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'A development of practical Catholic Emancipation': laying the foundations for the Roman Catholic urban landscape, 1850–1900

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ABSTRACT: The infrastructures of devotion and religious worship in Ireland changed dramatically during the course of the nineteenth century. This article examines the foundation stone ceremonies that marked the beginning of several large-scale building Roman Catholic church building projects between 1850 and 1900, and in particular considers the extent to which these highly visible and ceremonial events prefigured the more permanent occupation of public space by the new buildings. These foundation stone ceremonies were complex events that reflected contemporary political issues such as land rights as much as they engaged with the spiritual concerns of the Roman Catholic congregations in Ireland during this period.

Introduction

On 9 May 1856, the *Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo* published an article on a recent ceremony in Limerick city. According to this report, 'about 35,000 persons of all classes and creeds' witnessed the laying of the foundation stone for St John's Roman Catholic Cathedral.[1] The ceremony was carried out by the bishop of Limerick, Dr John Ryan, who was attended closely by the mayor, James Spaight, and 'his sergeants and constables, and the members of the Corporation wearing their

[1] St John's Roman Catholic Cathedral was designed by English architect Philip Charles Hardwicke to replace the earlier St John's Chapel, which was located nearby. The tower spire was designed by the firm of Pugin and Ashlin, with works also carried out by Maurice Alphonsus Hennessy. See J. Fleming, *St John's Cathedral, Limerick* (Dublin, 1987). The design and building work led by Hardwicke took place between 1856 and 1861, with the work on the tower progressing in 1868. Due to storm damage and the need for continuous repairs, building work on the cathedral continued until the 1890s, with further repairs carried out during the 1920s by various firms and individuals. Information from the Dictionary of Irish Architects, 1720–1940: www.dia.ie, accessed 12 Dec. 2016.

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civic robes'.[2] The account immediately focused on the extent to which the ceremony demonstrated the good relations across the religious denominations in the city, and included an extraordinarily florid passage reprinted from the *Limerick Observer*, which emphasized the political and religious significance of the ceremony:

> [F]rom the spot on which they met there ascended to Heaven an odour of far sweeter sacrifice than the blood of goats or of oxen, or the burnt offerings. There went up the sweet savour of party feelings and religious prejudices laid down mutually and consumed by the fire of Divine Charity upon the freshly-hewn altar stone of St John's Cathedral. Honour to whom honour is due. Honour, firstly, to the high-minded Protestant gentlemen who so nobly vindicated the earnestness of their belief by bearing public testimony to the doctrine of freedom of conscience in the aid which they gave by their presence and support to the building of a church wherein their poorer neighbours might be enabled to worship God after the form to which they adhered. Honour to the Protestant Mayor for the good example which he, as first magistrate of the city, set to the people by accompanying the Catholic Bishop in public procession to the commencement of the work.[3]

This passage highlights several of the key concerns for those involved in church building in Ireland from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards – the acquisition of a suitable site, the idea of an appropriate place for Roman Catholic worship within the city and the visible occupation of public space by specific religious groups.[4] The role of procession and public ritual in the demonstration of religious identity in an urban context has been explored in many different contexts.[5] The extent to which Catholic groups appropriated urban space, or used urban planning initiatives in order to 'give spatial expression to their religious identity', has also been the focus of scholarship on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but this article focuses on the performance of group identity

[2] *Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo*, 9 May 1856.
[3] *Ibid*.; *Limerick Observer*, 1 May 1856.
[4] The challenges around land acquisition and the purchase of sites for Roman Catholic church building projects are explored in several of the essays in D. Keogh and A. McDonnell (eds.), *Cardinal Paul Cullen and his World* (Dublin, 2011). While this volume focuses largely on Dublin, and to some extent Belfast, the arguments and analyses proposed by the authors are valuable in the consideration of Limerick's built urban Catholic landscape, for example: E. Kane, 'Paul Cullen and the visual arts' (99–114), M.E. Daly, 'Catholic Dublin: the public expression in the page of Paul Cullen' (130–45), and J. Montague, 'J.J. McCarthy and Holy Cross Church, Clonliffe: the politics and iconography of architectural style' (260–76).
[5] Several examples of recent work exploring the role of civic procession and the performance of identity in public space in a European context are listed below. K. Knott, V. Krech and B. Meyer, 'Iconic religion in urban space', *Material Religion*, 12 (2016), 123–36; K. Knott, 'Geographies of the urban sacred', in S. Lanwerd (ed.), *The Urban Sacred: How Religion Makes and Takes Place in Amsterdam, Berlin and London* (Berlin, 2016), 51–7; J.A. Mateos Royo, 'All the town is a stage: civic ceremonies and religious festivities in Spain during the golden age', *Urban History*, 25 (1999), 165–89; A. Vari, 'The nation in the city: ceremonial (re)burials and patriotic mythmaking in turn-of-the-century Budapest', *Urban History*, 40 (2013), 202–23; J. De Waal, 'The reinvention of tradition: form, meaning and local identity in modern Cologne Carnival', *Central European History*, 46 (2013), 495–532.

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prior to the development of new buildings or urban planning initiatives.[6] It considers the foundation stone ceremonies for a number of churches in Ireland between 1850 and 1900, with a particular emphasis on the ceremonies linked to St John's Cathedral in Limerick city, and a group of churches in urban environments of varying scale in an adjacent county in the Irish midlands, Co. Tipperary. Furthermore, it explores the work of boundary marking and the performance of group identity through parade and ritual as an important precursor to the development of the built environment.

