

*John Ireland and the American Catholic Church*, by Marvin R. O'Connell. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988. xiii, 610 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY NEIL T. STORCH, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, DULUTH

Marvin R. O'Connell, professor of history at Notre Dame, has written an engaging volume that captures the vibrant and colorful personality of John Ireland (1838–1918). The "warm and passionate" temperament of this controversial archbishop is evoked by an arresting metaphor: "the raging prairie fire that consumed all in its path, its heat and energy and volatility driving it ever forward, sometimes uncontrollable and unpredictable but always purgative of the ground it passed over" (284).

This Irish-born prelate was driven by his vision of America as a land of unbounded opportunity where anyone with the will to succeed could do so. How unlike the Emerald Isle of his youth! Ireland "preached, vulgarly at times, a get-up-and-go variety of religion to a society that avidly read the works of Horatio Alger" (282). Given his own experience, this is not surprising. An immigrant child brought to America by a desperate family escaping their famine-stricken isle, Ireland grew into a public figure — a man who could sit down in the White House and confer with the president of the United States. Unrealistically hopeful that the nation would convert to Catholicism if only the church did not appear so foreign, Ireland pressed immigrants to Americanize, that is, to embrace the American ethos with enthusiasm. Opponents, especially unassimilated German-Americans, saw no reason to hasten the inevitable Americanization process. In their eyes, Ireland, driven by his heady, unrealistic vision, badly underestimated dangers to the Catholic faith of simple immigrants. Surrounded by the dominant Protestant culture, immigrants might well lose their faith if their ethnic culture were torn from them. With rich detail and unflinching honesty, O'Connell describes the sordid backstairs politics used by powerful American prelates warring over Americanization. His even-handed treatment is enlivened by his skillful characterization of the opinionated antagonists.

Building carefully on previous studies, O'Connell provides a penetrating examination of Ireland's ventures in temperance, Catholic colonization, and education. His courageous and unpopular stand on behalf of one minority, black Americans, contrasted sharply with his bias against another, Eastern Rite Catholics. These non-Latin rite Catholics, often known as Uniates since they were in union with Rome, had distinctive customs, including a married clergy. Ireland's distaste for Uniates is easily explained since they were firmly attached to Old World customs and had little interest in Americanization. An important issue of conformity was also involved since the Eastern tradition did not re-

quire a celibate clergy. Finally, if a Uniate jurisdiction were created in America, Eastern priests would be subject to their own hierarchy rather than to the local bishop. Neither Ireland nor his episcopal colleagues wanted this trespass on their authority. The Uniate schism that began in Minnesota, when Father Alexis Georgievich Toth and 365 of his parishioners joined the Russian Orthodox church, later swelled into a mass exodus, as a quarter of a million or more Uniates in various parts of the country broke with Rome. O'Connell concludes, "if Ireland's advocacy of the blacks displayed him at his best, his belligerence toward the Uniates showed him at his bull-headed worst" (271).

O'Connell depicts Ireland as a man of action rather than a man of thought. Though certainly not on a par with the European intellectuals previously studied by O'Connell, Ireland was far more reflective than this biography suggests. His conviction that it was necessary to distinguish between essential beliefs and historical accidents was an important element at the very heart of his Americanist ideology. Eager to move his church into a more positive relationship with the advancing tide of knowledge, Ireland wanted his church to abandon certain human, accidental features and to speak to modern men and women in a language they understood. This conditioned his response to Modernism — a diverse movement that tried to form a synthesis of Catholic theology with modern biblical and philosophical inquiry. For much of his long and distinguished career, Ireland strove for balance. He advanced certain ideas, such as the philosophy of immanence, that he found useful in defending his church while rejecting others that would, at least from his perspective, imperil Catholic dogma.

In general, this is an eminently worthwhile and useful biography. No review can possibly do justice to the vast scope of this important work since it sheds light on a host of fascinating topics of interest to scholars and lay persons alike. The Minnesota Historical Society is to be congratulated on the production of such a handsome and well-edited volume. O'Connell's monumental study will long remain the standard biography of John Ireland and an essential book for students of religion in America.

*Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet*, by Roger D. Launius. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988. xii, 394 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY SAMUEL C. PEARSON, SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

This first biography of Joseph Smith III, son and namesake of the founder of Mormonism, is as much a study of Mormonism in the after-

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