

design of dissenters' meeting-houses in the north of Ireland was influenced by the innovations adopted in sixteenth-century Scotland.

Another theme that recurs in a number of the contributions is the way in which the Church, through its organisation, services and personnel, accompanied or adapted to successive conquests. The Church as an agent of change and instrument of colonisation became a focus for attacks. Such hostility helps to explain the profusion of ruined structures on which the editors comment in their introduction. More recently, secularisation has seen some religious buildings, notably where congregations have dwindled or been extinguished, turned to profane uses. Former churches now serve as cafés, store tyres and sell carpets. The two final chapters investigate physical manifestations of the confessional antipathies which divided Ireland after the sixteenth-century reformations. David Fleming reconsiders the belief that, throughout the eighteenth century, repressive laws obliged Irish Catholics to worship clandestinely, often in the open air at isolated mass rocks. He also suggests how this legend was propagated in popular publications during the nineteenth and twentieth century. In remote areas, especially in the north-west, because of exiguous resources and a scattered population, this strategy was adopted, but elsewhere it was uncommon. Furthermore, improvisation and the need for portable altars were not unique to Ireland. In the larger towns, buildings of some ambition were erected. Finbar McCormick, looking closely at the plans and styles of the Catholics' chapels, hardly any of which survive unaltered, detects unexpected similarities with those of the Presbyterians. Both denominations chose classical simplicity. There is an irony in the Catholics' adopting arrangements devised originally to accommodate Calvinist worship. McCormick speculates that the choice was not just pragmatic, but arose from a shared educational background in the Latin schools of Ulster. The most effective essays in the collection apply the local examples to larger questions. Some arguments may seem abstruse to non-specialists, but the cumulative result of the volume is to clarify how the landscapes of Ireland responded to and still bear the impress of the abundant religious foundations.

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'Charms', liturgies, and secret rites in early medieval England. By Ciaran Arthur. (Anglo-Saxon Studies, 32.) Pp. viii + 254 incl. 3 ills. Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2018. £60. 978 1 78327 313 3
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Contained within the surviving manuscripts of the Middle Ages are a diverse collection of instructions, procedures and rituals intended to enable the users of those manuscripts to affect the outcome of events through supernatural means. For many modern readers of those same manuscripts, it has made sense to distinguish among this variety of texts, and to classify some of them as liturgical rites, prayers or blessings, while labelling others as magical 'charms'. The question of just how meaningful such distinctions are lies at the heart of Ciaran Arthur's book, which focuses specifically on the *corpus* of material from Anglo-Saxon England. He

emphasises the fact that many so-called ‘charms’ are in fact intended for use in the same sorts of circumstances as are ‘liturgies’, and that Anglo-Saxon scribes sometimes placed them side-by-side on the same manuscript pages without apparent discrimination. These considerations lead Arthur to conclude that ‘there is no reason to think that contemporaries would have ... distinguished them from other rituals which developed from mainstream liturgical practices’ (p. 165), and therefore that ‘it is better to consider “charms” as liturgical texts that are part of an innovative, experimental and diverse ecclesiastical culture’ (p. 133). Throughout his study, Arthur consistently sets these views against those held in ‘traditional scholarship’, by which he chiefly means the various nineteenth- and early twentieth-century editors who first collected *corpora* of texts which they considered to be representative of ‘Anglo-Saxon magic’. Although Arthur is right to remind us of the distorting effects of such collections, which often pulled individual texts out of their historical and manuscript contexts in ways that can give a misleading sense of their nature and origins, one sometimes wonders whether those old views still hold sway to the extent that Arthur suggests (esp. pp. 8–12). Readers familiar with more recent scholarship, which has already gone some way towards problematising old distinctions between ‘charms’ and ‘liturgy’, may already feel predisposed to agree with Arthur that it is productive to look for connections between and among the individual strands of the Anglo-Saxons’ religious culture. Arthur himself offers several suggestions of ways in which the interests, goals or methods of so-called ‘charms’ might intersect with those of ‘mainstream Christian texts’, highlighting in particular instances in which he detects ‘thematic and textual similarities between “charms” and liturgical texts’ (p. 103). It is fair to say that some of the suggested ‘similarities’ go further than others, and there are certainly occasions when the pursuit of parallels in biblical or liturgical sources risks becoming forced (can it really be said that a ritual which requires a woman to step over her husband in bed exhibits ‘a close parallel’ to the biblical story of Elisha lying upon the body of a dead boy, as suggested on pp. 114–17?). But in its determination to reconstruct the meaning of so-called ‘charms’ to the people who used, copied and retained them, this study reminds scholars about the continuing need to make fresh connections in their interpretation of these fascinating texts.

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Edmund. In search of England's lost king. By Francis Young. Pp. 256 incl. 16 colour plates and 3 maps. London: I. B. Tauris, 2018. £20. 978 1 7883 1179 3
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This is a well-written and at times very informative book, in which Francis Young provides an overview of the history of Edmund of East Anglia (d. 869) and his cult from the ninth century and into the modern period. It comprises an introduction, five main chapters and a conclusion. Chapters i–ii cover Edmund’s lifetime, chapter iii the period 869–1066, chapter iv the period 1066–1536, and chapter v the period from 1536 onwards. The book has several unquestionable qualities, yet it also has several equally unquestionable problems. The figure of St Edmund and his cult have both been objects of meticulous study for several generations of