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Religion and Urban Society: The Case of Early Modern Dublin

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IN 1698 THE ENGLISH ANTIQUARIAN AND TOPOGRAPHICAL ARTIST Francis Place visited Ireland. Travelling along the east coast, sketching as he went, he arrived at Dublin in early 1699. From a hill to the south-west of the city, he drew a prospect of the cityscape using a camera obscura. In some ways the result was not unlike contemporary prospects of large English cities such as London, York or Norwich. The skyline was dominated by church towers, or in some cases towers surmounted by spires, the erection of which was made necessary by the rising height of the surrounding buildings.[1] This skyline is a reminder not only of the importance of religion in the early modern city but also of its daily visibility to urban dwellers. While Place's image of Dublin depicts a rather thinner forest of spires and towers than contemporaries could see in early modern London, it was certainly the greatest concentration of churches in any of Place's Irish topographical drawings. Moreover, the presence of two cathedrals in the city, the diocesan cathedral of Christ Church and the supernumerary one of St Patrick's, raised from collegiate status in the thirteenth century, marked Dublin out as an urban centre unlike anything else in early modern Ireland.

In fact the presence of religious structures in the city was even greater than Place's drawings suggest. Dublin on the eve of the religious changes begun in the 1530s could boast eight churches or chapels within the walls and nine outside, in addition to the two cathedrals. As the late seventeenth-century city expanded northwards across the River Liffey—and also south and west—new parishes, complete with churches, were created. To the north of the river, St Mary's and St Paul's were erected out of the older parish of St Michan's in 1697; and by 1749 St Thomas's was carved out of St Mary's. South of the river the fashionable parish of St Ann's was erected in 1707, and St Mark's and St Luke's were established in 1708. Apart from these new creations, other religious groupings in the city were not represented on Place's drawings for other reasons. The

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[1] Raymond Gillespie, 'Describing Dublin: Francis Place's visit, 1698–9' in Adele M. Dalsimer, ed., *Visualising Ireland: national identity and the pictorial tradition* (Winchester MA, 1993), pp. 99–117. The 1699 view is reproduced on p. 111.

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number of Catholic church buildings in existence before the eighteenth century is rather unclear.[2] By 1731, however, the parliamentary returns on the state of popery in Ireland make reasonably precise estimates possible. The numbers of churches returned by the mayor and the Church of Ireland clergy differ slightly but between seventeen and eighteen Catholic churches seem to have existed, of which about half had been built in the previous fifteen years.[3] To this tally, a handful of Dissenting churches need to be added, some of which, such as that built by the Presbyterians in Eustace Street during the 1690s, were very substantial structures indeed.[4]

This stock of buildings represents a very considerable capital investment by the citizens of Dublin in the matter of religion in the early modern period. Just how much a new, or a rebuilt, church would cost depended greatly on its scale.[5] St Luke's, built in 1708, cost over £2,000; this was funded by donations of £50 from the state, archbishop and corporation but the remaining £1,850 was cessed on the parish.[6] St Mary's—on the north side of the river—cessed £1,200 on the parish to build its new church, in addition to voluntary contributions, and St Peter's adopted a similar strategy.[7] In addition, large sums were spent in rebuilding and 'beautifying' existing structures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The medieval structure of St Bride's, for instance, was rebuilt in 1630 'at the charge of the parish and others'.[8] In the early eighteenth century, St Werburgh's received some help from the state for its rebuilding programme, but it was largely funded by parish cesses and the sale of parochial property. By 1724 in excess of £2,000 had been spent on rebuilding when the parish felt it had exhausted its resources; but by 1733 work had begun again in adding a steeple, dome and clock.[9]

It should not be presumed that because of their politically disadvantageous position Catholics spent less on their buildings. According to a description of Catholic churches in Dublin in 1749, many of these were of some magnificence, being fitted out with paintings, complex altarpieces and the latest in ecclesiastical furniture, most of which had been paid for by voluntary subscription by Dublin Catholics.[10] Such capital investment by Dubliners in the infrastructure of religion in their city during the seventeenth

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[2] For some guesses: Raymond Gillespie, 'Catholic religious cultures in the diocese of Dublin, 1614–97' in James Kelly and Daire Keogh, eds, *History of the Catholic archdiocese of Dublin* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 137–8.

[3] 'Report on the state of popery in Ireland, 1731' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, 4 (1915), 132–3; Nuala Burke, 'A hidden church' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, 22 (1974), 81-92.

[4] For these, see Steven ffeary-Smyrl, 'Theatres of worship: dissenting meeting houses in Dublin, 1650–1750' in Kevin Herlihy, ed., *The Irish dissenting tradition, 1650–1750* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 49–64.

[5] For a general survey of church building, H.A. Wheeler and Maurice Craig, *The Dublin city churches* (Dublin, 1948).

[6] RCB, P55/7/1, p. 67.

[7] RCB, P277/7/1, P45/6/1.

[8] Trinity College, Dublin, MS 6404, fo. 112v.

[9] RCB, P326/5/1, pp. 57, 92–3, 101–9, 120–1, 153.

