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loose from the binding. For a book of this quality and price, such shoddy production is a disservice and unacceptable.

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***The Irish Franciscans, 1534–1990.*** Edited by **Edel Bhreathnach, Joseph MacMahon, and John McCafferty.** Dublin: Four Courts, 2009. xviii + 413 pp. \$75.00 cloth; \$39.95 paper.

The year 2009 marked the eight hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Franciscan order, and it is fitting that in this year there should be published this third and final volume tracing the history and contribution of the Franciscan friars in Ireland to this ongoing story. This volume consists of eighteen essays by fourteen authors and is divided into two distinct sections. The first (consisting of eight essays) charts the history of the Irish friars chronologically over the years 1534 to 1990, a period of considerable trauma for the people of Ireland encompassing the establishment of plantations, wars of religion, famine, and mass emigration. The second section of the volume celebrates the legacy of the Franciscans in Ireland by exploring a range of topics from historical and hagiographic writings to architecture, chalices, and missionary activities. As with many collections of independently authored essays, there are elements of repetition and overlap (especially in relation to the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries), but the overriding sense conveyed by the book is of the courage and adaptability of the movement to meet and overcome, often at considerable personal cost, these many fluctuations in fortune. The essays are well served by extensive footnotes, and an excellent bibliography and index at the end of the book direct readers to both primary and secondary sources for further research. The book would probably benefit, though, from a short glossary of terms to help general readers quickly navigate their way through some of the ecclesiological terms used throughout the essays.

The scholarly (yet accessible) tone of the book is admirably set in the opening essay by Colm Lennon, covering the period from the dissolution to 1607. He informs readers that at the dissolution, the Franciscans appeared to be in a stronger position to face the challenges of the Reformation than most of their counterpart orders. The account of what follows quickly attunes readers to the difficulties of the next three centuries in the light of the

opening assertion. As persecution and proscription began to bite at various degrees of severity depending on a community's proximity to the English Pale and central government, the responsibility to provide adequate training of new friars was transferred to Irish colleges on the Continent. The importance of one of the first of these, St. Anthony's college at Louvain, and the subsequent network it created with other Irish colleges at Prague and Rome is initially explored in an essay by Mary Ann Lyons and revisited often in following essays. Any attempt to navigate a religious history through the turbulent and violent events of seventeenth-century Irish history is always going to be fraught with difficulties, especially in an essay of limited size. Raymond Gillespie attempts this through the lens of "generational change" across the three coevals of friars that covered the century. This enjoys a degree of success, but it is particularly weak in covering the Cromwellian period, which is discussed in only one paragraph. Readers will find more information on the impact of this time in the essay on the Order of Poor Clares but may have to consult other works for more detailed information. This is disappointing for an event that still figures prominent in Irish culture and memory.

The years 1698 through 1990 are covered in four essays, each of which is particularly well researched and clearly written. They each testify to the unique way in which Irish Franciscans have been shaped by the socio-political realities of their respective periods and the constant quest to rediscover their identity in the midst of tumultuous change. In the nineteenth century, considerable pressure was brought to bear on Irish Franciscans to bring them more in line with the rule and practice of Franciscans across Europe. In a lively essay by Patrick Colan, readers are taken through this event and introduced to the distinctly Irish phenomena of black and brown friars. The first section of the book is brought to an appropriate and stimulating conclusion with an examination of the work of the Order of Poor Clares in Ireland. Their work in education and with orphans is explored, and as a result an adaption of their rule was agreed to facilitate this pastoral ministry. The role of religious women in sustaining the faith and culture of the native Irish community is a fitting climax to the first section.

The second section of the book moves this volume from just being a history textbook into being a full exploration and celebration of the Franciscan contribution to Irish language and culture. A collection of forty-six color plates admirably illustrates many of the points discussed in the essays on Franciscan chalices (1600–1650) and Irish Franciscan architecture. They also transform the volume into a visually stunning book for the reader. Of all the book's essays, Michael O'Neill's account on Franciscan friary architecture alone is broader than the period specified on the cover. In order to present a comprehensive overview of developments, it necessarily needed to take the

reader back into the medieval period. The volume is richer for this, but one hopes that its cataloguing as a book covering the early modern period does not cause medievalists to miss out on this material. The Franciscan contribution to Irish hagiographic and historical literature is also explored in two carefully referenced and clearly developed essays.

This volume is a well researched, attractive, and reasonably priced book that will appeal to anyone interested in either the Franciscan movement or the culture and history of Ireland. For both the academic and the general reader there is much to be gleaned from its various essays, which cover a breadth of issues and themes.

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***Natural Science and the Origins of the British Empire.*** By Sarah Irving. Empires in Perspective 5. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008. xiii + 183 pp. \$99.00 cloth.

Twenty-five years ago, Christopher Hill titled a book *The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), showing how Puritan ideas changed the world. In 2000, David Armitage titled his book *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), turning the argument around by demonstrating how worldly practices give rise to articulations of them. One of Armitage's most forceful arguments was that the British Empire never quite reconciled *dominium* (the property and associated rights of a landlord) with *imperium* (the powers and authority of a monarch), so that the tensions between ownership and sovereignty could explode, as famously happened in the North American colonies. Irving positions her work against that of Armitage, arguing that in "the biblical tradition of empire, these two ideas existed in harmony." To explore this biblical heritage, Irving examines the writings of Francis Bacon and his seventeenth-century successors, who argued that the restoration of "man's earthly sovereignty" arose from improvement of the land. To make her point, Irving draws on a century of English literature on natural science and North America, finding the improvement of nature to be a key concept. In giving her attention to such ideas rather than ideologies, and words rather than deeds, she also harkens to the intellectual history of authors like Hill.