Overall, *The Templars, the Witch, and the Wild Irish* is a welcome addition to medieval Irish scholarship, and one hopes that it will provoke further discussion and research into the perplexing questions of the roles of religion and ethnicity in medieval Ireland.

Dianne Hall, Victoria University, Melbourne

PHILIP CONNELL. *Secular Chains: Poetry and the Politics of Religion from Milton to Pope*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 304. $90.00 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.9

In *Secular Chains*, Philip Connell describes the contentious relationship between the established church, the civil state, and nonconformist communities in England between the interregnum and the mid-eighteenth century. Connell offers readings of religious politics in works by major English authors, including John Milton, Andrew Marvell, John Dryden, the Earl of Shaftesbury, James Thomson, and Alexander Pope. These writers' responses to the national church were informed by their various political and religious sympathies, and each of them had an impact on religious politics in popular culture. Connell's core argument is that tensions between vesting authority in the national church and derogating religious authority to support civil power define British religious politics from the interregnum onward, and that contests between civil and religious power define the parameters of religious controversy as it is represented in literature. He argues, moreover, that ambivalence and internal division characterizes groups or politico-religious ideologies that have conventionally been understood as united in their political and religious thought.

The title of Connell's monograph is from Milton's sonnet on Oliver Cromwell, referring to the confining "secular chaines" imposed on free consciences during the Commonwealth by state-sponsored clerical appointments. The sonnet cautions Cromwell while ostensibly praising him, an apt beginning for this book's argument about the inextricability of spiritual and civil power and their frequent conflation or confusion. Connell tracks Milton's influence on religious politics even into the mid-eighteenth century. It is worth reminding non-literary specialists reading *Secular Chains* that the writers Connell focuses on are complex, ambiguous, and changeable on questions of politics and religion across their careers. The readings Connell develops reminds us that these figures were culturally central yet idiosyncratic in their thinking, often adopting hybrid and heterodox views on the major debates.

Connell makes the cases that during the Commonwealth and Restoration, literature was shaped by the "attempt to re-establish (or reinvent) 'Anglican' confessional authority in the face of Protestant nonconformity and the Catholicizing tendencies of the restored Stuart dynasty" (3). His readings challenge us to rethink attempts to separate or distinguish religious debates in the Commonwealth from the Restoration or the Stuart from Hanoverian regimes. In reality, Connell argues, tensions prevailed before and after Charles II between the need for a reformed clergy and centralized civil state, and attraction to the coercive, state-building power of the national church. He suggests, moreover, that we should include an "ecclesiastical dimension" (11) in understanding eighteenth-century partisan politics.

The book is organized into three parts: "Commonwealth," "Restoration," and "Enlightenment." In the first, Connell argues that the political agendas of republicanism and the religious commitments of mainstream Puritanism shared common ground, and that growing tension emerged over the conflation of "civil magistracy and spiritual authority" among critics of mainstream republican politics and religion (including Milton) (26). Connell discusses the

complexities and tensions in the political thought of the period, which he shows being put to work defending the republic against "sedition." Connell sets up the dichotomy that would dominate English religious and political struggle into the next century: "the limitations of the magistrate's authority to the 'outward man' and the sanctity of 'Christ's inward Government and rule in the conscience'" (42). The discussion of *Paradise Lost* (1667/1674) draws attention to Milton's formation of Moses as both sacred poet and prophetic legislator, whose holiness licensed the Hebrew Republic. At the same time, Milton expresses hesitation over the Mosaic Law and derogates its authority to that of the Gospel. The Milton of *Secular Chains* (and recent scholarship on which Connell draws) is more ambivalent about the relation of works of law to works of faith, more anxious about the relation of law to prophesy than previous generations have suggested.

Turning to the Restoration, Connell addresses ongoing debates over comprehension and toleration—the question of whether the state could permit worship outside the national church while retaining a strong Anglican identity, or whether minimal doctrinal requirements should encourage the absorption of dissenters into the national church. The major politico-religious debates of the post-1660 years turned on the matter of salvation and its relation to civil government: whether an erastian view of the state as separate from matters of conscience would hold sway over the orthodox view of their interdependence. Connell focuses on Dryden, who, he argues, viewed the restored monarch as the center of political authority, with both the established church and the nonconformists of diminished importance. Dryden's satires, then, are aimed at debunking Catholic ritual and anti-Catholic Whig hysteria alike. Again Connell tracks Milton's distinctive radicalism through the Restoration, arguing that he rejects the dichotomy between conformity and schism and evades the contest between faith and law with his vision of a republic of faith.

Moving to "Enlightenment," Connell describes the drift into theological partisanship and the rise of Whig cultural ideology, intended to build religious and political consensus. The contemporary phrase "the church in danger" recalls the extremes of early eighteenth-century religious conflict, Anglicanism assailed by nonjuring orthodoxy on the one hand and freethinking on the other. Connell follows Milton's evolution into a national hero via Joseph Addison, John Dennis, and Shaftesbury. Through readings of these and others, Connell charts the distinction between the Shaftesburian position that religion and poetry ought to be separate for the purposes of removing mystery from polite society, and the more conventional Whig argument that literature was conducive to the cultivation of public religion and virtue (166). A good chapter follows the phenomenon of physico-theology and its incorporation into Hanoverian ideology. In excellent closing chapters on Pope, Connell offers an account of the controversies that dominated the mid-century between freethinking and orthodoxy, focusing on the debate over Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733–34), which sheds "considerable light on the fiercely contested limits of religious orthodoxy in the 1730s" (212). Connell brings Pope's Roman Catholicism into the spectrum of confessions covered, otherwise all Protestant.

The volume belongs to a body of recent excellent scholarship on the persistence of religious habits of thought in political debate and the importance of religion in the formation of civic identity and society after 1660. In this fine monograph, Connell traces "the assimilation of religious arguments and identities to an emergent public political culture, in which they continued to play a prominent and contentious role." (5) *Secular Chains* offers a careful, valuable analysis of English religious politics in literary texts and the ongoing struggles to reconcile or separate religious and civil authority.

Sophie Gee, Princeton University