These ceremonies and public processions can be understood as providing an opportunity for encounter and visibility in public space, and were carefully choreographed to include public expressions of solidarity and respectability, connecting the Roman Catholic hierarchy and citizenry with the highest offices in the city. This position reflects the perspective that 'the city is not a container in which encounters occur, but is rather made from encounters',[7] as well as Peter Goheen's characterization of public space as 'a space of contention', and as 'the visible and accessible venue wherein the public – comprising institutions and citizens acting in concert – enact rituals and make claims designed to win recognition'.[8] While certain aspects of the ceremonies, such as the sermon, took place within the space of the church itself, and were highly symbolic and significant in terms of the forging of shared narratives within the community itself, the public component of the ceremony was more focused on external communication and expression. Chantal Saint-Blancat and Adrienne Cancellieri, in their study of the appropriation of public space for religious ritual in twentieth-century Italy by the Filipino *Santacruzan* parade, suggest that the examination of public religious performance facilitates an understanding of the ways in which 'religious practices adapt themselves to urban environments', and into the 'dynamics of the socio-spatial dialectic between religious and contemporary urban spaces'.[9] These events, while an increasingly common aspect of life in nineteenth-century Ireland due to the growing popularity of public devotional culture, retained their status as extraordinary gatherings that occupied a liminal status within society.[10] These events, therefore,

[6] J. Janssen, 'Religiously inspired urbanism: Catholicism and the planning of the southern Dutch provincial cities Eindhoven and Roermond, c. 1900 to 1960', *Urban History*, 43 (2016), 135–57, at 138.

[7] H.F. Wilson, 'On geography and encounter: bodies, borders and encounters', *Progress in Human Geography* (published online 2016), 1–21, at 3.

[8] P. Goheen, 'Public space and the geography of the modern city', *Progress in Human Geography*, 22 (1998), 479–96, at 479.

[9] C. Saint-Blancat and A. Cancellieri, 'From invisibility to visibility? The appropriation of public space through a religious ritual: the Filipino procession of *Santacruzan* in Padua, Italy', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 15 (2004), 645–63, at 646.

[10] The use of the term 'liminality' here is aligned with the concept of a ritual of transition, as explored by Victor Turner. According to Turner, liminal events could be characterized as 'threshold' events, points at which 'social order and structure could be temporarily

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opened new opportunities for boundary-marking, and for the formation and re-formation of identities and social relationships. As Saint-Blancat and Cancelleiri state, 'public religious ritual is not only a process of identity-marking, a display of a collective self or being testimonies of faith. It is also a clear quest for public visibility which means both to "take" and "make" place.'[11] The co-option of public procession as a method of inscribing Roman Catholic identity into the monumental space of the urban environment reflects Lee A. Smithey and Michael P. Young's conceptualization of the 'translation' of specific cultural forms by different groups in society, using their existing significance for new aims. As Smithey and Young write, 'performative acts that are central to institutional stability can be appropriated by group members who are on the periphery of the orthodox system of representation'.[12]

While the performance of a shared, respectable and pious identity to civil society at large was central to the function of these processions, it is also possible to consider the extent to which they worked to forge a sense of community and group identity within the Roman Catholic congregation. The newspaper coverage of these events emphasizes the visible spectacle of the crowds and the shared experience of the sermons and speeches. The events provided an opportunity for the Roman Catholic community to see itself, and its scale and power, in the context of the ceremonies. This reflects the importance of the 'corporeality' of rituals, as identified by Bernhard Giesen, the shared experiences as 'embodied performances, as events produced and experienced bodily by actors in a shared situation and in a local site'.[13] In her recent study of performative assembly, Judith Butler also highlights the 'expressive possibility' of 'plural and embodied performativity', and that an 'effective' result of such 'plural enactments is that they make manifest the understanding that the situation is shared'.[14] This experience of communal gathering was reinforced and given further significance by the strong historical narratives outlined during the sermons, drawing together past trauma and present endeavour as leading inexorably towards further triumph. As explored below, this would have been particularly resonant to congregations at the end of the century in the context of the Irish Land War, and the shift of agricultural

reversed or marginalized'; see S. Coleman, 'Recent developments in the anthropology of religion', in B.S. Turner, *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (2010), Blackwell Reference Online, accessed 15 Sep. 2016: www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9781405188524_chunk_g97814051885246.

[11] Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri, 'From invisibility to visibility', 646.

[12] L.A. Smithey and M.P. Young, 'Parading protest: Orange Parades in Northern Ireland and Temperance Parades in antebellum America', *Social Movement Studies*, 9 (2010), 393–410, at 395–6.

[13] B. Giesen, 'Performing the sacred: a Durkheimian perspective on the performative turn in the social sciences', in J.C. Alexander *et al.* (eds.), *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics and Ritual* (Cambridge, 2006), quoted in K. Brüggemann and A. Kasekamp, 'Singing oneself into a nation? Estonian song festivals as rituals of political mobilization', *Nations and Nationalism*, 20 (2014), 259–76, at 260.

[14] J. Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), 18.

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land from a system of landlord-and-tenant to peasant proprietorship.[15] In this, the combination of physical gathering and shared narrative experience bear out Giesen's statement that 'rituals are the performative counterpart to myth', and that they 'provide the ultimate anchor for connecting actions'.[16] The act of physical gathering, therefore, provided an essential context for sermons, which were often reproduced in their entirety in newspaper coverage of events.[17] However, while media reports insist on the collective unity and shared purpose of those attending, it is important to note that individual participants may well have brought 'multiple simultaneous motivations and interests to the streets', and that a common purpose, if it existed, may have emerged through the 'social space of the action' and through the 'polyphonic interlacing' of their concerns, rather than a pre-existing or uncomplicated sense of solidarity.[18]

While landscapes of religious worship and identity are continually changing in terms of use and significance, it is possible to identify specific periods of development as having a certain internal coherence and as exemplifying a particular ideology. The development of the Roman Catholic urban landscape from the second quarter of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century provides one example, characterized by an unprecedented surge in the construction of churches, cathedrals, schools, convents and monasteries.[19] These ambitious building projects for worship, education and health were funded through parishioners' donations and fund-raising schemes.[20] This article focuses on the post-Famine period, with a particular emphasis on case-studies from Munster, including Limerick city, and the smaller regional towns of Nenagh, Cloughjordan and the village of Emly. Further examples are also considered from Skibbereen, in the south-west, and

[15] C. Ó Gráda, 'Irish agriculture after the Land War', in L. Engerman and J. Metzer (eds.), *Land Rights, Ethno-Nationality and Sovereignty in History* (London, 2004), 131–52, at 131.

