance forces the historian into the role of theologian, judging the legitimacy of various claims to Catholicity. I think it is wiser to simply allow historical actors to lay claim to their own religious identities.

Anglo-Catholics generally justified their claim to Catholicity through adherence to what was called the "Branch Theory" of the growth of the Catholic Church. According to this view, over the course of its long history, the Catholic Church developed differently in different geographic and national regions. Eventually, these differences caused the trunk of the Catholic Church to split into different regional branches. First, the Catholic Church split into Eastern and Western branches and later, at the time of the Reformation, the Western Church split into Latin, or Roman, and Anglican branches. Each of these branches was fully a part of the one Catholic Church and each had sole ecclesiastical jurisdiction within its geographical region.[3] Thus, for Anglo-Catholics, while the Roman Church was the legitimate branch of the Catholic Church in continental Western Europe, it was not the legitimate branch of the Catholic

Church in Britain or Russia. Anglo-Catholics strictly adhering to the Branch Theory often spoke derisively of the British Roman Catholic Church as the "Italian Mission." In keeping with this theory, Anglo-Catholics who traveled abroad did not attend the local Anglican Church, but rather attended the local Roman Catholic Church if they were in Spain or Italy, or the local Eastern Orthodox Church if they were in Russia or Greece. By the interwar period, Anglo-Catholicism had developed into three distinct groupings: the English Catholics, represented by the Alcuin Club; the Western Catholics, represented by the Society of SS Peter and Paul; and the Anglican-Papalists, represented by the Catholic League.[4] Prior to the Great War, however, Anglo-Catholics remained relatively unified in the face of their still-strong Protestant rivals.

Finally, in the Anglican context, High Church refers primarily to Episcopal ecclesiology. However, the overlap between supporters of High ecclesiology and those with Catholic theological inclinations means that High Church has also come to designate more formal worship services with more explicit connections to ecclesiastical tradition. In practice, this usually means High Church services involve more elaborate ceremonial than "Low Church" services. A coherent modern High Church Party in the Church of England developed around the same time as Evangelicalism.[5] Although Anglican High Churchmen could identify as either Protestant or Catholic, after the Oxford Movement and the development of Ritualism, High Churchmen increasingly identified as primarily Catholic. Low Churchmen, those who preferred a minimum of ceremony in worship, more frequently self-identified as primarily Protestant.

Notes

1 David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Winchester, MA: Allen and Unwin, 1989) 2–3. For a recent discussion and reaffirmation of the so-called Bebbington Quadrilateral, see "Roundtable: Re-Examining David Bebbington's 'Quadrilateral Thesis,'" *Fides et Historia* 47, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2015) 44–96.

2 John Maiden, *National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy, 1927–1928* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2009) 10, 99.

3 See, for example, H. Theodore Knight, "Catholicism and Nationality," *A-C* 1, no. 2 (February 1899) 69.

4 Maiden, *National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy, 1927–1928,* 48 ff. See also Michael Yelton, *Anglican Papalism: An Illustrated History 1900–1960: A History* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005).

5 Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *High Churchmanship in the Church of England from the Sixteenth Century to the Late Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993) xiii.

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Abbreviations

A-C	*The Anglo-Catholic: A Magazine for Churchpeople*
CA	Church Society Papers, Church Association, Council Minute Books, Lambeth Palace Library
CI	*The Church Intelligencer*
CR	*Contemporary Review*
CT	*The Church Times*
EC	*English Churchman and St James's Chronicle: A Protestant Family Journal*
ECU	Church Union Papers, English Church Union, Minute Books of General Meetings, Lambeth Palace Library
FR	*Fortnightly Review*
ILP	Independent Labour Party Collection, London School of Economics Library
NC	*Nineteenth Century*
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004)
Parl. Deb.	Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates* (London: H. M. S. O.)
PO	*The Protestant Observer*
PP	*Parliamentary Papers*
QR	*Quarterly Review*
RCED	Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline Papers, Lambeth Palace Library
RRCED	Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline
W-MM	*Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*
WR	*Westminster Review*

