

REVIEWS

HENRY A. JEFFERIES and CIARÁN DEVLIN (eds.), *History of the Diocese of Derry from Earliest times* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000. Pp. 304, 1 tab. 4 maps. 5 figs. IR£19.95)

Hot on the heels of James Kelly and Dáire Keogh's splendid *History of the Catholic Diocese of Dublin* (Four Courts Press, 2000) comes this collection on the religious history of the diocese of Derry. Thirteen essays take the reader from the beginning of the Christian era in the North to the 'Troubles'. While all the essays present useful material on their respective topics there is a certain unevenness of style, length and quality which takes from the unity of the volume.

Brian Lacey, in a very brief first article offers a series of observations on Colum Cille and his associations with Derry. A lot more could be said about this subject than the present author manages. In the second article, John R Walsh, relying heavily on works by Lacey, Hamlin and Bonner tells us that the Uí Néill encouraged the christianisation of the area, offers some remarks on patrician associations with the area and summarises the establishment of the Church among the Uí Neill dependants. Again, this is a very brief overview and lacks the depth which the title leads the reader to expect. In the third article, Henry Jefferies and Ethna Johnston take the reader on a tour of the early churches in the Faughan valley of Co. Derry, paying particular attention to the less important sites. The fragmentary nature of the archival and archaeological sources on which this chapter is based, the geographical spread of the area under survey and the incompleteness of field research mitigate against a comprehensive account but the article is a good report on work in progress. Certainly the authors convey the extent to which early Christian sites in the area suffered the ordinary ravages of time and fell foul of reformed religious zeal after the Plantation. Oliver Crilly's aesthetic, scriptural and theological mediation on the Christ of Maghera is well executed and imaginative but is somewhat out of place in a volume which describes itself as a history of the diocese. Ciarán Devlin's article on the formation of the diocese in the twelfth-century is one of the most accomplished essays in the volume. It sets developments in Derry firmly in their Irish and European contexts. He paints a convincing picture of the politico-religious circumstances which affected the twelfth-century reform and illustrates how the external boundaries of the diocese related to the expansion of the Cineál Eoghain. Devlin follows this chapter with a series of episcopal lives from the early modern period. The piece on Réamann Ó Gallachair (1569–1601) is of particular interest, probing the relationship between counter-reformation cleric and early modern Gaelic lord. Henry Jefferies's article on George Montgomery, first reformed bishop of Derry, Raphoe and Clogher takes the reader briefly outside the Catholic community. Montgomery's efforts to secure revenue from church property, held by New English or Old Irish, involved him in a series of legal wrangles whose study is revealing of property holding patterns in the area in the early modern period and tells much of the financial condition of the Catholic Church as it emerged into the Plantation era. The remaining essays in the collection offer overviews of

the penal era (Diarmaid Ó Doibhlin), the Mercy Order of religious sisters (Angela Bolster), the Christian Brothers (John Ledwidge), the nineteenth-century Church (Stephen McLaughlin) and the twentieth-century Catholic community in Derry (Finbar Madden and Thomas Bradley). All contain interesting material but few venture into the area of historical assessment. It is a pity that the authors do not set their studies in the broader framework of the history of religion in the country. Bishop Daly's account of the 'Troubles' is a fascinating, often moving account of a prominent Catholic cleric's efforts to negotiate the difficult task of providing religious leadership in a time of sectarian violence, economic catastrophe and cultural confusion. His account will constitute an important source for the writing of the religious and political history of the period.

This volume is a beginning. If its appearance stimulates the study of the religious history of the diocese of Derry and leads to the foundation of a journal of local history in the area it will have served a very good purpose.

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JACQUELINE HILL and COLM LENNON (eds.), *Luxury and Austerity: Historical Studies XXI* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1999. Pp. 242. IR£30)

This book promises a collection of papers that is 'unusually tightly focussed and breaks new ground in opening up a subject that has received little systematic attention'. It lives up to its blurb which is a considerable achievement given that there is often the danger of conference papers being too tenuously linked. The collection is rich in variety, scholarly and attractively produced, containing 12 beautiful plates. It is unfortunate however, that the book opens with an essay by Christopher Berry on the changing meanings of austerity, necessity and luxury which, although the author maintains he does not want to be overly abstract, is highly theoretical and laboriously written, containing such sentences as 'a possible prophylactic against that potential pathology is to identify the conceptual context in which the word itself appears' (p. 1). The following essays however, are a dramatic improvement and the consistency is maintained throughout, owing to the considerable academic credentials of the contributors, most of whom are well established social historians.

The continual tendency in these essays to challenge accepted wisdoms is particularly welcome. Notable contributions include Colmán Etchingham's survey of the extended or figurative application of monastic ideas and language and Felicity Heal's examination of concepts of generosity in early modern England, in which she observes the rich protestant literature on charity but also how the chorus of appeals to be generous in charity during this period were indicative of widescale poverty, and that the emphasis on reward was an illustration of how difficult it was to construct a truly altruistic theory. Toby Barnard's reflections on public and private uses of wealth in Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth century skilfully portray how 'in a startling reversal of stereotypes, by the mid-eighteenth century, Irish Catholics were being characterised by thrift, industry and restraint. The new Protestant order in contrast, manifested those failings (fecklessness and idleness) said hitherto to have been monopolised by the Catholics' (p. 67).

Three essays dealing with the pre-Famine and Famine period complement each other