[10] Nicholas Donnelly, ed., *State and condition of R.C. chapels in Dublin . . . AD 1749* (Dublin, 1904).

and eighteenth centuries underscores the importance of religion in their lives. What functions those institutions performed in the city, and the ideas which underpinned their significance for the inhabitants of the city, are the subject of this chapter, although of necessity this will be confined to an account of the public rather than the private, devotional functions of religion.[11]

I

In January 1539, as the process of the dissolution of the greater religious houses in Ireland got under way in the Pale, the mayor and aldermen of Dublin wrote to the architect of these changes, Thomas Cromwell, in London.[12] They asked that the diocesan cathedral of Christ Church or Holy Trinity, which was a house of Augustinian canons, might not be dissolved. It stood, they argued, 'in the midst of the said city in like manner as Paul's church is in London. It is the very station place where as the King's graces parliament and councils are kept, all sermons are made and where the congregation of the said city in processions and station days and at all times necessary assembleth'. The arguments are significant. The link with London, the importance of religious sociability in the life of the city, and the demonstration of state power using ecclesiastical forms were all arguments for retaining the cathedral as a centre for civic, and indeed metropolitan, religion. However, the argument was carried further by claiming that if the cathedral was suppressed 'it would be a great desolation and a foul waste of the said city'.

The economic role of religious life in a large city was clearly important. The cathedral was certainly a consumer but it was also a way of circulating wealth from the surrounding rural world into the city. Pilgrims brought income to the city and the profits of the cathedral's land in surrounding County Dublin, in the form of rents, were attracted into the city. All these appeals might hold for any large city but the mayor and aldermen advanced a further argument which was specific to Dublin. To dissolve the cathedral church would be 'a great comfort and encouraging of our sovereign lord the king's Irish enemies'. Here the corporation linked urban, and specifically metropolitan, civility with religion. To dissolve the church would in effect be to capitulate to the forces of incivility as displayed by the disordered state of the church *inter Hibernicos* which failed to meet the standards of ecclesiastical organisation that characterised the English church.

The shaping of Christ Church cathedral as a marker of urban identity and civic values operated through a number of bodies which bound city and cathedral together. The

[11] For an account of the more devotional aspects of religious experience, see Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted people: religion and belief in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997).
[12] *State papers, Henry VIII*, vol. II, p. 545. For the correct dating of this letter, see Brendan Bradshaw, *The dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland under Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 118, n.2.

principal guild of the city, the merchants' Guild of Holy Trinity from which Dublin's mayors were drawn, had its chapel in the cathedral. Again, the cathedral confraternity drew most of its members from the city and most of the Augustinian canons who staffed the church were drawn from Dublin families.[13] Some of these institutions would disappear after the mid-sixteenth-century movement for religious reform, while the importance of others declined. However, up to the beginning of the seventeenth century, Catholic Dubliners retained an association with this now resolutely Protestant institution because of its importance as a marker of civic values. In the 1560s Catholics contributed to the repair of the cathedral, and again in the 1580s the Catholic-dominated corporation contributed generously to its repair.[14]

Between the early seventeenth and the early eighteenth century the composition of Dublin's population changed. From being a decidedly Catholic city in 1600 it was probably three-quarters Protestant by 1660, that dominance slightly reduced by 1720 when two-thirds of the population were Protestant. By 1750 the numbers had equalised with a continuing downward trend in the Protestant proportion of the city.[15] The dominance of Protestants in the city before 1750 ensured that Christ Church cathedral would continue to be an important symbol of civic and cultural values for the bulk of the city's population. This was most clearly symbolised by the emergence of state and civic ceremonial based around the church. The cathedral was effectively a chapel royal and it was there on Sundays and state days that the Dublin castle administration attended, although in the eighteenth century St Werburgh's would make a bid for this status since it was closer to the castle. In 1733, for instance, it attempted to mirror the ritual of the castle when the vestry ordered the churchwardens to erect a flag on the church's steeple 'to be displayed on every day when the flag of the castle of Dublin is to be displayed provided that the expense thereof don't exceed four pounds'.[16]

More importantly, the cathedral was also the place of worship of the corporation of Dublin. As the London bookseller, John Dunton, described the practice in 1699, the lord mayor and aldermen, with the sheriffs and representatives from some of the guilds, 'on foot in their gowns salute the government on the tholsel stairs as it passes by and then attends it to church'.[17] Such displays reminded Dubliners that they lived not just in a city but in a metropolis, a seat of government as London was also. While those who attended the cathedral services may have been, at best, lukewarm in their religious

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[13] Raymond Gillespie, 'The coming of reform, 1500-58' in Kenneth Milne, ed., *Christ Church cathedral: a history* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 158–60.
[14] *CARD*, vol. II, pp. 146, 168, 187, 211, 221; Dublin City Archives, MR/35, p. 365, MR/17, fo. 19; Raymond Gillespie, ed., *The proctor's accounts of Peter Lewis* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 22–3.
[15] Raymond Gillespie, 'Dublin, 1600–1700: a city and its hinterlands' in Peter Clark and Bernard Lepetit, eds, *Capital cities and their hinterlands in early modern Europe* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 90–1; Patrick Fagan, 'The population of Dublin in the eighteenth century' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 6 (1991), 121–56.
[16] RCB, P326/5/1, p. 156.
[17] Edward MacLysaght, *Irish life in the seventeenth century* (3rd edn, Shannon, 1969), p. 383.

beliefs, the cultural messages that religion conveyed were clear.[18] Dublin in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a predominantly Protestant city, and the form of that Protestantism was English in origin and the liturgy and music which they heard was that in vogue in London. Indeed the choir of Christ Church was in frequent demand in the eighteenth century for musical events in Dublin and hence acted as an important channel for introducing English cultural fashions into Dublin.[19]

