

of the book present a survey of Jesuit activities across Micronesia from the restoration of the Society in the mid-nineteenth century to 1945, a period when colonial control passed from the Spanish to the Germans and then to the Japanese.

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JOHN BARKER

Irish Jesuits in penal times, 1695–1811. Thomas Betagh and his companions. By Thomas J. Morrissey sj. Pp. 166 incl. frontispiece and 23 ills. Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2020. €19.95 (paper). 978 1 78812 115 6

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In the history of eighteenth-century Irish Catholicism, the Society of Jesus plays only a small part. At the time of its suppression in 1773 there were nineteen Jesuits in the country, engaged in parish work and in teaching. Thomas Morrissey's book traces in outline the careers of Thomas Betagh (1738–1811) and two others active in the Dublin diocese. All three were notable for their commitment to two very different educational missions, providing elementary schooling for the city's poor and at the same time maintaining a classical academy that enabled candidates for the priesthood to qualify for admission to the universities of Catholic Europe. A later experiment with sending students instead to Stonyhurst in Lancashire gave rise to a controversy, discussed in some detail, over the status in church law of this revived Jesuit community and the ownership of Irish funds entrusted to it. There is no bibliography and the footnotes are gnomic, but much of the material cited seems to consist of unpublished writings by earlier Jesuit historians preserved in the Society's archives. It is also odd to see a reliance, as secondary sources, on such venerable works as H. A. L. Fisher's *A history of Europe*. An illustration reveals the existence of at least six manuscript booklets containing Betagh's sermons, but regrettably there is no attempt to analyse these for what clues they might hold to the theological views or pastoral priorities of their author.

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY,
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S. J. CONNOLLY

Church in the wild. Evangelicals in Antebellum America. By Brett Malcolm Grainger. Pp. viii + 271 incl. 6 figs. Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 2019. £32.95. 978 0 674 91937 2

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As Brett Malcolm Grainger observes at the outset of *Church in the wild*, scholars of American religion have long assumed that spiritual interest in nature signals a person's rejection of traditional Christian belief. In this masterful study, Grainger argues that this was not the case for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Evangelicals. Time spent in nature often confirmed their faith, and they manifested a 'pervasive curiosity about the natural world as a site of spiritual power, presence and possibility' (p. 5). Nature fostered conversion and provided a site for periodic rejuvenation of faith. Renewal occurred both at large outdoor revivals and in moments of solitary contemplation. Evangelicals employed water cure to foster physical healing and spiritual development. They also experimented with electricity and

mesmerism, which they believed represented the boundary between the natural and spiritual worlds. As Grainger notes, all of these endeavours depended on Evangelicals' vitalist worldview that saw divine presence in nature. The implications of this study are significant. Against longstanding scholarly characterisations of Protestants as agents of disenchantment, Grainger highlights the multiplicity of ways in which Evangelicals popularised the idea of divine immanence in nature. This argument is sustained by the breadth of perspective that Grainger brings to this work. He deploys a range of sources, most notably hymns and poetry, persuasively arguing that 'when evangelicals expressed themselves poetically they gave greater voice to their vitalist sensibility' (p. 162). He deftly analyses the biblical foundations for Evangelicals' conceptions of nature. Grainger also considers the precedents in both early Christianity and post-Reformation Protestantism for treating nature as a site of spiritual growth and transformation. Another major strength of *Church in the wild* is the thoughtful attention that Grainger devotes to exploring how white and African American Evangelicals differed in their interpretation of nature. Beyond showing that beliefs and practices from Africa influenced how slaves thought about divine presence in nature even after they converted to Christianity, this focus allows Grainger to emphasise how African Americans interpreted natural phenomena differently. Thunder was a 'sermon of wrath' for whites, for example, but a joy-inspiring hint of 'God's promise to shatter the present social order' for slaves (p. 124). A final notable element of Grainger's work is the way he highlights the tensions and contradictions in Evangelicals' views. Tensions surrounded the question of how much authority Evangelicals thought should be granted to women given their belief in the 'natural female proficiency in reading the book of nature' (p. 93). There were also contradictions in conceptions of nature itself. Evangelicals believed that nature lacked 'restraining law and civilization' yet was beneficially free 'from the corrupting influences of society' (p. 118). In these instances, the book would have benefited from deeper analysis. It seems difficult to imagine that some of Grainger's subjects did not recognise such tensions. Consideration of how Evangelicals did or did not attempt to reconcile these contradictions would have brought even deeper insight to an already important, compelling study.

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Archibald Simpson's unpeaceable kingdom. The ordeal of Evangelicalism in the colonial South. By Peter N. Moore. (Religion in American History.) Pp. xxx + 221 incl. 9 ills. Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018. £70. 978 1 4985 6990 3

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In early America, South Carolina was unusual in two respects. It was the first mainland colony where enslaved Africans became a majority of the population, a transition that occurred by the first decade of the eighteenth century. And, apart from Catholic-founded Maryland, its proprietors were the earliest to endorse religious toleration. In the 1660s, when the colony came into being, its organisers