[16] Giesen, 'Performing the sacred', quoted in Brüggemann and Kasekamp, 'Singing oneself into a nation?', 260.

[17] It is important to note that sources for the ceremonials are limited, and that regional and national newspaper reports contain the most extensive coverage of events. Further sources include diocesan records and personal letters and memoirs, or commemorative pamphlets produced following the occasion. In the main, diocesan records contain limited functional information around decisions. Newspaper reports, while reflecting the bias of their owners, writers and readership, reflect the action of the crowds and the visual appearance of the urban environment, as well as the details of the sermon and the dignitaries present.

[18] O. Alexandrakis, 'Introduction: resistance reconsidered', in O. Alexandrakis, *Impulse to Act: A New Anthropology of Resistance and Social Justice* (Bloomington, IN, 2016), 1–15, at 7–8.

[19] The Roman Catholic building boom during this period must be considered in the larger context of religious building across denominations. For an overview of ecclesiastical architecture throughout the nineteenth century, see A. Wilson and H. Campbell, 'Catholic churches and cathedrals in the nineteenth century', in A. Carpenter, R. Loeber, H. Campbell, L. Hurley, J. Montague and E. Rowley (eds.), *Art and Architecture of Ireland*, vol. IV: *Architecture, 1600–2000* (Dublin and New Haven, 2015), 292–5.

[20] B. Grimes, 'Funding a Roman Catholic church in nineteenth-century Ireland', *Architectural History*, 52 (2009), 147–68, at 147.

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Dublin. Building on the world of Grimes, Jeanne Sheehy and others, this article explores some of the key differences in post-Famine construction, including the intensification of political and nationalist rhetoric in the sermons, the explicit use of spatial metaphors reflecting the context of the Land War and an emphasis on the respectable Roman Catholic body as performed during large-scale urban processions.[21]

The use of case-studies drawn for the most part from Munster facilitates an insight into the way in which these building projects cross-referenced each other in the narratives created around their foundation, and also reflects the specific circumstances of regional cities, large towns and small towns within Munster. The sample case-studies considered also reflect the development of a range of building types – a cathedral (Limerick city), large parish church (Nenagh), smaller parish churches (Emly and Cloughjordan) and a convent (Skibbereen), as well as buildings on green-field sites (such as Enniskerry and Cloughjordan), and buildings that were being constructed in close proximity to existing medieval ruins (Emly). The development of the urban Catholic landscape during this period must be considered within the broader context of the Devotional Revolution, as described by Emmet Larkin, and that of the ultramontanism led in particular by Cardinal Paul Cullen.[22] These aspects of Roman Catholic culture in Ireland, involving large-scale groups such as the sodality and confraternity movements, and the strict application of Roman Catholic doctrine and emphasis on the central role of the papacy as a result of Cullen's ultramontane approach, shaped the urban landscapes of Irish towns and cities from the mid-nineteenth century. The buildings from this period continue to define many of the urban environments across Ireland, with large church, convent, monastery and schools buildings occupying prominent positions, and in varying states of use, re-use or decline.

While the legacies of these Roman Catholic urban landscapes merit further exploration, this article is focused on a particular aspect of its construction and development. The physical buildings themselves can be examined in terms of their architectural form, their symbolic significance or their usage, but the performative aspects of their construction should not be overlooked.[23] Although events such as the laying of the foundation stone and the later consecration ceremonies were largely ephemeral in nature, they can be read as significant public and visible expressions of the

[21] J. Sheehy, 'Irish church building: popery, Puginism and the Protestant Ascendancy', in C. Brooks and A. Saint (eds.), *The Victorian Church: Architecture and Society* (Manchester, 1995), 133–50; and J. Sheehy, *J.J. McCarthy and the Gothic Revival in Ireland* (Belfast, 1977).

[22] E. Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850–75', *American Historical Review*, 77 (1972), 625–52; Keogh and McDonnell (eds.), *Cardinal Paul Cullen and his World*.

[23] Scholarship on Roman Catholic architectural culture during the nineteenth century includes B. Grimes, *Majestic Shrines and Graceful Sanctuaries: The Church Architecture of Patrick Byrne, 1783–1864* (Dublin, 2009); A. Rowan, 'Irish Victorian churches: denominational distinctions', in B.P. Kennedy and R. Gillespie (eds.), *Ireland: Art into History* (Dublin, 1994), 207–30; Sheehy, 'Irish church building'; and Sheehy, *J.J. McCarthy and the Gothic Revival in Ireland*.

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Roman Catholic community. The format of the ceremonies, together with the content of the sermons and speeches delivered during these occasions, reflect the extent to which they were explicitly used as opportunities to define and display an increasingly confident and powerful Roman Catholic identity in the context of the urban landscape in Ireland during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The foundation stone ceremony at St John's Cathedral in Limerick city in 1856 is one of the earliest examples considered here, but the resurgence in Roman Catholic church building began in earnest at the end of the previous century, exemplified by ambitious projects such as the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Waterford city, built in the 1790s.[24] The ability to build churches, as well as the desire to express Roman Catholic identity more fully in public space, reflects the changing political and legal circumstances for Catholics in Ireland by the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.[25] Ann Wilson and Hugh Campbell note that the decision to move the mensal chapel of St Mary from Dublin's Liffey Street to a much more prominent site adjacent to Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street), resulting in the magnificent Pro-Cathedral (built *c*. 1814–27), reflected 'a new-found Catholic confidence' and their desire to acquire a more 'significant architectural presence' in the city.[26] While John Coakley's analysis of demographic data confirms the stark contrast between Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian citizens in terms of occupation, educational attainment and social status that characterized Ireland in the 1860s, recent scholarship on aspects of Roman Catholic elites within nineteenth-century Ireland and on opportunities for social mobility within Irish society across denominational borders, presents a more complex picture of Roman Catholic agency during this period.[27] The increasingly public nature of Roman Catholic identity is reflected in the expansion of a rich devotional material culture by the second half of the nineteenth century, and in the growing social role of the confraternities and sodalities during the same period, particularly in urban environments.[28] Lisa Godson argues that the material culture and devotional practices of Irish Roman Catholics embedded in educational, domestic and public life during this period reflect the ultramontanism that 'altered the political and

[24] R. Loeber, K. Whelan and A. Mullin, 'Burnham Catholic churches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in Carpenter *et al.* (eds.), *Art and Architecture of Ireland*, vol. IV, 290.