Assessing the contribution of religious infrastructure to the creation of a sense of metropolitan civility need not stop with the great cathedrals. The repeated rebuilding of the Dublin parish churches in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries served to highlight the church as a fashionable centre with the smartest type of architecture. As Archbishop King claimed, rebuilding of churches would not only benefit the church-going population of the city but also bring gains to landlords by improving their property.[20] In the 1720s, towards the end of the craze for rebuilding, the cartographer Charles Brooking depicted twenty of the city's most important civic buildings on the borders of his map of Dublin. Two of these were newly built parish churches. Something of the civic pride which this was intended to engender is conveyed by the plan in 1717 to hang the building accounts for the construction of St Luke's in the church to 'satisfy posterity'.[21] Even earlier, in the late sixteenth century, the parish church had been an important symbol of civility and civic identity. In the 1570s the Catholic Dubliner Richard Stanihurst listed, in his description of Dublin, fifteen parish churches, a task which he did not attempt for any of the other Irish cities which he described.[22] The point he wished to reinforce, as part of a more general argument about the civility of Dublin, was the density and antiquity of the parish churches which were to be found there.

If religious infrastructure played an important part in establishing urban civility and the metropolitan status of Dublin in the early modern period, then religious language and rhetoric could be deployed in exactly the same way. Stanihurst, when describing the city in the 1570s, emphasised its loyalty, 'manners and civility' arguing that it was superior to all other Irish towns 'and therefore it is commonly called the Irish or young London'. One of the main features of the civility of the city, which Stanihurst repeatedly emphasised, was the hospitality of its citizens. This, he declared, sprang from religious duty, for the hospitality shown by the Dublin mayors was only possible 'by the goodness of God which is the upholder and furtherer of hospitality'.

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[18] For examples of tepid piety, see the complaints of the precentor of Christ Church: Edward Wetenhall, *A practical and plain discourse of the form of godliness visible in the present age* (Dublin, 1683), pp. 111–12.

[19] Barra Boydell, 'Cathedral music, city and state: music in reformation and political change at Christ Church cathedral, Dublin' in Fiona Kisby, ed., *Music and musicians in Renaissance cities and towns* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 131–42; Barra Boydell, 'The flourishing of music, 1660–1800' in Milne, ed., *Christ Church cathedral*, pp. 300–1, 314.

[20] Trinity College, Dublin, MS 750/8/38–41, 42–5.

[21] Trinity College, Dublin, MS 750/11/2/51.

[22] Liam Miller and Eileen Power, eds, *Holinshed's Irish chronicle* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 44–5.

What this meant in practice was developed in his pen portrait of Patrick Sarsfield, the mayor in 1551. Sarsfield was depicted as a generous figure using three barns of corn and twenty tuns of claret, besides white wine and sack, when entertaining during his mayoral year. The objects of his hospitality were not only the civic élite but also the poor. He rejected the advice of some that he was profligate since, he declared, 'pardon me to be liberal in spending since God of His goodness is gracious in sending'.[23] In this way ideas of urban civility and religious values were inextricably linked.

The religious obligation of hospitality became one of the motifs which both Protestant and Catholic commentators used to characterise the city of Dublin in the early modern period. In 1678, for instance, Robert Ware, a third-generation Protestant settler, compiled a history and survey of Dublin in which he included chapters on 'the hospitality of the city', 'the good deeds of the city' and 'the pious deeds of the city', all of which were intended to show the importance of religion in the construction of Dublin's civic identity.[24] Almost a century later, in the 1760s, Ware's nephew by marriage, Walter Harris, also used the motif of hospitality and generosity to the poor as a marker of civic virtue in his history of Dublin. According to Harris it was 'a brand of infamy cast upon the city of Dublin' by foreigners that 'although we had several churches yet not a single hospital' or any other provision for the indigent. Harris refuted these allegations by demonstrating the religious duty of hospitality and the generosity of the inhabitants of Dublin in supporting hospitals and other charities.[25] For Harris, urban values and those of religious duty were interchangeable. Thus when in 1699 a visitor from Market Dereham in Norfolk, James Verdon, recorded that in Dublin 'the people [there] are civilised and so like christians but in the country they are barbarous in all parts', he was telling Dubliners nothing that they did not already know.[26]

II

Religious language and ideas were, therefore, important in constructing a set of ideas about civic values and identity in early modern Dublin. However the same ideas, especially when employed by the professionally religious clergy, could produce an image of the city that was a less positive one. Sometime in the later 1630s William Ince, a fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, preached a series of sermons to students in the college chapel. His theme was the story of Lot as recorded in Genesis 19. When he came to verse 20, in which Lot was told to flee from Sodom into the mountains but instead went to a small town, Ince reflected on the reasons why town life was preferable to that of

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[23] Miller and Power, eds, *Holinshed's Irish chronicle*, pp. 40–2.
[24] Armagh Public Library, Robert Ware's MS history of the city of Dublin.
[25] Walter Harris, *The history and antiquities of the city of Dublin* (Dublin, 1766), pp. 413–20.
[26] BL, Add. MS 41769, fo. 40.

the countryside. He was, presumably, affected not only by his own experience of coming to Dublin but also by the experiences of most of his student listeners who were recently arrived urban migrants from their parental estates.