1 Introduction

In 1898, Liberal MP Samuel Smith declared that one issue "LAY MORE AT THE ROOT OF THE NATION'S WELFARE THAN ALL THE OTHER QUESTIONS THAT WERE BEING AGITATED."[1] This issue, rocking the nation at the century's end was not such an obvious dispute as the massive engineering strike the year before, or the Fashoda incident that was just unfolding, or even the expanding suffrage movement. Rather, the problem was the introduction of incense into Church of England services. The conflict over sweet-smelling smoke was a symptom of what contemporaries called the "Church Crisis,"[2] a conflict between the Protestant and Ritualist (self-described "Catholic") Parties within the Church of England that lasted roughly between 1898 and 1906. During this period, increasing numbers of Britons embraced Ritualism and even converted to Roman Catholicism. Consequent fears that Catholicism—whether Anglo or Roman—was undermining the "Protestant" heritage of the Established Church led to a moral panic that bled into Parliament.

The Church Crisis led to the formation of a relatively small group on the radical Evangelical fringe of the Church of England and Nonconformity. For convenience, I will refer to this loose and fractious group of Protestant anti-ritual activists as the "Protestant Party," a term used by contemporaries as well.[3] The group of likeminded individuals and organizations which comprised the Protestant Party was able to win prominent politicians to its cause and make anti-Ritualism and state control of the Established Church some of the most talked about domestic issues in Parliament between 1898 and 1906. But, in the end, the dissolution of the Protestant Party coalition contributed to the decline of Erastianism as a viable political philosophy. How was the (brief) influence of the somewhat ragtag Protestant Party possible in an age of supposedly increasing secularization? What constituted the Church Crisis? In short, three developments constructed a sense of crisis about the growth of Anglo-Catholicism within the Church of England and the growing assertiveness of Roman Catholicism from outside: (1) the 1897 publication of Walter Walsh's *Secret History of the Oxford Movement*; (2) the 1898 anti-Ritualist protests of John Kensit; and (3) Liberal leader Sir William Harcourt's 1898 parliamentary speeches against Ritualism.[4] Primarily as a result of these events, the Protestant Party coalesced around the Church Association, which will be discussed below.

The sense of crisis among the core Protestant Party and the many others it influenced remained acute until 1906 when a Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline issued its report, ending serious attempts to impose liturgical conformity by essentially calling for compromise.

The roots of this "Great Church Crisis" lay in the influential Oxford or Tractarian Movement. Tractarian leader John Henry Newman proposed that the Oxford Movement started on July 14, 1833, with John Keble's "National Apostasy" Assize Sermon attacking Parliament's plan to eliminate some bishoprics in the Church of Ireland. Oxford fellows Newman and Edward B. Pusey joined Keble in his anti-Erastian crusade, arguing that the state had no right to interfere with the spiritual matters of the Church of England. Newman, Pusey, and Keble, along with others, spread their ideas through the publication of 90 *Tracts for the Times* that outlined an innovative theological program generally following the High Church tradition, which included a renewed emphasis on the visible church, belief in apostolic succession, the model of the early church, and the sacrament of Holy Eucharist. In 1841, Newman argued in the controversial *Tract 90* that the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England did not conflict with Roman Catholic doctrine. Protestant fears about the Romanizing influence of Tractarianism seemed confirmed in 1845 when Newman converted to Roman Catholicism, although Pusey and Keble remained within the Anglican fold. Following the conversions of Newman in 1845 and of Henry Edward Manning in 1850, Protestants generally saw Ritualism, or Anglo-Catholicism, as crypto-Romanism. This fear was further exacerbated by the "Papal Aggression" of 1850. By the late 1850s, the connection between Romanism and Ritualism was unquestioned by most Protestants.

To Protestants the most obvious sign of "Romanist" influence within the Church of England was the increasing amount of Catholic ritual preformed during services, such as the Elevation of the Host. These developments in Anglican ritual were supported by the English Church Union, which was formed in 1860 when a group of High Churchmen transformed the Church of England Protection Society into a new organization capable of defending Ritualists against Protestant accusations. The Union became closely associated with the controversial Society of the Holy Cross (*Societa Sanctae Crucis*), which had been founded in 1855 by Father Charles Lowder as a society of celibate Anglo-Catholic priests.