[25] I. McBride, 'Religion', in R. Bourke and I. McBride (eds.), *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* (Princeton, 2016), 292–319.

[26] Wilson and Campbell, 'Catholic churches and cathedrals in the nineteenth century', 292.

[27] J. Coakley, 'Religion, national identity and political change in modern Ireland', *Irish Political Studies*, 17 (2002), 4–28, at 10–11. Aspects of elite culture in Ireland during the nineteenth century have been explored in C. O'Neill, *Catholics of Consequence: Transnational Education, Social Mobility and the Irish Catholic Elite, 1850–1900* (Oxford, 2014).

[28] L. Godson, 'Charting the material culture of the Devotional Revolution: the Advertising Register of the *Irish Catholic Directory* 1837–96', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 116C (2016), pp. 265–94, at 276; C. Lennon and R. Kavanagh, 'The flowering of the confraternities and sodalities in Ireland, c. 1860 – c. 1960', in C. Lennon (ed.), *Confraternities and Sodalities in Ireland: Charity, Devotion and Sociability* (Dublin, 2012), 76–96.

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authority structures of the church worldwide', encouraging the building of new institutions and the transformation of devotional practice.[29] Much of this was carried out in public space, involving banners, the wearing of medals and frequent ritual processions.[30]

While icons and signifiers of religious identity such as medals or holy pictures were relatively affordable and were available at a range of price points for different income levels, as outlined by Godson, the completion of large-scale building projects required sustained fund-raising programmes.[31] These fund-raising initiatives often drew on funds from abroad, as demonstrated by Ann Wilson in her account of the construction of St Colman's Cathedral in Queenstown (now Cobh), Co. Cork (built 1867–78), and by Brendan Grimes in his survey of funding for building projects in Dublin.[32] This exploration of the foundation stone ceremonies reveals the extent to which fund-raising campaigns were mobilized throughout the community, building on narratives of national political resurgence, the occupation of land and perceived triumph over historical adversity. In his sermon during the foundation stone ceremony for the new church at Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary, in 1898, for example, Dr Denis Kelly, bishop of Ross, described the new building as 'a development of practical Catholic emancipation', encouraging the congregation to see the church as part of past political victories and ongoing political change, as much as a place of spiritual worship and reflection.[33] This rhetoric echoes the ideologies of the Land War of 1879 to 1903, described by Cormac Ó Gráda as involving 'a return of the land to people who saw themselves as descendants of those who had lost their lands in the bloody Tudor, Cromwellian, and Williamite confiscations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', despite the many contradictions and complications within that narrative.[34] As explored below, the narrative constructed during foundation stone ceremonies linked the development of the new church building with a wider reoccupation of land and public space.

Parading the ideal Roman Catholic citizen

The foundation stone ceremony marked the initiation of a building project for the community, and took the form of a highly ritualized, public event.

[29] Godson, 'Charting the material culture of the Devotional Revolution', 5.

[30] The wearing of confraternity medals in a later period is explored in L. Godson, 'Display, sacramentalism and devotion: the medals of the archconfraternity of the Holy Family, 1922–39', in Lennon (ed.), *Confraternities and Sodalities in Ireland*, 110–25. The role of public ritual in Roman Catholic life during the twentieth century is also considered in S. de Cléir, *Popular Catholicism in Twentieth-Century Ireland: Locality, Identity and Culture* (London, 2017).

[31] Godson, 'Display, sacramentalism and devotion', 4, 14–15.

[32] A. Wilson, 'The building of St Colman's Cathedral, Cobh', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, 7 (2004), 233–56; Grimes, 'Funding a Roman Catholic church in nineteenth-century Ireland'.

[33] *Nenagh News*, 2 Jul. 1898.

[34] Ó Gráda, 'Irish agriculture after the Land War', 131.

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While there are inevitably some variations across the ceremonies that took place throughout the country, a common pattern can be observed across the vast majority of the events. The events for St John's Cathedral, Limerick, in 1856 (foundation stone ceremony), 1861 (first consecration) and 1894 (consecration following restoration of the building due to issues of disrepair and degradation of its fabric) reflected the ceremonies held around the country to mark the various stages of construction of the new churches and cathedrals throughout the country. The foundation stone ceremony of 1856 in Limerick, described in the above quotation, was held just three months after the decision to rebuild the old chapel of St John was taken by the parochial committee.[35] The holding of a ceremonial event so close to the initiation of a large-scale and expensive building project reflects the role that these events played in the funding and overall feasibility of the project.

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was common for foundation ceremonies to begin with an initial Mass, often held in an existing church, followed by a procession to the site of the new building, either in the very early stages of planning or construction. During the foundation stone ceremony at Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow, in 1858, for example, the ritual took place at the site of the church, which had the foundations cleared out, and a large wooden cross in the position of the high altar. The site of the church was decorated with wooden posts festooned with flags and flowers, and a spacious circular tent was erected around the area where the foundation stone was to be laid.[36] The foundation stone for the new Church of St Mary of the Rosary at Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, in 1892 took place before the architectural plans for the proposed building had been drawn up, and the ceremony involved the turning of the first sod at the site for the building.[37] Reports of these ceremonies emphasized the huge crowds that attended, but also the appeal for funds that was central to events. In his account of the construction of St John's Cathedral, John Fleming notes that that the foundation stone ceremony marked the beginning of a major fund-raising drive by the bishop of Limerick, including a visitation to all the churches in the city and the county, and the publication of the amounts contributed by individuals in the local newspapers.[38]

Reports of ceremonies from later in the century, such as the foundation stone ceremony at Emly in Co. Tipperary, describe the impact of the highly emotive political and religious rhetoric of the sermons and speeches on those present. The *Freeman's Journal* described the impact of the sermon given by Dr Thomas Croke, archbishop of Cashel and Emly, on the crowds

[35] The decision to construct the new cathedral is outlined in some detail in Fleming, *St John's Cathedral, Limerick*, 42–8.