There were three motives, according to Ince, for moving to towns: plenty, society and safety. When all three concurred life was happy; an abundance of wealth refreshed the body, the abundance of company delighted the mind, and safety permitted the town-dweller to enjoy the other benefits. However, he believed this rosy picture was a spurious one. Despite these attractions, towns were, Ince proclaimed, full of dangers. To be in urban society was to risk moral infection from the ungodly and, on the basis of Lot's experience recorded in Genesis, would lead not only to temptation but also to judgment. Ince pointed out that being in a wicked society, such as that which thrived in towns, would lead to social intercourse with sinners and finally the commission of sin.[27] As an inveterate crusading Dublin resident, Barnaby Rich, expressed it more concisely some years earlier, 'sin is bred in towns'.[28]

In early modern Dublin there seemed to be abundant evidence to support the contention that what defined urban life in religious terms was not its adherence to the moral values promoted by religion but rather its negation of those values. The literary image of the city portrayed a place of dubious morality. One 1640 play in blank verse by the Dubliner Henry Burnell depicted two of those who came to the city as drunkards for 'when we come to town we do/ nothing but run from tavern to tavern/ oft to blind ale houses to visit the fine/ wenches, of purpose they are placed to draw custom'. Their religious activity was confined to attending a sermon when everything else was closed 'and sleep out/ (at least) three parts on't'.[29] If this was intended to be entertaining, a rather more damning image of the city was presented in the writings of Richard Head.

Head's play of 1663, *Hic et ubique, or, The humours of Dublin*, which he claimed was based on personal experience, portrayed a city dominated by immigrants from England with little to recommend them. The characters Contriver, Bankrupt, Hope Well and Trust All represent the dissolute life of the city. They establish themselves in Dublin in such dubious occupations as astrologer and surgeon specialising in venereal diseases, who also has 'exquisite knowledge in the occult art of physiogamy'. Undertones of corruption, both sexual and moral, pervade the play.[30] The following year Head again provided a picture of Dublin in his partly autobiographical and picaresque work *The English rogue described*. This was again a fractured world with strong amoral tendencies. 'There is' observed Head, 'hardly a city in the world that entertains such a variety

[27] William Ince, *Lot's little ones, or, A meditation of Genesis the 19th and 20th* (Dublin, 1640), pp. 92–119.
[28] Barnaby Rich, *My ladies looking glass* (London, 1616), p. 15.
[29] Henry Burnell, *Landgartha: a tragie-comedie* (Dublin, 1641), sig. E3.
[30] Richard Head, *Hic et ubique, or, The humours of Dublin* (Dublin, 1663). For a further analysis, Christopher J. Wheatley, *Beneath Ierne's banners: Irish protestant drama of the Restoration and eighteenth century* (Notre Dame, 1999), pp. 15–26.

of Devil's imps as that doth. If any knavishly break, murder, rob or are desirous of polygamy they straightway repair thither making that place or the kingdom in general their asylum or sanctuary'.[31]

Head returned to the nature of Dublin society in his 1675 novel *The Miss display'd* which is again based on the corruption of a young girl on coming to Dublin 'hopeful for her advancement'. She is seduced by the chaplain in a house in which she is work-ing as a servant. Religious undertones are also introduced by naming the chaplain somewhat ambiguously 'Ignatius'. In the course of the novel we are treated to insights into Dublin brothel life as well as the amoral state of the capital.[32] None of this is proof that the moral state of Dublin was any worse than any other large city, such as London, but it does suggest that in the mind of at least one person who experienced Dublin life the city's inhabitants had serious moral and social problems. Moreover, as Head repeatedly emphasised, the city was a place of migrants over whom there was lit-tle control. Head was not alone in this view. In 1619, for instance, the commons of Dublin had petitioned the corporation about people in the city whom they believed 'do commit many disorders and wicked acts'. It transpired they had come from England and Flanders but the chief reason suspicion had fallen upon them was that, as these people were migrants, Dubliners were 'not knowing whether they be of honest conver-sation or good life or from whence they come'.[33]

There were a number of responses to this situation. The first response was that of the clergy, who had a clearly defined set of moral ideas of what should constitute a city. The late seventeenth-century notebook of the Revd Dr John Yarner, the rector of St Bride's, provides one insight into these. Yarner's notes from other works display a con-cern with the problem of drunkenness in the city, as well as the changing role of women. Such breaches of the moral order were, for Yarner, linked with more wide-spread religious problems, most explicitly the rise of atheism and social disorder, which had an impact on orderly government.[34] These ideas were articulated at regular inter-vals from pulpits throughout the city. Preachers highlighted the dangers of immoral conduct among their listeners and warned that the result would be divine judgment. Preaching in Christ Church cathedral in 1625, Henry Leslie warned that the plague then ravaging London was a punishment for immorality there and—since sin reigned in Dublin—'God's wrath was imminent'.[35] Such sentiments were commonplace among godly preachers in seventeenth-century Dublin. Some extended the analysis beyond simple moral lapses which would provoke God's anger to the wider issue of the toleration of Catholics in the city which, it was claimed, was the sin of idolatry. The

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[31] Richard Head, *The English rogue described* (London, 1666), pp. 53–83 covers Dublin.
[32] Richard Head, *The Miss display'd* (London, 1675).
[33] *CARD*, vol. III, p. 117.
[34] Raymond Gillespie, ed., 'Rev. Dr John Yarner's notebook: religion in Restoration Dublin' in *Archivium Hiber-nicum*, 52 (1998), 30–41.
[35] Henry Leslie, *A warning to Israel* (Dublin, 1625).

godly preacher Steven Jerome, in 1631, in a Dublin sermon added toleration of
Catholics to the traditional sins of blasphemy, drunkenness and profanity. In Jerome's
case the logic of his own position led to political difficulties in the 1640s. He became
convinced that Charles I was a tolerator of papists and hence brought God's judgment
on the nation, a view he expounded from the pulpit of Christ Church cathedral and was
imprisoned as a result.[36]