During the mid nineteenth century, the English Church Union highlighted six points of Catholicity: the Eastward position, Eucharistic vestments, a mixed chalice, altar lights, unleavened bread, and the use of incense. The introduction of these "points" into Anglican worship often created conflict between supporters of Ritualism and Protestantism, especially since the civil legality of each point was questionable at best.[5] While the introduction of Catholic rituals actually triggered riots and violence in some cases (a rash of fist-fights over the use of vestments broke out in 1856), most concerned Protestants chose to combat Ritualism through the law. For example, in 1853, the outraged

Evangelical Anglicans of St Paul's, Knightsbridge began prosecutions against their Ritualist priest. The Evangelicals sought to have the new high altar, cross, candlesticks, and colored paraments removed in order to save the church from Roman infiltration.[6] In 1865, Protestant Anglicans founded the Church Association in order to fight Ritualism in the Church of England through (usually) legal means.

The Church Association had its hands full, but sprang into legal action with gusto, initiating a series of high-publicity Ritualist cases. In 1867, the year a Clerical Vestments Bill designed to outlaw Eucharistic vestments failed to pass Parliament, the Association offered £50,000 to help "aggrieved parishioners" sue their Ritualist priests.[7] Parishioners of St Alban the Martyr in Holborn gladly took up the offer, suing Rev. Alexander H. Mackonochie for the use of altar candles, kneeling during the consecration, elevating the Eucharistic elements, using a mixed chalice, and using incense.[8] While the Court of Arches refused to declare some of Mackonchie's actions illegal, on appeal, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council found Mackonochie guilty on all points.

Despite these early successes, the 1870s brought mixed results for the Church Association. In a celebrated 1871 court case, the Privy Council found Rev. John Purchas, the Ritualist vicar of St James in Brighton, guilty of several ecclesiastical violations such as the use of altar candles. However, in a stunning defeat for the Church Association, the Privy Council also ruled that Anglican ministers could and *must* wear a surplice according to the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer.[9] In an effort to prevent further Ritualist legal victories, the Church Association started to lobby for new anti-Ritualist legislation. In 1872, Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity Amendment Act (Shortened Services Act). The amendment did not substantially alter the Act of Uniformity of 1662, which required all Anglican services to adhere to the rites and rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer. Of course, these rubrics were themselves ambiguous and the various theological parties interpreted them differently. In 1874, Benjamin Disraeli responded by pushing the Public Worship Regulation Act (PWRA) through both Houses of Parliament with the acquiescence of Archbishop Archibald Tait.[10]

The Public Worship Regulation Act aimed to eliminate Anglo-Catholic Ritualist practices within the Church of England by simplifying and streamlining the procedures of the existing Church Discipline Act (1840) for prosecuting ecclesiastical offenses.[11] According to the new act, an archdeacon, a churchwarden, or any three parishioners could petition the diocesan bishop to rule on the legality of a ritual practice (or omission). Once the bishop had been appealed to, he could veto any further legal proceedings. If he believed the case had merit, he could offer to judge between the accused priest and the complainant. If the parties did not agree to the bishop's arbitration, the case would be sent to a new judge appointed to represent both the Canterbury and York Provinces.[12] Lord Penzance (James Wilde), a former divorce court judge, became the first Dean of Arches under the act. In essence, the PWRA made it easier to prosecute Ritualist offenses by reducing the number of hearings

before a case reached final appeal from three to only one. Controversially, the act also took fraught cases out of the hands of the bishops and put them under the jurisdiction of a lay judge in a new secular court.[13]

The PWRA initially appeared to be a popular measure, having passed Parliament with the support of a 150,000 signature petition.[14] Disraeli and most Conservatives supported the PWRA, while the Liberal Party split over the issue. William Gladstone fought the bill, although many of his allies, such as William Harcourt and W. E. Forster, supported it.[15] Disraeli famously declared that the goal of the bill was "to put down Ritualism" and destroy "the Mass in masquerade."[16] Much to the chagrin of the Church Association, however, the PWRA soon proved to be a massive failure. The act made it easier to prosecute illegal actions such as mixing the chalice and kneeling during the consecration. But well-organized Ritualists continued their ceremonies in an act of civil disobedience that led to the arrest of five priests. Sending clergymen to prison endeared neither the Church Association nor the PWRA to the public. In fact, in 1881, the bishops of the Province of Canterbury agreed to avoid prosecution for ritual offensives if at all possible.[17] Indeed, the tide of public opinion clearly turned after 1888, when the Association made the profoundly unpopular decision to prosecute the pious Bishop Edward King. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council acquitted King, the first bishop since the Reformation to wear a miter, of most charges.[18] Public outcry against the spectacle of a bishop in the dock caused anti-Ritualist Protestants and the Church Association to reconsider their tactics.

