

the reputation of mysticism by elevating it to prominence as a source of discord between Catholics and latitudinarian churchmen like Stillingfleet (pp. 137–8).

Temple's book is well-written and lucidly argued. However, the book's title could lead the reader to expect that Temple explores the role and status of mysticism in sixteenth-century England; a more accurate title might have been *Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century England*, since Temple begins his discussion with Baker and says little about the fate of mysticism in sixteenth-century England. The latter is surely a subject that requires a study in its own right, but it is perhaps a shame that the author does not set his study in context by providing even a brief explanation of what happened to English mysticism in the interval between the Reformation and 1605. Nevertheless, *Mysticism in Early Modern England* is a ground-breaking book that is of interest not only to scholars of the history of mysticism, since Liam Temple's major achievement is to challenge assumptions about the insularity of the Catholic and Protestant mystical traditions. He therefore makes an important contribution to the historiography of the English Reformation, causing us to question fundamental assumptions about apparently polarised confessional identities.

Francis Young

Cara Delay, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism, 1850–1950*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019, pp. x + 253, £80.00, ISBN: 978-1-5261-3639-8

Recent scholarship on Roman Catholicism in Ireland throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has demonstrated the value in considering the subject from multiple, intersecting perspectives. Religion and faith were linked in important ways to issues of identity, class, gender, personal spirituality, sexuality, spatial experience, and social mobility. As scholars such as Lisa Godson, Caroline McGee, and Ann Wilson have demonstrated through their research, material objects were often central to the construction and expression of personal and group confessional identity for Catholics, while work by Sarah Roddy, Patrick Doyle, and Ciaran O'Neill has examined the extent to which class and money intersected with religion, and with the experience of being an Irish Catholic at home or abroad during the second half of the nineteenth century. Lindsey Earner-Byrne, Emilie Pine, Katherine O'Donnell, and Catherine Corless have considered the impact of the Church on the lives of the poor, and the role of

the Church in providing social services, and in operating residential institutions for marginalised or stigmatised groups in society. In recent years, there has been a significant scholarly, activist, and public focus on the operation of these institutions, with the Justice for Magdalenes group providing one example. The work of the scholars listed above reflects the need to carefully explore the very many lives lived as members of the Catholic Church in Ireland during a period in which it expanded exponentially in terms of its social, political, and economic importance, as well as continuing a tradition of scholarship focused on investigating the lives, motivations, and political efficacy of its hierarchy.

Cara Delay's *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism, 1850–1950* considers the lives of lay women and girls within the Irish Catholic Church, moving beyond the important work being carried out on nuns and religious orders more generally during this period. Its emphasis on lives of lay woman and girls, therefore, is to be welcomed within the emerging scholarship on this field. Throughout, Delay considers the agency of women within Catholic Church, as well as the way in which the Church and its interaction with the Irish Free State in particular acted to constrain their freedom and choices. The decision to consider this large and diverse population throughout a century is certainly ambitious, and the book is organised according to thematic chapters focusing on girlhood, motherhood, the spaces of the household and the church, and relationships with priests and power. Delay positions her exploration of women and girls within a broad theoretical context, and this provides some valuable comparative contexts. In a well-argued chapter on motherhood, for example, Delay draws on the work of Latin American scholars to create a comparison between Mexican and Irish women and their manipulation of the role of victim and sacrificial mother in letters to the Church hierarchy. In relation to a careful analysis of letters by women to members of the hierarchy within the Dublin Diocesan Archives, Delay provides a close reading of the different claims and identities presented in order to access charity and financial aid.

Delay makes frequent reference to diocesan archive sources, as well as personal narratives, testimonies from oral history projects, autobiography and life-writing, and the print culture of the time period covered. In her chapter on girlhood, Delay provides a valuable insight into the range of books and magazines which girls were encouraged to read, and which may have had an important role in structuring Catholic girlhood in Ireland between 1850 and 1950. Delay's examples go beyond texts provided as part of structured educational experiences, and she includes materials that would have been part of a domestic or leisure space, expanding our sense of the broader textures of Catholic life in a range of spheres and contexts.

Throughout the book, Delay points to the importance of differentiating between the experiences of rich and poor women. However, given the broad scope of the book, the discussion can revert to the use of the category of 'Catholic women' or 'Irish women', without reference to the various factors that would have made lives and experiences very different. The exploration of Catholic motherhood, for example, does provide a useful critical framework, but does not consider the extent to which this would have been complicated or nuanced across the wide social spectrum. Throughout, Delay also tends to infer universally-experienced states based on the testimony of individuals, most notably in her chapter on Catholic girlhoods. Here, autobiography and testimony are used to provide evidence for issues such as the relationships between girls and teaching nuns and the experience of the sacraments. Delay does cite theoretical literature framing her use of personal narrative and the valuable, yet often unreliable nature of memory as historical evidence, framing her use of such sources. However, some further critical attention to the ways in which the narrative form of written memoir can dramatise particular moments, or to the cultural contexts for the production of specific memoirs and personal narratives, sometimes written in order to reflect personal independence from the Church, or as part of the retrospective narrative Catholic memory culture of the later twentieth century, would help to qualify many of the conclusions presented. In making this point, I do not mean to invalidate the use of such sources within this kind of historiographical project, but rather to reflect that the contexts of their production, reception, and of the work within the author's oeuvre, will have a significant impact on the evidence that they present.

In many ways, *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism, 1850–1950* could form the title of an extensive book series, rather than a single volume. It is an extremely important and rich subject, and Delay has contributed significantly to its exploration here. However, the broad thematic and temporal sweep does, perhaps inevitably, result in a loss of nuance and detail. The synopsis of relevant theory and historiography prefacing each thematic chapter also occupies spaces that could perhaps have been used in the expansion and development of individual strands, although these overviews will be valuable to the reader who is unfamiliar with the critical field and existing historiography. *Irish Women and the Creation of Modern Catholicism* is best, in this reviewer's opinion, when it takes time to closely examine and expand on specific sources, drawing on Delay's considerable knowledge of the operation of Catholic culture and the ways in which it operated with and through its Irish congregations.

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