In the later seventeenth century, such links between urban morality and providen-
tial punishment were less commonly voiced in Dublin pulpits. The idea of special
providences had been shown to have dangerous consequences. However that does not
mean that the Church of Ireland clergy were silent. In the late 1690s a number took to
their pulpits to discourse on the subject. Peter Brown, later bishop of Cork, identified
the manifestations of impiety in Dublin as 'fornication, adultery, cursing and swearing,
blasphemy and profaneness, drunkenness and gluttony, unjust gain and oppression,
rebellion and disobedience to laws and government, breaking of amity among chris-
tians and dissolving of unity in the worship of God'. Such sins, he argued, weakened
the power of the Church and demonstrated a lack of zeal for God's work in the city,
and the result was that moral standards in the city had fallen.[37] This tradition of urg-
ing moral reform for the honour of God and the strengthening of the civil government
lasted well into the eighteenth century.[38] However, the older argument of reform to
avoid punishment was not yet dead for it could be heard from Dissenting preachers in
the 1690s. The Presbyterian Nathaniel Weld, preaching in Dublin in 1698, was clear
that the city needed moral reform because the country was in a 'state of probation and
trial before the Lord'. What had happened, according to Weld, was that God had pun-
ished Protestant Ireland in 1689–90 with a Catholic king. He argued that failure to
institute moral reform after the deliverance of 1690 would bring further divine punish-
ment. The following year the Presbyterian Alexander Sinclare, also preaching in the
city, delivered a similar message.[39]

There is a scarcity of evidence concerning the Catholic clergy's message to their con-
gregations on the problem of moral laxity in the urban environment of Dublin. Such
evidence as does exist suggests that they conveyed a message similar to that of Protes-
tant preachers. In 1624 the parish priest of St Audoen's, Luke Rochford, published a
sermon condemning idlers, 'revellers, dancers, drunkards, tobacconists, perjurers,
unthrifts' and others. Modern women, he claimed, scorned to do corporal acts of
mercy, and drunkards 'do pester all corners of our country'. Vagrants and other idlers

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[36] S[teven] J[erome], *The soul's sentinel ringing an alarm against impiety and impenitence* (Dublin, 1631), sig. A3;
Raymond Gillespie, 'The crisis of reform' in Milne, ed., *Christ Church cathedral*, pp. 204–5.
[37] Peter Brown, *A sermon preached at St Bride's church, Dublin . . .* (Dublin, 1698).
[38] For example, Edward Smyth, *A sermon preached before the lord mayor and magistery of Dublin* (Dublin, 1708).
[39] Nathaniel Weld, *A sermon before the societies for the reformation of manners preached in New Row, October the
4th 1698* (Dublin, 1698); Alexander Sinclare, *A sermon preached before the societies for the reformation of manners
in Dublin, April 11th 1699* (Dublin, 1699).

should be taught trades in bridewells.[40] By the early eighteenth century, press reports of Catholic sermons suggest a similar concern with the problems of urban society, especially that of violence. In 1725 the *Dublin Post Man* reported that Catholic clergy threatened to excommunicate any of their congregations who were involved in plundering ships, and four years later the *Dublin Weekly Journal* reported that clergy threatened to excommunicate anyone involved in grain riots in the city. By the 1740s all forms of rioting as well as 'drunkenness and late hours' were being condemned by Catholic clergy, and Catholic churches were being closed in the afternoon which 'will keep the common people to their work and not let them have an opportunity of idling, or an excuse for going abroad'.[41] Catholic clergy, no less than their Protestant counterparts, were keen on reform of urban society in line with religiously determined moral norms.

The second response, this time a lay one, to the moral laxity of Dublin was a more ambivalent one. Given the use of religious language to construct the civic values and identity of the town, they were slow to respond to a call for reform which implied that Dublin's status was compromised. However, there were two imperatives to reconstructing the city along the ideas articulated by the clergy rather than the lay perceptions of the use of religious language in defining Dublin. The first reason was a practical matter of the government of the city. The corporation and some other moralists appreciated that vices such as drunkenness undermined family and community and hence ultimately loosened the cement of civic society. Barnaby Rich, for instance, claimed that drunkenness was 'the root of all crime and the fountain of all vice' and led to worse crimes.[42] For this reason from time to time they acted against these vices. The main action was an attempt to restrict ale selling to freemen of the city.[43] By 1634 the state had become involved in regulating alehouses but this seems to have had little effect on the city since another act had to be passed specifically for Dublin in 1639.[44] The corporation were forced into this area of life apparently because of a failure of the parish system to be effective in this area. The evidence here is thin since only one pre-1640 set of parochial records for the city has survived, for the parish of St John. On the basis of these the parish had almost no involvement in moral control or poor relief for the first three decades of the seventeenth century. It was only in the 1630s that it became active in this area, as did the parish of St Werburgh's, but it was the later half of the century before real poor-relief structures were developed.[45] The reasons for this situation are

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[40] L[uke] R[ochford], *An antidote for laziness, or, A sermon against the capital vice of sloth and the sundrie evil effects thereof* ([Dublin?], 1624). For Rochford's background, John Brady, 'Archdeacon Luke Rochford and his circle' in *Reportorium Novum*, 3 (1) (1961–2), 108–20.

[41] John Brady, ed., *Catholics and catholicism in the eighteenth-century press* (Maynooth, 1965), pp. 43, 49, 67, 77–8.

[42] Barnaby Rich, *The Irish hubbub* (London, 1612), pp. 17, 21, 24–5.

[43] *CARD*, vol. II, p. 440; vol. III, pp. 47, 72.

[44] The acts were 10 & 11 Chas. I c. 5 (Ire); 15 Chas. I, c. 8 (Ire).

