

(1855) as M'Gaurin, a long-suffering bookseller/library owner, buffeted by the competing demands of his customers and creditors.

Leaving aside such colourful illustrative material, it should also be stressed that the volume looks beyond circulating libraries and reading societies narrowly defined, and discusses a variety of additional library types, including 'private' libraries, 'dividing' libraries (from which books were sold, following a period of circulation), libraries carried by military regiments and the libraries established by religious organisations and mechanics' institutes. For Manley, the arrival of these latter institutions on the scene in the mid-1820s marks something of an end point, for although related to subscription libraries, mechanics' institutes were broader in scope, and their libraries were not their 'prime focus' (p. 10), though his concluding chapter looks forward, briefly charting the fate of subscription libraries in the later nineteenth century.

What emerges from all of this is a clear sense that a varied, if somewhat unevenly distributed, network of libraries developed in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ireland – a network that facilitated access to both 'improving' literature and to novels, and that was particularly dense in Dublin (in the form of circulating libraries) and in the Presbyterian heartland of Counties Antrim and Down (in the form of reading societies).

It need scarcely be stated that this will be of particular interest to readers working on library and book history. But what of those whose interests lie elsewhere? Here mention might be made of Manley's concluding 'List of libraries', detailing all of the 'private subscription libraries, commercial circulating libraries, reading societies, and dividing book clubs known to have been established in Ireland before 1825' (p. 197). This will serve as a useful resource for urban and local historians, seeking evidence of associational culture and intellectual life.

More broadly, Manley's account of the spread of circulating libraries may prove to be of interest to social historians, insofar as it illustrates the commercialisation of leisure and offers a sidelight on middle-class recreational practices, and his detailed account of Ulster's libraries and book clubs during the 1790s will be of interest to scholars of that troubled decade who have, as he remarks, 'increasingly recognized' their significance (p. 9). Moreover, while Manley goes on to suggest that the 1790s constitute 'one of the few occasions when library history has collided with national history', his volume offers further intriguing examples of such collision (p. 9). Discussing circulating libraries in the early nineteenth century, for example, he notes that one consequence of the Act of Union was the application of British copyright law to Ireland, as a result of which Irish reprinting of British books collapsed and the 'imports of books printed in London quadrupled' (p. 75).

Similarly, cultural and political intersection can be seen in the Dublin Library Society's 'newspaper wars' (p. 102). In 1814, the society's members objected to continued subscription to *The Sun*, on seemingly political grounds, and nine years later, in 1823, the society voted against taking the 'virulently anti-Catholic' *Dublin Evening Mail* (p. 103). That Daniel O'Connell was numbered among the members opposing the *Mail* neatly illustrates both the overlaps that exist between 'national' and 'library' history, and the wider significance of this broad-ranging and carefully researched volume, which is attentive not just to libraries and reading societies, but to the contexts in which they were established and utilised.

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JONATHAN JEFFREY WRIGHT  
*Department of History, Maynooth University*  
jonathan.wright@mu.ie

THE IRISH PRESBYTERIAN MIND: CONSERVATIVE THEOLOGY, EVANGELICAL EXPERIENCE AND MODERN CRITICISM, 1830–1930. By Andrew R. Holmes. Pp 279. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2018. £65.

Andrew Holmes's deeply learned and important study takes as its central theme the spiritual and intellectual constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in the century between Catholic emancipation and the Davey trial. On the basis that (unlike the Church of Scotland) there was relative unity and unanimity within the church in this period, Dr

Holmes focuses on the intellectual leadership – ‘ministers, writers and professors’ (p. 36) – together with their associated institutions, rather than (say) church sessions or the wider laity. His concerns are fundamentally with the ways in which this leadership responded to the waves of challenge represented by biblical criticism, modern historical method, and Darwinian evolution, as well as external forms of liberal theological influence. In documenting these concerns, he deploys a truly prodigious array of (largely) printed primary sources, together with some manuscript materials in Ireland and the U.S.A.

The picture that emerges fundamentally alters received wisdom – not just about the centre of intellectual gravity within the church, but also about the established metanarrative of its development across these years. In the first instance Dr Holmes wants us to take seriously the (otherwise neglected) theological thought of mainstream conservative Presbyterianism in Ireland – and to treat it in its own terms. He argues that Irish Presbyterians, communicating across a formidable set of transnational networks (including – of course – Princeton and its seminary), consolidated a conservative theological outlook which was defined by (and operated flexibly between) the twin poles of the Westminster Confession of Faith and evangelical spirituality and sensibility. Its distinctiveness, or – in Dr Holmes’s terms, its ‘Irishness’ – arose from ministers’ particular secular and theological education in the north of Ireland, their emphasis upon the historic identity of Presbyterianism within Ireland, and from their communication with both transatlantic evangelicalism and Princeton theology. It is this recovery of an intellectually self-confident and engaged theological conservatism which (in part) distinguishes Dr Holmes’s study – as well as his revision of those interpretations of Irish Presbyterianism which have either over-emphasised Enlightenment or, indeed, modernist influences – or which (alternatively) have treated it as a subset of political unionism or (even) of Paisleyism.

More generally, the high distinction of this work stems in part from Holmes’s palpable dissatisfaction with the existing analytical frameworks applied, not just to Presbyterianism in Ireland, but to the history of religious faith in Ireland more generally. He convincingly identifies a particular deficit within modern Irish historiography, whose practitioners (he says) ‘have paid little sustained attention to the beliefs and practices of Christians, especially theological thought. Religion for most historians of Ireland is about the politics of identity’ (p. 12). Irish history, he argues, needs to be more cognisant of new emphases within the history of religion, rather than obsessed with its own tired and immutable agenda.