Meanwhile, Anglican Ritualism continued to develop in the direction of contemporaneous Roman Catholicism. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the six points had become passé and advanced Ritualists began insisting on prayers for the dead, the Reservation of the Sacrament, the service of Benediction, the use of the rosary, and other Marian devotions—in short, all of the Roman Catholic devotional practice without the inconvenience of a pope. Needless to say, Protestants—both Evangelical Anglicans and Nonconformists—continued to be outraged by the open display of Catholicism within what they considered to be a Protestant Church body.[19] The apparent unwillingness of the Anglican bishops to prosecute Ritualists for violating the PWRA through the performance of unlawful ritual caused further outrage. Moreover, the break-up of the Liberal Party over Irish Home Rule after 1886 denied Nonconformists and Evangelical Anglicans a unified party vehicle for their religious concerns.

As noted above, the turn-of-the-century Church Crisis began in 1898 when three developments combined to precipitate a panic among Protestants about the growth of both Roman and Anglo-Catholicism.[20] First, in 1897, author Walter Walsh published *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*. Walsh claimed to have uncovered the Catholic conspiracy behind the Oxford Movement and its contemporary incarnation, Ritualism. Walsh invited readers to join the battle against superstition and priestcraft, as they enjoyed a voyeuristic exposé of lecherous Catholic secret societies bent on reuniting the Church of England with Rome.[21] The book proved to be wildly popular, selling over

32,000 copies by 1899 and going through five editions in 16 months.[22] Walsh's influence is evident in the speeches and letters of both powerful politicians like William Harcourt and ordinary Britons.[23] The allied Church Association published a popular (sixth) edition at the "request of friends of the Protestant cause" so that the poor could afford to read *The Secret History* before the next General Election.[24] In fact, largely on the strength of *The Secret History*'s sales, Walsh became a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.[25]

The Secret History had an immediate impact, both fueling and coinciding with John Kensit's anti-Ritualism campaign, launched in January 1898 at St Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate. His basic strategy was to attend Ritualist church services and cause a disturbance at a crucial moment, such as the Elevation of the Host or the adoration of a crucifix. Kensitite riots broke out throughout the spring of 1898. Although most Britons, Protestant and Catholic alike, saw Kensit as a radical, he nonetheless had the backing of the Church Association, which was chaired by Col. Alexander Cobham and had ties to Members of Parliament such as Samuel Smith, William Harcourt, W. D. Cruddas, and J. W. Mellor. In fact, before commencing on his protest campaign in January, Kensit sent a letter to the council of the Church Association "asking the assistance of the Council in the legal expenses which might be involved in the attempt which he was determined to make in clearing the church from its idols and illegal ritual."[26] The council agreed to "favorably entertain" Kensit's request.[27] Later, the council agreed to pay for a faculty suit for the removal of St Ethelburga's tabernacle on Kensit's behalf and to pay for Kensit's defense in police court proceedings.[28]

Kensit had first come to prominence as a publisher of Protestant materials and as the founder of the Protestant Truth Society (1889), an organization for the promotion of Protestantism within the Church of England. In the spring and summer of 1898, he organized the Wickcliffe Preachers as a traveling band of anti-Catholic lecturers. Nevertheless, Kensit's fame and influence were based upon his protests. Although Neville Beeman denounced Kensit's violent methods, he nevertheless admitted that there was "no doubt, however, that he has by his rough and ready methods, forcibly concentrated the public attention upon the question of the legality of certain practices that have crept into the Church."[29] Kensit's popularity and seeming success disappointed an increasing number of elite Secularists who had hoped that England was growing less religiously fanatical.[30] Although most Protestants disapproved of Kensit's militant tactics, he did attract some emulators, such as Rev. R. C. Fillingham, the vicar of Hexton, who also disturbed a service during the Elevation of the Host.[31] Such strife was not uncommon. The Protestant Party and sympathizers complained that cases like Fillingham's illustrated the hypocrisy of the bishops; they were willing to crack down on Protestant "lawbreakers" like Fillingham, but not on Ritualist lawbreakers.[32]