[45] Katharine Anderson, 'The evolution of the parish of St John the Evangelist, Dublin, 1600–1700' (MA thesis, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 1997), pp. 40–4.

complex and are clearly related to the scale of poverty and the theology of the Church of Ireland, which moved from an insular Calvinism to a more socially engaged Arminianism from the 1630s.

The second impetus to reform came from the fear of judgment, which was a prominent theme of Protestant preaching on urban society. In April 1574 the corporation of Dublin declared that any woman who defiled her body with 'filthy fornication', on being convicted by testimony of her neighbours, would be committed to the stock or prison for twenty-one days and then pilloried and banished. The motivation for passing this by-law was, they declared, that 'it is thought that this city is exceedingly infested with the horrible vice of whoredom and the preachers of God's word do continually pronounce God's vengeance to be at hand if the same be not speedily remedied'.[46] The sentiment seems to have struck home for in 1616 the commons petitioned the corporation of the city about women in the city 'whose ungodliness of life can do no less than procure the indignation of God against this honourable city'. Similar language was used in 1619.[47] Episodes of moral panic akin to this, and sometimes accompanied by religious riots, are not common in early modern Dublin but at least two are identifiable. Both were associated with wider fears generated by war and the seizure of the Dublin pulpits by godly clergy.

In the 1640s, as a response to the outbreak of rebellion in Ireland, church attendance in Dublin increased and a group of godly clergy, led by Faithful Teate, preached a message of repentance and revenge against Catholics from the pulpits. Teate himself recorded

> what flockings there were then daily by all sorts to the courts of God's house . . . in such abundance that diverse knowing men have been heard to say that they hardly ever saw so great a concourse, the number and quality of the persons considered, in all their lives an any other parts of the world.

The tone of the sermonising may be gauged from Teate's comment that 'our preaching was to animate the soldiers courageously to prosecute so just a war against unparalleled murderers' who were 'incarnate devils'.[48] One outcome of this cathartic experience was separation of some from the established church and the establishment by 1647 of an indigenous Dissenting church in Dublin, which was fed by Cromwellian immigration to the city.[49]

Again, in the 1690s, the fear generated by the Jacobite *revanche* of 1688–90 manifested itself in the form of imitations of the English Societies for the Reformation of

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[46] *CARD*, vol. II, pp. 89–90.

[47] *CARD*, vol. III, pp. 69, 117.

[48] Faithful Teate, *Nathaniel, or, An Israelite indeed* (London, 1651), sigs. A3v, A5v, A6. For Teate see Raymond Gillespie, 'The murder of Arthur Champion and the 1641 rising in Fermanagh' in *Clogher Record*, 14 (3) (1993), 61–2.

[49] For further details, Raymond Gillespie, 'War and the Irish town: the early modern experience' in Pádraig Lenihan, ed., *War in early modern Ireland* (Leiden, 2001).

Manners which, significantly, failed to spread outside Dublin. Such bodies, initially outside clerical control and whose 'fervour outran discretion', prosecuted sabbath-breakers, swearers and prostitutes in an endeavour to restore moral purity to the city.[50] The legacy of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners lingered on in eighteenth-century Dublin. Into the 1730s the parish of St Michael, in the core of the medieval city, waged a campaign against prostitution in the parish, taking examinations against women thought to be prostitutes and in 1737 sending five to the Bridewell.[51]

III

Despite the shifting perception of the positive and negative influences which religious ideas had in shaping ideas of metropolitan civility in early modern Dublin, the institutions which supported those ideas were usually embraced by those who lived in the city for a variety of motives. In 1698 George Bewley, a Quaker from Cumberland, came to Dublin at the age of fourteen as apprentice to the linen draper Edward Webb. The apprenticeship had been arranged by ministering Friends who travelled between England and Dublin. He later recorded in his spiritual autobiography: 'and now being removed from a country place to a large and populous city in which I apprehended there was a great deal of youth being hurt I was very thoughtful lest I should lose that good condition which in measure I had attained unto' and so he promptly joined a Quaker meeting.[52] Another motive, less spiritual, for becoming part of an organised religious group is suggested by the career of another Dublin Quaker, Anthony Sharp. Sharp arrived in Dublin in 1669, fleeing from persecution in Gloucestershire. By the time of his death in 1707 he had amassed a vast fortune. Some of this had come from the Irish woollen trade, in which Sharp became a key player, but it had also been augmented by speculation in the developing American colonies. In this process of the acquisition of wealth, Sharp had been helped by a trans-national network of Quaker contacts in Dublin, England and the New World, which provided a trading network and highlighted marketing and more speculative opportunities.[53] While none of this should detract from the genuineness of Sharp's religious convictions, the opportunities for sociability which they provided could be turned to commercial gain.

Such religious sociability was of particular importance in early modern Dublin since the population of the city was composed, especially in the seventeenth century, of fairly recent migrants. Some claimed to be able to link such religious sociability to

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[50] T.C. Barnard, 'Reforming Irish manners: the religious societies in Dublin during the 1690s' in *Historical Journal*, 35 (1992), 805–38.

[51] RCB, P118/5/1, vestry accounts for 1726, 1735, 1737.

[52] George Bewley, *A narrative of the Christian experiences of George Bewley* (Dublin, 1750), p. 11.

