

traditional ideas of female power as witches and hags, to make them primary to the reconstitution of slave religion.

Therefore, when enslavers introduced Christianity to the enslaved community, women reconstituted the gathering of souls in church and other gatherings in innovative ways. This chapter recentered African cosmologies and women into African American religion. Rather than adding African flavor to Christianity, she argues that Christianity was molded atop African religious practices. Christian language helped to serve them to reframe ancient female power. She argues that the South was not particularly Christian but were subject to the religion of slavery. As such the formal churches had to adapt to enslaver demands of ministers to support slavery. The Christian church was a space, she argues, that the enslaved avoided as a space of surveillance. Instead, they sought to gather more secretly, closer to nature, and further from the gaze of their enslavers to move, sing, wail, and preach in the brush arbor. In this practice, women helped develop the novel Christian practices that would become the Black church.

This book deftly and in a sophisticated manner unearths and refashions the religious lives of the enslaved by proving that women and, therefore, gender stood at the center of understanding the development of Black American spirituality. This book should be required for any scholar examining slave religion and enslaved women. There is little to critique for such an ambitious book. However, the depiction of Africa does not really address the role Islam may have played in their African remembrances, and I would have liked to see more historiographical footnotes to recognize other scholarship and contextualize her study in relation. Nonetheless, this is a valuable addition to our understanding of the enslaved experience and religion.

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***Dissent After Disruption: Church and State in Scotland, 1843–63*, By Ryan Mallon. Scottish Religious Cultures. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2021. ix + 306 pp. £85 (paperback, 2023, £24.99).**

Even to those well-versed in the arcane world of splits and unions in Scottish Presbyterianism, the relationships and negotiations amongst the post-Disruption dissenting Presbyterians give the impression of an impenetrable tangle of ever-shifting attitudes and relationships. Ryan Mallon has tackled the first twenty years of this tangle with admirable aplomb.

Book-ended by Introduction and Conclusion, the work is split into four two-chapter parts. Part 1 first describes the build up to the Disruption from the Patronage Act of 1712, and then discusses the new Free Church, particularly concentrating on the “establishment principle.” Part 2 looks at the relationships between the dissenting churches after the Disruption and the embryonic and tentative moves towards a union of the churches opposed to patronage. Part 3 considers the place that anti-Catholicism played in the ecclesiastical politics of the time, looking at length at the Maynooth Controversy and the churches’ influence on the parliamentary elections, particularly those of 1847 and 1852.

Finally, Part 4 looks at urban mission and at the influence of the dissenting churches on the gradual movement towards state-controlled and state-financed education.

In his introduction, Mallon explores very fully the differing points of view of modern historians. The United Presbyterian Church (UPs) had come into existence by union only four years after the Disruption. Some have ascribed this union of the United Secession Church and the Relief Church as a deliberate challenge to the Free Church, or at least a defensive reaction to it. Coming just after the 1843 split in the United Secession Church over the "atonement controversy," the 1847 union brought together churches of "New Light" views, which were moving inexorably toward voluntarism and the breaking of ecclesiastical links with the state. Contrariwise, the Free Kirk, like the "Old Light" Seceders, were in full agreement with church-state links so long as state interference was not in evidence. The positions of the Free and UP Churches were not compatible. There is some discussion about the smaller Presbyterian churches and their attitude to the Free Church, concluding that to an extent these churches saw the Free Church as the "true" Church of Scotland from which they were separated. Sadly, although space is given to the union between the Free Church and about half of the Old Light Seceders in 1852, information on the surviving smaller churches dwindles thereafter. In a book about church and state, the Reformed Presbyterians' ban on members voting in public elections, causing increasing disagreement as the franchise expanded and leading to the split in the denomination in 1863, might have found a place.