Liberal Parliamentary Leader William Harcourt added more fuel to the fire lit by Walsh and Kensit in 1898 through his speeches during the Benefice Bill debates on June 16 and 21.[33] The Benefices Act attempted to reform the

Church of England's patronage system. Harcourt took the opportunity to argue that preferment should not be given to Ritualist "lawbreakers." The dormant Erastianism of Harcourt and other Liberals could dovetail with the anti-Ritualist agenda of groups like the Church Association. This allowed Harcourt, among others, to at least temporarily don the Protestant mantle. Harcourt's intervention also created more interest in the Church Crisis among the general public. For example, Walter Walsh's book sales increased after Harcourt mentioned *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement* in Parliament.[34] The result was that the Protestant Party outside of Parliament and its political allies mutually reinforced each other's messages.

Following the Benefices Act debate, Harcourt went on to reach a much larger audience through his letters to *The Times*. The series, called "The Mutiny of the Priests," began on July 16 in the midst of increasing public concern about the growth of Ritualism. Harcourt's equally controversial series of letters ended on February 4, 1899, and he then collected them into a book entitled *Lawlessness in the National Church*. This "lawlessness" especially disturbed Harcourt and the Protestant Party because of their shared—and legally dubious—assumption that ecclesiastical law had essentially become a subset of statutory law following the Reformation Settlement. Winning Harcourt for the anti-Ritualist cause helped turn an ecclesiastical controversy into a matter of serious parliamentary—and therefore national—importance. The editors of both secular and church periodicals responded to the increased interest in Ritualism with numerous articles relating to the Church Crisis.[35]

One of the more bizarre controversies to come out of this flurry of church-related publishing involved palm branches and an ass. In the October 1899 edition of *Nineteenth Century*, Cornelia, Lady Wimborne, attempted to enlighten her readers regarding certain illegal Palm Sunday rituals. She claimed that the Ritualist church of St Alban's, Holborn had used a live donkey in their 1899 Palm Sunday procession.[36] But unfortunately for Wimborne, St Alban's priests vigorously denied the charge and, despite the best efforts of the Church Association to get to the bottom of the case (they hired a private detective), no evidence for the existence of the donkey was ever produced.[37] The Church Association's failure to actually produce the donkey led to much comment in Anglo-Catholic circles.[38] James Britten, the secretary of the Catholic Truth Society, even claimed that High Church families began naming their donkeys Cornelia in honor of her ladyship.[39]

In any case, among the three of them, Walsh, Kensit, and Harcourt managed to arouse public outrage over the growth of Anglo and Roman Catholicism and succeeded in keeping the danger of Catholicism before the public eye for several years to come.[40] In 1898, Alfred Barry, the turn-of-the-century rector of St James's, Piccadilly and former Bishop of Sydney, could claim that "the word 'Ritualism' is on every man's mouth, and the public mind is greatly excited, and not a little perplexed by the 'Ritualistic Crisis.'"[41]

A ruling from Lambeth Palace kept the Church Crisis at the forefront of the public mind in the summer of 1899, following the outbreak of the Boer War.

In a joint opinion, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Frederick Temple) and the Archbishop of York (William Dalrymple Maclagan) announced that processional lights and the ceremonial use of incense were illegal within the Church of England.[42] On May 1, 1900, the archbishops issued two more opinions stating that any form of the Reservation of the Sacrament was also illegal within the Church of England.[43] The rulings prompted resolutions of disobedience from the English Church Union, an action which served to further enrage the Protestants. Additionally in 1900, Walter Walsh published his follow-up to *The Secret History*, called *The Romeward Movement of the Church of England*. As both Evangelical Anglicans and Nonconformists began calling for new legislation against the growth of so-called Catholic worship within the National Church, they forged a pan-Protestant anti-Ritualist political alliance.