[53] Richard Greaves, *Dublin's merchant Quaker: Anthony Sharp and the community of Friends, 1643–1707* (Stanford, 1998).

social status or trade. In 1669 the archbishop of Dublin informed the lord lieutenant that the dissenters in Dublin were 'merchants and tradesmen'. His successor in the 1690s was equally clear that Dublin Dissenters were 'substantial shopkeepers and tradesmen' while the Church of Ireland in the city was attended by gentlemen and 'ordinary handicraftsmen'.[54] How these occupational and social distinctions could originate and be perpetuated was suggested by William King, the archbishop of Dublin, in 1707 when he observed that Presbyterians would 'take no apprentices that will not engage to go to the meetings with them, to employ none nor trade with any that are not of their own sort, if they can help it'.[55] In such a way a well defined group could be established, using the structures of religious sociability. In the eighteenth century, as elections became a more common feature of city life, the allegations of social and economic collusion turned to political partying although there never seems to have developed a Dissenting party within the corporation, despite the fact that a number of Dissenters were members of the aldermanic board.[56] Despite this, during the elections of 1727–8 one Dublin candidate was accused of using Dissenting preachers to campaign for him.[57]

The sort of sociability provided by religious settings could be important in forming a variety of networks within the city. However, not all religious sociability was the same. Social contexts and theological differences between the various settings for worship shaped the nature of the social bonds which could be formed as a result. Some of this type of religious sociability did not need to occur in the context of a church setting. As county feasts and sermons became popular in London in the later seventeenth century, so too in Dublin such religious events drew together groups of similar ethnic backgrounds.[58] In 1671 the Welsh in Dublin met for a 'feast' followed by a sermon preached by a Welsh minister, and in the same year the men of Chester and Cheshire met in St Werburgh's church for a sermon preached by the Cheshire preacher Samuel Hinde in celebration of the fact that the mayor for that year, John Totty, was a Chester man.[59] These occasions could be ways of conveying generalised moral messages. When the Welsh in Dublin met on St David's day in 1700, they were urged to emulate the 'heroic and virtuous actions' of their patron and to be 'valiant, pious and learned'.[60]

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[54] Bodleian Library, Carte MS 45, fo. 458; Cambridge University Library, Add. MS 1/85.

[55] Quoted in R.H. Murray, *Revolutionary Ireland and its settlement* (London, 1911), p. 366.

[56] J.R. Hill, 'Dublin corporation, protestant dissent and politics, 1660-1800' in Kevin Herlihy, ed., *The politics of Irish dissent, 1650–1800* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 28–39.

[57] T.C. Barnard, 'The government and Irish dissent, 1704-1780', in Herlihy, ed., *The politics of Irish dissent*, pp. 24–5.

[58] For this development, Newton E. Key, 'The localism of the county feast in late Stuart political culture' in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 58 (1996), 211–37.

[59] *HMC, Manuscripts of the earl of Egmont* (2 vols, London, 1909), vol. II, p. 25; J.T. Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin* (3 vols, Dublin, 1854), vol. I, p. 30.

[60] [David Pollock], *A discourse in praise of St David, the saint and patron of the Welsh* (Dublin, 1704), p. 8. On the importance of St David in this context, Bernadette Cunningham and Raymond Gillespie, 'The cult of St David in Ireland before 1700' in J.R. Guy and W.G. Neely, eds, *Contrasts and comparisons: studies in Irish and Welsh church history* (Llandysul, 1999), pp. 27–42.

However, there were usually more specific messages about social bonds within the city. The sermon preached by Samuel Hinde at the gathering of those from Chester and Cheshire in 1671 took as its text Romans 12:10: 'be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love, in honour preferring one another'. While he urged on his hearers the necessity of an ordered society and the general virtues of a moral life in the city by living 'soberly, godly and righteously here' he went further. He argued that men of Chester and Cheshire in Dublin had social obligations to each other based on ethnic loyalties and religious duty. Specifically if a brother was richer he should help his fellow countrymen 'by your purse', if abler he should help them 'by your person' and if better help them 'by your prayers'.[61] The importance of this type of religious sociability is clear. It at least had the potential of creating bonds based on geographical origin and reinforcing them with ideas of religious duty. In doing so, networks were forged that made it possible for individuals and communities to negotiate their way around the city.

Religious events such as the county sermon were infrequent. Of greater importance in forging networks within the city was the more regular religious sociability provided by the church through worship. The importance of worship in this context is not that it articulated a set of theological ideas or organisational structures but rather that it generated the basic symbols of a religious culture which bound the members of a local congregation together within the context of the city. The nature of those symbols varied a good deal between religious groups, and worship styles and symbols were shaped and reshaped to meet the demands of the city. Dublin Presbyterians, for example, had styles of worship not encountered among other religious groups in Ireland. While their co-religionists in Ulster praised God using the Psalter, those in Dublin preferred a hymn book devised by their own ministers, which carried a different theological message. This was important since, in communal singing, congregations were bound together with a common and yet local focus which served to shape a local identity.[62] The most important religious symbol which was used within Dissent to shape local civic identities was that of the eucharist. In Ulster, Presbyterians favoured mass communions with hundreds in attendance which were held infrequently. In Dublin, however, each congregation held its own monthly communion. Within that congregation the communion ritual created powerful forces for cohesion within the local congregation. All had heard the same communion sermon, sung the same hymns, partaken in the same bread and wine, and this had been shown in a practical way by the possession of a communion token which marked them off from the surrounding world.[63] Such actions served to build social networks in what was potentially a morally and physically dangerous city.

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[61] Samuel Hinde, *A sermon preached before the Rt Honbl. Lord Mayor of the city of Dublin and the rest of the society of the city and county palatine of Chester and the county palatinate of Chestershire* (Dublin, 1671), p. 8.