[36] *Freeman's Journal*, 7 Apr. 1858.

[37] *Nenagh Guardian*, 5 Nov. 1892.

[38] Fleming, *St John's Cathedral, Limerick*, 42.

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present. At the foundation stone ceremony for the new Church of St Ailbhe in 1880, he stated that the people of the parish were 'ashamed to worship the Great God of their fathers in the poor and primitive chapel over the way', suited only to the 'circumstances of a people in chains'.[39] The response was an 'almost wildly generous one', with more than £1,500 raised through large and public donations by local dignitaries, while 'poor women rushed forward with their pence, and hats that were sent through the crowd came back overladen'.[40] In using these newspaper reports as sources for the foundation stone ceremonies, and for religious and social culture in general in Ireland during this period, it is essential to take the often partisan and highly politicized nature of the press during this period into account.[41] The *Freeman's Journal* was aligned with the political issue of Home Rule, and was the foremost nationalist daily newspaper published in Dublin by the beginning of the twentieth century.[42] Taking the contexts of their production into account, it is possible to read these reports as rich sources for the political, social and religious culture of the period, with biblical metaphors being used to refer to contemporary political issues such as the Land War and the conflicts over Home Rule.[43]

Public processions, encompassing the principal streets of the urban landscape, were an important facet of the overall ceremony. During the 1856 foundation stone ceremony at Limerick, the *Limerick Chronicle* reported on the highly structured format of the ceremony, as well as the celebratory mood in the city, commenting on the banners in the Trades Hall windows, and the different members of the temperance societies and guilds that 'might be seen wending their way through the streets to their different places of rendezvous, each wearing a sash, ribbon, rosette, or some distinctive badge'.[44] The procession began with the Chapel

[39] In her work on emotion, political rhetoric and the Land War, Anne Kane has explored the importance of emotions within large-scale political gatherings, and has emphasized the mobilization of emotions such as shame, indignation and anger as part of the social movements during this period. This analysis reflects the use of emotional language within the foundation stone sermons. A. Kane, 'Finding emotion in social movement processes: Irish Land Movement metaphors and narratives', in J. Goodwin, J.M. Jasper and F. Polletta (eds.), *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago and London, 2001), 251–66.

[40] *Freeman's Journal*, 31 May 1880.

[41] B. Hayley, 'A reading and thinking nation: periodicals as the voice of nineteenth-century Ireland', in B. Hayley and E. McKay (eds.), *Three Hundred Years of Irish Periodicals* (Mullingar, 1987), 29–48; R. Kearney, *Transitions: Collected Irish Essays* (Dublin, 2006), 76; B. Inglis, *The Freedom of the Press in Ireland, 1784–1841* (London, 1954).

[42] F.M. Larkin, '"The old woman of Prince's Street": Ulysses and the *Freeman's Journal*', *Dublin James Joyce Journal*, 4 (2011), 14–30.

[43] The position of national and particularly provincial newspapers during this period is considered in M.-L. Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850–1892* (Dublin, 1999). The role of the sermon as a vehicle for political expression and controversy is explored in I. Whelan, 'The sermon and political controversy in Ireland, 1800–1850', in K.A. Francis and W. Gibson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon, 1689–1901* (Oxford, 2014), 169–82.

[44] *Limerick Chronicle*, 3 May 1856. The *Limerick Chronicle* was one of the oldest provincial newspapers in Ireland, founded in 1766. Horgan describes it as part of a relatively small

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Committee, bearing white wands, moving from the old chapel of St John to Park House, the residence of the bishop. They were joined by the temperance societies and trades, with each guild and society marching under their banners. The procession then moved from the outskirts of the city across its main bridges to the town hall on Rutland Street, which occupied a central location close to both the city's medieval core and the quays. There, they were joined by the mayor, magistrates and the corporation members, who processed with them through the main city streets until they reached the central point selected for the site.[45] The extent to which this religious ceremony engaged with the civic space of the city through the procession, which incorporated the main thoroughfares in the city, as well as with the civic institutions of the city, from the guilds to the corporation, judiciary and mayor, points to the significance of the building as a statement of Roman Catholic identity and social position in relation to the city at large.

Newspaper reports on the foundation stone ceremonies frequently noted the participation of guilds, sodalities and confraternities, as well as the participation of children. The role of children in these ceremonies reflects the growing role of the Roman Catholic church in the education of children in Ireland, and the role of Catholic societies dedicated to children.[46] It also reflected the importance of demonstrating the size of the religious community, the importance of the family and the respectability of the Roman Catholic body in post-Famine Ireland. At the foundation stone ceremony at Nenagh in 1892, for example, 'the procession consisted of the girls of the Convent and National schools, tastefully dressed in white and wearing wreaths', as well as boys from the Christian Brothers' school and the Children of Mary, all of whom 'sang in excellent time a selection of Catholic hymns'.[47] The foundation stone procession at Cloughjordan, in 1898, included 'hundreds of school girls, all charmingly dressed in white, and carrying beautiful bouquets of flowers', as well as 'school boys, all very tastefully dressed and decorated with blue sashes'. Similarly, at Emly in 1880, the procession included 'several hundred school children in their pure white dresses, boys in their surplices'.[48] At a ceremony around St Catherine's Church on Meath Street, in Dublin's city centre, children are also noted as spectators – an account published in the *Freeman's Journal* in 1852 described 'the children of the poor crowded around the old

landscape of Protestant-owned newspapers; see J. Horgan, *Irish Media: A Critical History since 1922* (London, 2001), 6.

45 *Limerick Chronicle*, 3 May 1856.