This, then, is a work which is partly focused on the task of excavating and restoring not only an intellectually serious conservative tradition within Presbyterianism, but also – more widely – the importance of theological debate and distinction within the church. The alternative, as he makes clear, has been a historiography which has traded often either in context or in caricature – as with the famous Davey trial, which (for Holmes) was far from being an uncomplicated clash between modernism and its opponents (p. 234). Indeed Holmes’s analysis of the episode and its protagonists underlines his general dissatisfaction at (what he sees as) the crudity of the vocabulary and categorisation which has been hitherto applied: Davey himself, for example, was both the author of the ‘modernist’ text, *The changing vesture of the faith* (1923), as well as being deeply rooted within conservative evangelical cultures (he was ‘born again’ through an experience of personal conversion at Keswick). For Holmes, this complex tension between a thoughtful confessional theology and evangelical experience embodied the very essence of the contemporary ‘Irish Presbyterian’ mind.

It should be said immediately that Dr Holmes has not rescued his conservative church community from the condescension of liberal or secular interpretation, only to reinstate an older form of (generally denominational) celebration. As it happens, these in-house histories of Irish Presbyterianism tended to focus on institutions and personalities, and (more generally) denominational identity rather than upon the history of theological ideas. But perhaps the defining strength of this volume is that Holmes not only recreates his Victorian Irish Calvinist international – he also in a sense mimics the intellectual achievements and strengths of his subject matter. For, just as these Presbyterian leaders were strong on ideas and a global intellectual engagement, so Holmes himself confidently situates the specifics of their story in an impressively rich and layered set of theological, philosophical and historiographical contexts. In short, this is not merely a distinguished contribution to the study of Irish Presbyterianism, it is also a vital contribution to the wider intellectual ‘turn’ within modern Irish historiography.

There is an elegiac quality to his final paragraphs, where he observes that ‘what has been lost [within contemporary Presbyterianism] is a distinctively Irish and Presbyterian intellectual culture in which conservative religious ideas mattered and were often articulated with dignity and ability’ (p. 239). It is entirely in keeping with his uniformly calm, restrained and judicious approaches that Dr Holmes otherwise resists the temptation to pursue any overt comparison between the sophisticated leadership community which he anatomises so skilfully and its latter-day successors. For them in particular this superb volume should be required reading.

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ALVIN JACKSON  
*School of History, Classics & Archaeology,*  
*University of Edinburgh*  
 alvin.jackson@ed.ac.uk

BEGGING, CHARITY AND RELIGION IN PRE-FAMINE IRELAND. By Ciarán McCabe. Pp 320. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 2019. £29.95.

Ciarán McCabe has written an insightful account of begging, charity and religion in pre-Famine Ireland. Containing seven chapters, a substantial introduction and extensive bibliography, the author has engaged with a rich variety of primary sources that offer fresh perspectives on poverty, charity, religious responses and attitudes in the early nineteenth century, highlighting the similarities and differences between various social groups that go beyond the 1838 Poor Law Act and giving voice to the poor, who previously tended to have walk-on parts in the historiography of pre-Famine Ireland.

The collapse of cottage industries in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars saw the formerly industrious poor resort to begging. The politicisation of poverty in Ireland saw various denominations develop distinct approaches and attitudes towards poverty with the concept of virtuous poverty seen to be important and a hierarchy of merit among the poor, though religious sentiment appeared to colour acts of charity. McCabe stresses the importance of social class, gender, rural and urban ideas around alms-giving as well as religion, and poses the question as to whether there were actually different interpretations of poverty between religious denominations. The Whatley Commission into poverty offered great insight, coming in at a whopping 5,000 pages that contained unparalleled information on social and economic conditions in pre-Famine Ireland. Contemporaries remarked that vagrants and beggars were beyond enumeration because there were so many. The government tried but struggled properly to come to terms with poverty and chronicles of Ireland in the nineteenth century commented upon the ubiquity of poverty.

McCabe examines the changing use of the terms beggar and mendicant, while aware of the importance of finding appropriate definitions and nomenclature. The dubious nature of vagrancy laws meant that authorities could use the ambiguity of these terms to their advantage. McCabe argues that arrests have often been used to measure the levels of begging and vagrancy but this is problematic and inadequate in measuring mendicancy. Statistics gathered were largely impressionistic and McCabe has stated that the large-scale mobility of the poor was always a challenge in measuring poverty as mendicants were mobile strangers that engaged in face-to-face interactions.

There were also benevolent and sympathetic views that tended to be wrapped up in the unctuous language of paternalism. Contemporaries stated that a lot of poverty was hidden and there were social and moral obligations in giving alms. Vagrants’ visibility shocked people and their visceral state particularly concerned wealthy people. The Dublin Mendicity Institution paraded the poor and beggars through the streets when times were bad in order to both remind and shame the wealthy. These institutions were seen by the commercial classes as a good way of controlling and removing beggars from public view. Furthermore, the harsh treatment of vagrants and beggars was a form of self-defence that appealed to middle class senses of respectability that also allowed for the demonisation of the lumpenproletariat.

Both Catholic and Protestant interpretations of philanthropy focused upon an active and living faith. McCabe shows that there were really very few differences between Catholic and