[62] For a further discussion, Raymond Gillespie, '"A good and godly exercise": singing the word in Irish dissent, 1660–1700' in Kevin Herlihy, ed., *Propagating the word of Irish dissent, 1650–1800* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 24–45.

[63] Raymond Gillespie, 'Dissenters and nonconformists, 1660–1700' in Herlihy, ed., *The Irish dissenting tradition*, pp. 25–6.

If the eucharist was important in shaping local networks within the Presbyterian communities of the city, then it was equally important for those in the Church of Ireland. This was especially true given the lack of other parochial functions in the city. St Werburgh's was almost unique in eighteenth-century Dublin in having a 'sober festivity' for its parishioners funded by the Southwell bequest to the parish.[64] From the 1670s the amounts spent on bread and wine for communion in the Dublin city churches soared. This reflects the fact that the Church of Ireland community in the city was growing but also the fact that communion was becoming more frequent. By the 1690s a monthly communion was the norm in most Dublin churches whereas in the 1590s twice yearly had been the norm in St Werburgh's. Outside the city this trend was slower to spread.[65]

The city took to a Caroline tradition of a frequent eucharist much more quickly than the rest of Ireland. This clearly had implications for the internal arrangement of urban churches, as larger numbers required access to the communion table; this may be, at least in part, the reason behind the extensive rebuilding of churches in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century discussed above. In 1702, for instance, St Catherine's vestry spent money 'to gilding and beautifying St Catherine's pulpit and altar' and in 1723 the St Werburgh's vestry moved the reading desk 'in order to make the more room for communicants to come to the altar on sacrament day'.[66] Little is known about the frequency of resort to the eucharist in the early modern period but it does seems clear that there were a number of traditions at work. The offering book for the parish of St Nicholas Without for 1782, which is the earliest surviving one for the city, suggests that of the offerings at the sacrament almost half were received at Christmas and Easter, the traditional times for communicating by many who ignored the more frequent celebrations.[67] In addition the monthly communion service was largest in the autumn and early winter. As was the case among Presbyterians the eucharist was a venue for religious sociability. However, given the open nature of the Church of Ireland communion, it was rather less important in forming bonds. It was, however, more important in the city than anywhere else in the country, suggesting a need for a forum for social interaction formed around religious affiliation.

Perhaps the greatest range of religious symbols around which communities could be constructed, and venues for religious sociability established, was provided by the Catholic Church. The symbols of prayer and Eucharist were represented at formal masses but also in more informal settings, of which the holy well tradition is probably the most important. Into the early eighteenth century, Dublin Catholics visited holy wells on the edge of the city on pattern days. Such events show all the features of pilgrimages on a smaller scale, with their stress on social dislocation and reintegration

[64] RCB, P326/7/1, fo. 1.
[65] Gillespie, *Devoted people*, pp. 97–9.
[66] RCB, P117/5/2, 1702–3 vestry; P326/5/1, p. 41; Gillespie, 'Describing Dublin', pp. 106–8.
[67] RCB, P210/7/3.

as part of the ritual.[68] In the early eighteenth century, the traditional visits to holy wells fell out of favour with reformist clergy. However, new venues developed to take their place. Confraternities, for instance, seem to have expanded. In 1733 it was reported that a new type of Catholic event had emerged in Dublin: the conference. As the vicar of St Catherine's reported, a Carmelite friar, Fr Lahy, had arranged Sunday evening conferences in a house in the parish, which seem to have been to refute Protestantism. 'To gain admittance' reported the vicar, 'all comers were obliged to pay two pence for the said Lahy's use and also to spend two pence more for ale for the benefit of Tomson's ale house'.[69] In such ways secular and religious sociability might join to create social bonds of considerable strength in a city where they were fractured.

IV

Religion in early modern Dublin was not a simple matter of attendance at Sunday worship. Religious language and ideas were used in great number of ways within the city. Laymen and women used religious attributes as a way of characterising the civic values of Dublin and hence shaped the urban identity within which they worked. Clergy, on the other hand, took a rather different view of the city, seeing it as a dangerous place in which high concentrations of people made it easy to escape the moral discipline which they saw as part of the religious make-up of the city. Which of these two views prevailed at any one time depended a great deal on the specific economic and political context. From time to time, such as in the 1640s or 1690s, laypeople agreed with their analysis, especially when they feared divine judgment on the city, but on other occasions they happily rejected this dismal analysis, preferring a more positive view of the city's attributes. Within these competing frameworks of civic virtue and identity those who lived in the city, especially the more recent migrants, used the institutional and cultural frameworks that were built on these religious ideas as venues for religious sociability. Such processes made it possible to establish networks which enabled them to negotiate and to negate the dangers of urban life. Religion was essential for survival in the early modern secular city.

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[68] For a discussion of this, Raymond Gillespie, 'Catholic religious cultures', pp. 127–43.
[69] 'Report on the state of popery', p. 144.

List of Abbreviations

APC	*Acts of the Privy Council*
BL	British Library
CARD	*Calendar of the Ancient Records of Dublin*, ed. J.T. and R.M. Gilbert, 19 vols (Dublin, 1889–1944)
CLRO	Corporation of London Record Office
CJ	*House of Common Journals, England*
CSP	*Calendar of State Papers*
Ec.HR	*Economic History Review*
HCJI	*Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland*
GL	Guildhall Library
HMC	*Historical Manuscripts Commission*
Lambeth PL	Lambeth Palace Library
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PP	Parliamentary Papers
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew
PRONI	Public Record Office, Northern Ireland
RCB	Representative Church Body Library, Dublin
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
WAC	Westminster Archives Centre