46 Despite the introduction of the national school system, which was planned as a secular system, in 1831, by 1850 over 90% of schools were under religious management. Á. Hyland, 'The multi-denominational experience in the national school system in Ireland', *Irish Educational Studies*, 8 (1989), 89–114. The participation of children and young people in sodalities is discussed in C. Begadon, 'Confraternities and the renewal of Catholic Dublin, c. 1750 – c. 1830', in Lennon (ed.), *Confraternities and Sodalities in Ireland*, 35–56.

47 *Nenagh Guardian*, 5 Nov. 1892.

48 *Freeman's Journal*, 31 May 1880.

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chapel-yard, all clad in their holiday garments'.[49] In descriptions of crowds, both within the procession or spectators, there is an emphasis on the social and physical respectability of those attending, and this is particularly evident in the descriptions of children, reflecting the fact that these events provided an opportunity for the public demonstration of the ideal Roman Catholic citizen.

Following the procession, the ritual of laying the foundation stone itself took place, with similar rituals being observed for monasteries and convents as well as church buildings. Indeed, several aspects of this ritual, such as the use of the silver trowel, feature in most secular as well as religious foundation stone ceremonies.[50] The attendant ritual aspects, such as religious procession, the use of specific liturgical chant and the role and content of the sermon in particular, distinguish these events from the ceremonials surrounding the many non-religious construction projects during this period. The format of this part of the event varied according to the state of the construction site. During the ceremonies at Skibbereen at the Convent of Mercy in 1857, the foundations were already in situ, so the laying of the stone was clearly a symbolic gesture. The *Irish Examiner* report on this ceremony described the ritual aspects in some detail, describing the blessing of the stone with salt and water, the singing of the antiphon *Signum Salutis Pone* and the psalm *Quam Delecta*.[51] This was followed by the sprinkling of holy water on the stone, and the inscription of three crosses into its surface by the bishop using a silver ceremonial trowel. Following the cutting of the crosses, 'all went on their knees while the Litanies of the saints were being sung', followed by a prayer recited by the bishop and the laying of the stone. This was followed by the procession of clergy around the foundations, reciting the psalms and sprinkling holy water and chanting.[52]

As mentioned above, the ceremonial silver trowel features in nearly every foundation stone ceremony of the period, and was usually presented to the most senior cleric by the architect or a member of the construction firm contracted to complete the works. A report from the *Freeman's Journal* of the ceremony at Enniskerry in 1858 described the 'magnificently wrought silver trowel, manufactured at the establishment of Mr J. Donegan, Dame-Street', in great detail, noting that it was made

[49] *Freeman's Journal*, 1 Jul. 1852.

[50] The use of a silver trowel by King Edward VII during the foundation stone ceremony at the Royal College of Science on Dublin's Merrion Street in 1904 is described by F.E. Dixon, 'Civic museum acquisition', *Dublin Historical Record*, 37 (1984), 147.

[51] *Irish Examiner*, 13 Mar. 1857. The 'Quam Delecta' or 'Quam Dilecta' refers to psalm 84 which refers to the beauty of the house of the Lord. It is often sung at the laying of a church foundation stone, and is listed by the Anglican Church of the Province of New Zealand as part of the form for a foundation stone ceremony: http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/NZ/part1.htm, accessed 11 Dec. 2016, and was part of the foundation stone ceremony for the parish church of St Mary the Virgin, Kenton in 1935: www.stmaryskenton.org/church-history/st-marysconstruction, accessed 11 Dec. 2016.

[52] *Irish Examiner*, 13 Mar. 1857.

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of 'pure Wicklow silver', and that the handle 'which is carved at the end in the shape of a mitre, is part of an old yew tree now growing at Glendalough, and said to have been planted by St Kevin'. The trowel had an ivory cross inlaid in its handle, and an inscription 'tastefully decorated with shamrocks', recording its presentation to the clergyman leading the ritual.[53] The adaptation of the silver trowel into a specifically Roman Catholic object, through the alteration of its shape and the inclusion of iconography and materials that explicitly referenced the early Christian Irish past, reflect the incorporation of these secular ritual aspects into a more explicitly Catholic ceremonial culture. The use of materials from Glendalough, in particular, reflects a desire to associate the new building with the early Christian past in Ireland, as this religious landscape, with its round tower and series of small medieval churches, would be recognized by many due to its prominent position in Irish picturesque tour guides, as well as in guides to Irish antiquities.[54]

The foundation stone ceremony in Limerick largely followed this pattern, with the bishop determining where the first stone of the new cathedral should be laid. According to the *Limerick Chronicle*, 'his Lordship was handed a trowel by the architect', together with a 'sealed bottle, containing a parchment bearing an inscription of the date of the commencement of the building, and the coins of the period'.[55] The description of events in the *Kerry Evening Post* reflects a satirical, and perhaps more critical, approach. The report noted that the inscription was in 'Irish, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Russian, German, Flemish and English, besides a *depositum* in Spanish…there could be no greater confusion of tongues had it been intended for a corner-stone of the Tower of Babel'.[56] While both the *Limerick Chronicle* and the *Kerry Evening Post* were associated primarily with a Protestant readership, Ferrar's Limerick paper tended to be more moderate, and may have had more invested in presenting a less partisan account of events in its home city. According to the Kerry report, the bishop 'rapped it thrice with a silver trowel, cut the sign of the cross upon it in divers places, and there the ceremonial ended'.[57]

Together with the confraternity banners and flags used in the processions, the inscriptions, coins and silver trowel are part of the Roman Catholic material culture of the period, and were central to the performance of Roman Catholic identity in the construction of the urban environment during this period. Newspaper reports of these events capture some sense of the decorations that would have transformed the urban environment for the duration of the ceremony, but that otherwise

[53] *Freeman's Journal*, 7 Apr. 1858.
[54] A. Ireland, 'Glendalough: the RSAI's contribution to its preservation, examination and illustration', in C. Doherty, L. Doran and M. Kelly (eds.), *Glendalough: City of God* (Dublin, 2011), 332–48.
[55] *Limerick Chronicle*, 3 May 1856.
[56] *Kerry Evening Post*, 10 May 1856.
[57] *Ibid*.