Interestingly, the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War in October 1899 helped to further radicalize the anti-Ritualist Protestant subculture. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, committed anti-Ritualists often interpreted the early British defeats in South Africa as divine punishment for permitting the spread of Catholicism within the Established Church. Additionally, anti-Ritualists believed God was perhaps punishing South Africa in particular, since this colony had a reputation as a hotbed of Anglo-Catholicism. Others theorized that the entire conflict was part of a papal plot to bring down the Protestant British Empire. In any case, the us versus them Manichean mentality created by the war further enabled anti-Ritualists to see the Church Crisis as a zero-sum game in which either good or evil would ultimately triumph in the British Isles.

As the Boer War raged during the first few years of the twentieth century, anti-Ritualist Protestants and Catholics increasingly debated the proper relationship between the British Government and the Church of England. In 1901, the death of Queen Victoria led to fierce controversy as Roman and Anglo-Catholics fought to have the Monarch's Declaration against Transubstantiation abolished. Following Queen Anne's accession to the throne in 1702, all British monarchs had been required to swear that "the Sacrifice of the Mass, as . . . now used in the Church of Rome, [is] superstitious and idolatrous" in order to prevent a Roman Catholic from becoming sovereign. Following Victoria's death, concerned MPs in the House of Commons, such as John Redmond, began calling for the elimination or alteration of the declaration. Meanwhile, in the House of Lords, Lord Braye (Alfred Verney-Cave) called for the abolition of the declaration altogether, and Lord Herries (Marmaduke Constable-Maxwell) proposed the formation of a committee to study the problem. Prime Minister Salisbury (Robert Gascoyne-Cecil) agreed and formed a Select Committee charged with proposing a revision to the declaration that would not impair its ability to safeguard the Protestant succession. After having met only once, the committee recommended striking the words "superstitious and idolatrous" and replacing them with the words "are contrary to the Protestant religion." They also recommended removing the long section denying any mental reservation on the part of the monarch.

Not surprisingly, this solution pleased absolutely no one, except perhaps Lord Salisbury. Catholics argued that the revised declaration still singled out the Mass for special criticism and that protesting against Catholicism, or any other religious body for that matter, was unnecessary to ensure a Protestant monarch. Many Anglo-Catholics agreed, arguing that the declaration remained offensive and unnecessary.[44] Lord Halifax (Charles Wood), the president of the English Church Union, also heavily criticized the revisions. But, not surprisingly, the most vocal opponents of the revised declaration were stout Protestants, eager to preserve the nation from "Catholic aggression."

Many of the nation's Protestants argued that the declaration was necessary to maintain the Protestant succession in the face of resurgent Roman Catholicism and the rise of Anglo-Catholicism within the Church of England.[45] Although most conceded that the declaration was, in fact, offensive to Catholics, they believed this was a small price to pay for an effective bulwark against religious error and tyranny. Even Samuel Smith admitted that "the language of the declaration drawn up in 1688 sounds harsh and intolerant to-day, but it was forced on our forefathers by the incessant Popish plots to destroy the civil and religious liberties of this country." He was willing to render the "declaration less offensive to the feelings of devout Catholics," but argued that the revised version was ineffective in preventing a Catholic from ascending the throne.[46]

According to some, due to the advent of Ultramontanism and claims of papal infallibility, the need to protect religious liberty through a Protestant monarch remained greater than ever.[47] Yet, Smith and other Protestants argued that the revised declaration did not safeguard the succession since a Roman Catholic could in all honesty swear that "that the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary, or any other Saint, and the Sacrifice of the Mass, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are contrary to the Protestant religion."[48] Moreover, Alexander Cobham argued that because the pope could issue dispensations, the revised declaration lacked the strength to prevent a Catholic from occupying the throne.[49] Finally, the revised declaration allowed for the possibility of an Anglo-Catholic monarch, which many felt would be just as dangerous as a Roman Catholic monarch. Prominent historian and genealogist J. Horace Round argued that due to the advanced Anglo-Catholicism of Lord Halifax and others the transubstantiation clause could not be sacrificed, since without it an Anglo-Catholic could ascend to the throne.[50]

