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disciplines, which creates a full, devastating picture of the Donnybrook Magdalene asylum and, by extension, the ‘architecture of containment’ endured by so many women across Ireland.

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Olivia Dee
School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics,
Queen’s University, Belfast
l.dee@qub.ac.uk

Thomas Drew and the making of Victorian Belfast. By Sean Farrell. Pp 360, illus. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press. 2023. $85.00 hardback; $39.95 paperback.

Sean Farrell has produced a well-written and thoughtful study of the Rev. Thomas Drew, one of Belfast’s most polarising figures. Drew’s public career is used by Farrell to explore the complex relationships between urbanisation, politics, religion and sectarianism. On the one hand, Drew was a dedicated and attentive pastor who wanted to improve the lives of his parishioners; on the other, he was an anti-Catholic and Orange firebrand forever associated with the sectarian riots of 1857. Farrell shows that the interplay between these two aspects of Drew’s career explains his success but also placed significant limits on his wider influence amongst evangelicals and political conservatives.

Perhaps significantly, Drew was an outsider. Born in Limerick, he became a curate in north Antrim, before being appointed in 1833 to the newly formed parish of Christ Church in Belfast. The first two chapters consider Drew’s religious vision and pastoral work. Drew was a tireless pastor who made Christ Church a success by providing for the spiritual and material needs of his parishioners, most of whom were recent arrivals from rural areas, and he was especially successful in retaining the adherence of working-class men. The other side of the process of community formation was the Orange Order, which was for Drew ‘a vehicle for moral and spiritual transformation’ (p. 84). Drew’s everyday sermons were simple attempts to promote respectable behaviour and self-discipline. He rarely mentioned Catholicism or politics; his Orange sermons were very different. Drew’s popular image as a champion of the Protestant poor is considered in chapter four by examining his response to the plight of handloom weavers and the devastation of the Famine. Farrell draws out Drew’s paternalism and range of civic engagement, yet concludes that he deferred to landlords and businessmen and opposed collective action.

Farrell’s efforts to ‘historicize’ sectarianism are well done. Rather than simply explaining it as natural Protestant bigotry, he explains how sectarianism was conditioned by time and place, and how the narrative of conflict was shaped by the logic of events and the actions of interest groups. Drew was not unique, and his opposition to Catholicism was shared by most Protestants. What distinguished Drew from his fellow evangelicals was how his anti-Catholicism moved into sectarianism because of the extremity of his language and the importance of place. Located at the interface between Protestant Sandy Row and the Catholic Pound, Christ Church offered a receptive audience for his views and placed him at the centre of sectarian tensions in the growing town. Chapter five shows that Drew’s actions in 1857 occurred at this key site at particularly fraught moments and shaped how he was portrayed, even though he was not especially active in street preaching. Critical to that process of personifying Drew as the sectarian malcontent were the Catholic and Liberal lawyers associated with the riot commission of 1857. The official report and the press coverage that followed established a narrative about intercommunal relations that portrayed Catholics as victims of evangelical and/or Orange preachers.

Farrell is right to highlight the complexity of too-often stereotyped movements such as evangelicalism, Orangeism and political conservatism, though the interplay between Drew and these broader themes could be developed further. For instance, Drew’s friendly relations with Presbyterian ministers are frequently mentioned, but apart from William McIlwaine, there is little sense of how Drew related to the clergy and structures of his own church.

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What were his networks? How representative was he of the clergy in the diocese? Christ Church was the product of a drive to increase church accommodation in Belfast, but we are told little about how many other churches were formed, their location, and their relative success. More could have been said about Drew's relationships with his bishops, not least because they do not conform to stereotypes. Drew roundly criticised Richard Mant as a High Churchman, yet he was a beneficiary of Mant's church extension efforts in Belfast. We also know that before moving to Ulster, Mant had caused controversy as bishop of Killaloe and Kilfenora (1820–23) because his full-throated support of the Second Reformation had outraged local Catholics. Mant's successor, Robert Knox, was an evangelical who twice banned anti-Catholic orators from preaching in his diocese (pp 51 n. 66, 280). Knox was responsible for Drew's move to rural Loughinisland in 1859, yet Drew was also on very friendly terms with the Orange hero of Dolly's Brae, the third Earl of Roden, who appointed him as his personal chaplain. More could also be said about the tensions between Drew's churchmanship and his commitment to Protestant cooperation. Generally speaking, evangelicalism drew Protestants together while also, paradoxically, increasing denominational loyalty. Farrell notes that Drew sometimes offended Presbyterians, and had an often 'tempestuous' (p. 62) relationship with Henry Cooke, though he does not discuss Drew's public dispute in 1840 about the merits of liturgy with James McKnight, the Presbyterian editor of the *Belfast News Letter*. Farrell also suggests that Drew shared Cooke's identity as a 'populist political minister' (p. 299), yet a much better Presbyterian parallel is the Rev. Hugh Hanna who, like Drew, made his reputation as a conscientious pastor of a working-class congregation, staunch advocate of popular education and was more actively involved in the riots of 1857.

These comments should in no way detract from what is a thought-provoking and readable book that succeeds in relating Drew in a meaningful way to the complexity and variety of life in mid nineteenth-century Belfast.

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ANDREW R. HOLMES
School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics,
Queen's University, Belfast
a.holmes@qub.ac.uk

THE GREAT FAMINE IN IRELAND AND BRITAIN'S FINANCIAL CRISIS. By Charles Read. Pp 341. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press. 2022. £25 paperback.

The explanation of policy decisions has long ceased to preoccupy historians of nineteenth-century British politics. The study of financial legislation and institutions has fallen still more decisively out of fashion. Charles Read's book reminds us that we ignore these aspects of politics at our peril. It presents both a radical reinterpretation of the forces behind the Famine, and a wider set of arguments about how we should understand the making and malformation of public policy in modern Britain. It is a powerful and salutary piece of scholarship.

The book is essentially an attempt to rethink a single, seismic move made by the British state: the defunding of Famine relief efforts in the spring of 1847. Read argues that all previous attempts to account for this shift, from nationalist polemics and charges of genocide to versions centred on *laissez-faire* and providential ideologies, have fallen wide of the mark. This, he suggests, is because historians have ignored how the state actually functioned. Read asks us to look again at the elementary questions of where power lay, who wielded it, and what the decisive pressures on them were. He contends that what really lay behind the change of direction in Famine relief policy was acute financial and political instability. Lord John Russell's government could not raise the loan it wanted to because the markets would not have it. The government could not make alternative fiscal provision because its parliamentary position was too fragile. Ministers may have cited *laissez-faire* principles in public, but this was only to cover up the political and financial weaknesses which they all prioritised in

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