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leave little trace.[58] The *Freeman's Journal* described the town of Emly in 1880 as 'wreathed all over with evergreens and bright, coloured streamers', and recorded that 'such a wearing of the green was never witnessed', with 'green flags and green boughs', 'green favours at the horses' heads and in the bandsmans' button holes', as well as 'green rosettes…fastened in the fair communion dresses of the little children and in the scarlet-tipped soutanes of the acolytes'.[59] Together with the physical congregation of the ritual processions, these processions facilitated increased visibility for Roman Catholics within the public sphere, physically and visually occupying the urban space of the city.

These religious processions can be considered in relation to the civic ceremonial traditions in the city. Matthew Potter, in his surveys of local government in Limerick, describes several types of ceremony, including the riding of the bounds of the city by the mayor in 1765, described as a huge procession on horseback, with a military band, sheriffs, servants and corporation members, all richly dressed and many carrying ceremonial banners.[60] Further instances of the 'riding of the bounds' are described by Potter, events which in 1776 included a fancy dress ball, a play, a regatta, an oratorio in St Mary's Cathedral, a grand ball in the city assembly rooms and a 'Venetian breakfast'.[61] These events were clearly designed as public expressions of power and elite status, using the public and private spaces of the city to perform and reinforce social hierarchies. The processional occupation of the city during the latter half of the nineteenth century reflects shifting social structures, the changing political landscape, as well as the different ways in which the city itself was developing, but can also be understood as an appropriation of public procession and mass gathering as a tool for the public performance of power and identity by different groups.

The occupation of the urban fabric of the city through temporal events, as well through more permanent memorials and buildings, has been characterized by Joep Leerssen as an increasing Roman Catholic attempt to control the 'monumental space' of the city. This reflects Henri Lefebvre's conceptualization of 'monumental space' as offering 'each member of a society an image of that membership'.[62] In this way, the processions form

[58] Photographs of decorated streets during the Dillon family wedding celebrations in Ahascragh, Co. Galway, in the Clonbrock Photographic Collection (CLON161) (National Library of Ireland) reflect the kinds of street decorations, usually made from plants or fabric flags and banners, described as forming part of the foundation stone ceremonies. I am grateful to Richard Butler for supplying this reference.

[59] *Freemans's Journal*, 31 May 1880.

[60] M. Potter, *First Citizens of the Treaty City: The Mayors and Mayorality of Limerick, 1197–2006* (Limerick, 2007), 64.

[61] *Ibid*.

[62] J. Leerssen, 'Monuments and trauma: varieties of remembrance', in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), 204–22, at 210; H. Lefebvre, 'The production of space (extracts)', in N. Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory* (Abingdon, 1997), 133.

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part of the way in which Roman Catholics were inscribing their own identity into the monumental space of their urban environment. However, it is important to note that the foundation stone processions were not planned or perceived as a tactic of resistance or protest, but rather occupied a liminal space between popular and civic power.[63] As evident in the *Tralee Chronicle and Killarney Echo* excerpt quoted above, the procession was an opportunity to demonstrate good relations, rather than tensions. Indeed, it is possible to understand these processions, with their emphasis on the physical respectability of crowds and participants, and the subsequent luncheon parties with selected invited guests, as a co-option of, rather than challenge to, existing symbols of civic power and elite social practice.[64]

The reports on the event in the *Limerick Chronicle* and the *Kerry Evening Post*, however, do reveal some tensions between the civic structures within the city and those involved in the procession. The reporter from the *Limerick Chronicle* complained that only some of the Corporation wore their full civic robes, and that even the mayor only wore his chains rather than full mayoral regalia, marring the overall event.[65] Representing a contrasting view, the report on events carried by the *Kerry Evening Post* described the processions and ceremony in a positive light, but included highly critical remarks on the 'real business of the day' – the banquet held in the National Schoolhouse for the dignitaries present. A proposed toast to the honour of the queen was met with 'evident tokens of sullen "mouth-honour"', but a toast to Pope Pius IX was met with enthusiasm.[66] Commenting on this, the report questioned whether the government should grant 'thousands of pounds annually, to be expended upon the construction and support of National Schools in Ireland' when 'those schools are to be devoted to pious orgies, at which the Pope's health is drunk with every demonstration of loyal respect', but that only 'contemptuous and reluctant' notice is taken of the queen. In conclusion, the report called into question the legality of such 'Popish processions' in the streets.[67] Again, it is necessary to read the evidence of newspaper

[63] The role of procession as a tool of resistance by groups with less power in society is explored in M. Busteed, 'Parading the green: procession as subaltern resistance in Manchester in 1867', *Political Geography*, 24 (2005), 903–33. While the Roman Catholic church as an institution occupied a very powerful position in Irish society at this time, with membership drawn from a broad range of social classes and backgrounds, Roman Catholics for the most part did not occupy the most powerful positions in society; see O'Neill, *Catholics of Consequence*.

[64] Smithey and Young, 'Parading protest', 393–410. In this article, Smithey and Young explore the 'stickiness' of symbolic practices associated with power, and the ways in which their institutional position can be adopted and used by groups who desire to claim that power for themselves.

[65] *Limerick Chronicle*, 3 May 1856.

[66] The attention of the content of the toasts reflects contemporary sectarian toasts by Grand Juries during and after Catholic Emancipation in 1829. I. d'Alton, 'Remembering the future, imagining the past: how southern Irish Protestants survived', in F.M. Larkin (ed.), *Librarians, Poets and Scholars: A Festschrift for Donall O Luanaigh* (Dublin, 2007), 212–30, at 217. I am grateful to Richard Butler for suggesting this reference.

[67] *Kerry Evening Post*, 10 May 1856.