The controversy over whether Maynooth Seminary should receive public funds waxed long and bitter, particularly in Scotland, and forms a major segment of the book. The controversy enjoyed considerable attention in the public press and in a wide variety of denominational publications. One has to admire the author for his assiduous combing of them. This section in particular is heavily reliant on contemporary newspapers. In the mid-nineteenth century, as now, the press concentrated on what it thought would sell newspapers. But the Victorian reader had a much more informed interest and engagement in church matters, and all aspects of church life were covered very fully, with different newspapers supporting their chosen church factions. Reportage, therefore, was not necessarily balanced any more than it is now, and bias was evident. Mallon does, however, complement the newspaper coverage with official records, and, to a small extent, unpublished material.

Having identified his themes of anti-Catholicism, urban mission and education, Mallon does not have space to consider response to the potato famine of the 1840s in detail, although he does question whether the Free Church's haste in putting a relief package in place was counter-productive. It did, however, establish the Free Kirk as the champion of highland Christianity even if, at a later stage, the tensions between a lowland church (essentially commercial and middle class) and a highland church (theologically much more conservative) was to lead to a further disruption.

Turning to the urban missions, Mallon shows how churches worked together, but with tensions. There was, however, a real ambition to cooperate in an effort to Christianise the slums. Chalmers' pre-Disruption efforts in Glasgow and his later Free Church "West Port Project" in Edinburgh are considered in the context of whether they were ever viable on a large scale. It might have been useful to move from the administrative description of what was happening to actual experience, shown, for example, in John G. Paton's account of his life as teacher in Maryhill Free Church School and in Glasgow City Missions in the 1850s (John Paton, *John G. Paton, Missionary to the New Hebrides: An Autobiography*, 1889). This is missing from an otherwise very full bibliography.

The debate over education and particularly religious education takes up the final chapter and begins to show a movement toward rapprochement between the Free

Church and the Established Church, though less so with the UPs. It has to be said that reading the churchmen's opinions through the mouthpiece of newspapers, which had slightly different agendas, makes for a confusing narrative, but Mallon has largely succeeded in unpicking it.

The first twenty years of the Free Church was a time of great hope and ambition, tempered with a growing realization that the central pillar of the Disruption, the replacement of the Established Church with a new "true" Free Church as the national church, was not going to happen. *Dissent after Disruption* finishes at a point when the Established Church was beginning to recover from the loss of so much of its talent and when the dissenting churches were embarking on the next phase of operating in a multi-denominational state and moving toward union. Despite minor shortcomings, Mallon has done a great service to historians in unpicking the strands of ever-changing opinions and positions to deliver a cogent picture of the mid-Victorian church in Scotland and its relationship to affairs of state.

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Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Spy: The Civil Wars of John R. Kelso.
By Christopher Grasso. Oxford University Press, 2021. viii+ 529
pp. Hardcover \$34.95.

Christopher Grasso's biography of John Kelso—"a teacher, a preacher, a soldier, and a spy; a congressman. . . a Radical Republican. . . a Methodist. . . an atheist"—is a good book, and you should read it (415). If a book is good I wish people would state that and save everyone the time of wading through swamps of jargon only to, at journey's end, remain confused as to the final verdict. This is a good book well written and will prove useful to the student and scholar alike. Biography done right, its first strength, the book also, in its ample focus on the Civil War's western theater, sheds light on this still overlooked region of America's most famous conflict. Grasso's historiographical ambition is impressive. The Civil War narrative is worthy of Shelby Foote or Gary Gallagher (take your pick of the professional or "popular," Grasso has something for you either way), his focus on nineteenth-century concepts of "manliness" in the same league as Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization*, his use of historical memory as deftly done as David Blight (*Race and Reunion*) and, returning once more to the prime vehicle, biography, one cannot help but see something of Timothy Tyson's *Radio Free Dixie* here. Tyson knew his subject, Robert F. Williams, on a deeply personal level, dining with him and his family on multiple occasions. Grasso did not go so far with Kelso but, alas, it was accidents of time, and Kelso's death on 131 years ago, that is to blame. For Grasso so naturally and completely presents Kelso that you finish the book thinking they were childhood friends. Character intimacy is the calling card of good biography. This work has it in spades.

Furthermore, in addition to good biography and the western theater getting its due, the book is about the largeness of nineteenth-century America, the time of the Transcontinental Railroad, the telegraph and the telephone, gold in California, in