Not surprisingly, the Protestant societies dedicated to combating the spread of Anglo-Catholicism within the Church of England came out strongly against any revisions in the declaration.[51] *The Saturday Review* speculated that were it not for "the contest of the Ritualists and the 'Protestants'" the declaration could have been altered without much difficulty.[52] But, as things were, the anti-Catholic passions stirred up by the struggle against Anglo-Catholicism made Protestants especially outraged by what they saw as further evidence of Catholic influence within the church–state machinery. With these concerns in mind, the Church Association issued 114 petitions opposing the abolition of the declaration throughout the Empire. In total, they collected 520,543 signatures,

of which 284,647 were English, 51,197 were Scottish, 16,949 were Irish, 8,670 were Welsh, and 2,369 came from the Channel Islands.[53] By April, the Church Association had also distributed about 120,000 papers relating to the declaration and had budgeted an additional £400 to be spent on advertisements opposing the revisions.[54] Walter Walsh also wrote a new pamphlet entitled *A Defence of the King's Protestant Declaration*, which sold out in four days, forcing the preparation of a new edition of 10,000.[55] The strong popular opposition to the altered form of the declaration proved enough to undo Salisbury's attempts to pass a revision bill.[56] After its third reading, the bill was dropped. The issue of the Monarch's Declaration then fell out of public consciousness until Edward VII's death in 1910.

The year 1902 witnessed the Education Act controversy, which will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 7. The controversy surrounding the act served to further broaden the appeal of anti-Ritualism since organizations like the Church Association sought to link their cause to more general opposition to education reform. The government's Education Bill offered state support to schools controlled by the Church of England. Many Nonconformists responded to the passage of the act by forming a Passive Resistance League and refusing to pay taxes that would be used to fund Anglican schools. While historians have written about this event in the context of the disestablishment campaign and of increased Nonconformist concern for social issues around the turn of the century, few have analyzed opposition to the 1902 Education Act in relation to the Ritualist controversy in the Church of England. In fact, in large part, Nonconformists refused to support Anglican schools because they believed that Anglo-Catholics had captured all the schools and were teaching their pupils Roman doctrines such as the sacrifice of the Mass and auricular confession.

In response, throughout 1903, Protestant MPs such as Austin Taylor, William Harcourt, and Charles McArthur struggled to pass a Church Discipline Bill. In this context, Walter Walsh published another anti-Catholic exposé entitled *The Jesuits in Great Britain*.[57] W. E. Bowen's 1904 book *Ritualism in the Church of England* and the pamphlets on the topic that he sent to MPs galvanized enough anti-Ritualist passion in Parliament to force House of Commons leader Arthur Balfour to appoint a Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline.[58]

The Commission heard evidence throughout 1905 and delivered its final report in 1906. By legitimating greater elasticity in worship, this report effectively ended serious Protestant attempts to impose liturgical conformity within the Church of England: practices "plainly significant of teaching repugnant to the doctrine of the Church of England and certainly illegal, should be promptly made to cease" and "the existing law relating to the conduct of Divine Service and to the ornaments and fitting of churches" should be amended to give "greater elasticity . . . and wider scope for the exercise of a regulative authority."[59] The advice of the report, endorsed by influential Evangelicals including Commission member Francis Jeune, turned more moderate Protestants away from political anti-Ritualism. The pan-Protestant anti-Ritualist alliance received another

shattering blow later that year when the Liberal Government's failed Education Bill of 1906 caused many Anglican and Nonconformist Protestants to part ways. Although the report had in theory called for compromise between Anglo-Catholic and Protestant concerns, by failing to grant the courts any new powers to address ecclesiastical lawbreaking, allowing for "greater elasticity" in church services, and—along with the Education Bill of 1906—fracturing the broad anti-Ritualist political alliance, the report had in reality granted victory to Anglo-Catholicism within the Church of England.