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reporting within the context of an individual reporter, reflecting the biases of a particular newspaper and readership. However, it is possible to observe some of the tensions and different views that existed across Irish society from these reports, with the *Kerry Evening Post* painting a critical and satirical picture of a boorish Roman Catholic leadership unable to comport itself with the required dignity for governance and civic responsibility. Similarly, the perceived slights to the importance of the occasion noted by the *Limerick Chronicle* reporter reflects the close scrutiny of social relations central to these events, with the building of a new structure in the shared public space of the city acting as a kind of 'boundary object', tenuously uniting different groups across a shared area of concern.[68]

Procession, crowds and the occupation of public space

By the 1880s and 1890s, sermons explicitly combined the injustices of the past with contemporary politics. The rhetoric around the reoccupation of space reflected the contexts of the Land War in particular during this period, but as Irene Whelan has outlined, the sermon had developed as a vehicle for the expression of often highly controversial political ideas throughout the nineteenth century.[69] The sermon given by Francis Joseph MacCormack, bishop of Galway, during the foundation stone ceremony for the new church at Nenagh in 1892, began with passages from the Old Testament on the Israelites building their new temple following the destruction of the old Temple of Solomon and captivity in the desert, which the bishop noted were 'words of special meaning and application to them all today'.[70] The emphasis on dispossession and destruction refers to the narrative of expulsion from land, but also the occupation of medieval churches by the Church of Ireland, many of which were in ruins by the nineteenth century, and the suppression of the monasteries during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Aligned with an increasing interest in national antiquities during this period, conflicted narratives existed around the rightful ownership of these sites, as possession of the early Christian or medieval site provided powerful ballast to claims to be the true church of Ireland.[71]

Explicit parallels were drawn between the treatment of the Israelites and of the Irish Roman Catholics during the Reformation and Penal

[68] The concept of a 'boundary object' providing a space of shared concern between disparate communities of interest is outlined in S. Leigh Star and J.R. Griesemer, 'Institutional ecology, "translations" and boundary objects: amateurs and professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology', *Social Studies of Science*, 19 (1989), 387–420.

[69] Whelan, 'The sermon and political controversy in Ireland, 1800–1850', 169–82.

[70] *Nenagh Guardian*, 5 Nov. 1892.

[71] The contentious role of the ruined medieval church during this period is explored in more detail in N. NicGhabhann, *Medieval Ecclesiastical Buildings in Ireland, 1789–1915: Building on the Past* (Dublin, 2015).

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Laws, as MacCormack noted that 'in Ireland almost necessarily a day of this kind recalled memories of the past, unpleasant memories of the persecution and desecration of their church and their altars'.[72] Similarly, Croke's address at Emly focused on the violence of the past, outlining the grisly death of Terence Albert O'Brien, last bishop of Emly, in Limerick by Cromwellian forces. As at Nenagh, Croke concluded his speech with a call to action, to build the church in order to revive 'the ancient monumental glories of Emly'.[73] In several cases, the new church was linked to a ruined ecclesiastical building in the nearby landscape. At Emly, the *Freeman's Journal* report noted that the parish priest had attempted to purchase the site of 'St Aibi's ancient cathedral' from the Church Temporalities Commission but had been refused, concluding that 'the last effort of expiring bigotry was to leave the spire standing in solemn desolation, monument of a hateful usurpation, but a monument also of its own miserable collapse'.[74]

The rhetorical pattern outlined above is repeated in many contemporary sermons, with the overarching narrative linking historical and biblical experiences, and creating a sense of shared triumph over past, shared adversity. This newly triumphant identity was often explicitly expressed architecturally, through long descriptions of the magnificence and quality of the new church to be built, and the increasing presence of Roman Catholic buildings in the landscape. At Nenagh, MacCormack exhorted the congregation to 'look at the magnificent cathedrals, churches and colleges through the land'.[75] During his sermon, Croke asked the assembled people to 'Look around you everywhere throughout the country, and what do you behold? You see Catholic schools frequented, churches, colleges, cathedrals, hospitals, houses of refuge, rising as if by magic, in every town and city of our island.'[76] This language of appropriation and triumph was explicitly spatial in its expression, reflecting the significance of visibility and land ownership, as well as the important role of expansion and conversion that formed an important part of religious culture across the denominations during the period.[77]

Conclusion

This article has explored some of the performative aspects of the construction of the Roman Catholic urban landscape, where the liminal

[72] *Ibid*.
[73] *Freeman's Journal*, 31 May 1880.
[74] *Ibid*.
[75] *Nenagh Guardian*, 5 Nov. 1892.
[76] *Freeman's Journal*, 31 May 1880.
[77] Cultures of religious expansion and conversion in the context of the Anglican church provide a useful context for Roman Catholic culture during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see G.A. Bremner, *Imperial Gothic: Religious Architecture and High Anglican Culture in the British Empire, c. 1840–1870* (New Haven and London, 2013), 350–63.

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potentials of the festive event facilitated the expression of a new form of Roman Catholic identity in urban, post-Famine Ireland. While there is an emphasis on corporeality and the shared experience of the crowd, it is also important to note the role of the newspapers in recording the events, and reproducing the shared experience across a much wider audience, reflecting the 'shared informational zone' produced by the developments in print media during this period.[78] As Godson has argued, an understanding of the way in which 'institutional, sacramental and devotional' aspects of Roman Catholic culture became so entrenched in Irish society, it is necessary to explore 'evidence of an entire material system that involved artefacts, religious ritual, music, smell, sound, gesture, utterance, architecture and spatial practice'.[79] In the context of Irish urban history, this expanded perspective on 'spatial practice' is particularly salient, as it focuses on the ways in which the lived experience of the city was constructed. It also serves to contextualize further the monuments of nineteenth-century Roman Catholic architecture that continue to dominate Irish cities, towns and villages. In order to understand the operation of Roman Catholicism as a central facet of Irish society, it is essential to consider the way in which it was experienced spatially, both in relation to its buildings for worship, health, education and recreation, as well as the ways in which individuals and groups negotiated that landscape through space and time.

[78] C. Morash, *A History of the Media in Ireland* (New York, 2010), 50.
[79] Godson, 'Charting the material culture of the Devotional Revolution', 28.

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