Chapter outline

Chapter 2 discusses Erastianism and the historiography of nineteenth and early twentieth-century British church–state relations. Chapter 3 establishes the background causes of, and religious debates involved in, the Church Crisis. Chapters 4 through 8, provide a roughly chronological narrative of the Church Crisis's impact on politics, Parliament, and church–state relations. These chapters highlight the resonance of religious issues in order to show that religion remained the driving factor behind serious turn-of-the-century political controversies. "Religion" did not so often function as a bearer of repressed social or cultural concerns as social or cultural concerns functioned as bearers of more fundamental religious concerns. In order to illustrate the way commitment to religious beliefs shaped political action, chapters 4 and 6 also examine the roles of the Church Association in conjunction with Liberal Leader William Harcourt and House of Commons Leader, and later prime minister, Arthur Balfour between 1898 and 1906. Chapter 5 slightly breaks from a strict chronological account in order to consider the perceived relationship between the Boer War and Church Crisis separately.

Chapter 3, "Never trust a clergyman in black: British anti-Catholicism during the Great Church Crisis," begins by exploring the growing appeal of Anglo and Roman Catholicism. It was the shocking growth of Anglo-Catholicism within the Established Church and Roman Catholicism outside of it that triggered the Church Crisis in the first place. It then considers the reaction to the Catholic revival in the nature and appeal of anti-Catholic Protestantism. Since most Britons traditionally linked Protestantism and the nation, the seeming expansion of Catholicism appeared increasingly threatening to both soul and state. Anglo-Catholic Ritualists especially became an enemy within, accused of ruining the nation by destroying its religious and moral foundation. Although convert Catholics often saw themselves as both modern and progressive, Protestants retorted that Catholicism remained a retrogressive religion. Only Protestantism could ensure the continued progress of the British Empire; Catholicism would lead to national degeneration.

Chapters 4 through 8 explain the political impact of the Church Crisis and position these years as a significant period in the history of the church–state relationship in England. Chapter 4, "William Harcourt's Protestant Erastianism: church and state, 1898–1900," looks at the continuing importance of religion

in parliamentary politics through the figure of William Harcourt and the now largely forgotten events associated with the Church Crisis between the years 1898 and the General Election of 1900. This chapter explores Harcourt's role as an ally of the Church Association and also discusses the role and impact of the Church Crisis in the so-called "Khaki" election of 1900. Although the election largely became a referendum on the Boer War and imperialism, anti-Ritualism emerged as a major local issue and one of the most significant domestic issues of the election.

Chapter 5, "Protestant paranoia and Catholic conspiracies: Protestant and Catholic perspectives on the Second Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902," moves away from domestic politics to examine the way the Boer War was seen by anti-Ritualists through the lens of the Church Crisis. While all Britons surely saw the war as a major event, many anti-Ritualist Protestants saw the war as especially significant. For them, it was not merely a secular conflict, it was spiritual warfare breaking out into human history. Many Britons saw the Boer War, like other major *fin-de-siècle* occurrences, from a religious perspective and anti-Ritualists interpreted it in light of the Great Church Crisis. The Boer War, then, was interpreted, by anti-Ritualist Protestants through a confessional lens and contributed to the further politicization of religious questions on the eve of the General Election of 1900.

Chapter 6, "Arthur Balfour and the coming triumph of ecclesiastical independence, 1898–1902," retells some of the story begun in Chapter 4, but this time from the perspective of Arthur Balfour. Rather than remain aloof from seemingly petty church squabbles, Balfour became deeply invested and personally involved in the debates. Along with Chapter 4, Chapter 6 emphasizes how the consideration of religion, and especially the events of the Church Crisis, alters the received image of a well-studied political figure. I take the story of the Church Crisis past the aftermath of the General Election of 1900 up until the passage of the 1902 Education Bill, which is the main subject of Chapter 7, "A new front in the Church Crisis: the 1902 Education Act." Chapter 8, "The Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline, another education bill, and the implosion of Erastianism, 1903–1906," concludes the story of the Great Church Crisis by examining its parliamentary effects from the formation of a Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline in 1904 to the Commission's report and another General Election in 1906.

The conclusion argues that by moving religion from the margins of analysis we are able to alter the commonly received image of the turn of the twentieth century as a time of increasingly secular concerns and privatized religion. In reality, theological concerns, especially as related to the *fin-de-siècle* revival of Catholicism and Protestant reaction, continued to inform public debate on topics such as imperialism and foreign policy, education, and church–state relations. The opponents of the anti-Ritualist party, who succeeded in keeping the church free from parliamentary legislation during these years, sought not the removal of the church from the public sphere, but rather its separation from the state so that it could function independently within its own sphere.