

**‘A mission-minded nation’:
popular domestic experiences of the Irish Catholic missionary
movement in the twentieth century**

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in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

Supervised by Dr Anne Dolan
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Brophy', written in a cursive style.

Kate Brophy

Summary

By the mid-twentieth century missionary activity to ‘pagan’ countries had become an integral feature of Irish Catholic culture. In 1955 over 4,500 nuns and priests were estimated to be working abroad endeavouring to ‘win souls’ for Catholicism. Despite the country’s poor economic performance, each year thousands of pounds left Irish shores with the aim of ‘saving’ ‘pagans’ and ‘black babies’. This thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of this overlooked cultural phenomenon from the domestic perspective. It accounts for Catholic Ireland’s seemingly unparalleled embrace of ‘the missions’ across the first decades of independence and the sudden rejection of the phenomenon in the 1960s. Reliant on the public for vocations and donations, missionary congregations operated symbiotic relationships with both their individual supporters and wider society. This thesis explores these relationships during the growth, zenith and rapid decline of the modern Irish Catholic missionary movement. Using comparative analysis with French and wider western experiences of nineteenth and twentieth-century missionary expansion, this thesis moves away from neat narratives of exceptionalism to place the Irish experience in its wider context.

The primary means through which the missionary movement created and harnessed mass enthusiasm, chapters one and two focus on the Irish Catholic missionary magazine. Chapter one deals with the establishment and growth of this genre. Chapter two concentrates on its subsequent boom and decline. Chapter three then explores other forms of popular engagement with the missionary cause, analysing how ‘the missions’ became a near-ubiquitous feature of life in newly independent Catholic Ireland. Finally, chapter four examines the relationship between the Catholic missionary movement and the Irish state, probing ideas of a ‘spiritual empire’ and the importance of the Biafran War in confirming the decline of the missionary phenomenon.

Utilising a broad range of archival sources and published periodical material, this thesis asserts the place of ‘the missions’ in the twentieth-century Catholic Ireland. It explores the hitherto unrecognised scale of popular engagement with the phenomenon and its role in creating the ‘traditional’ Irish Catholic culture which flourished between independence and the Second Vatican Council. It argues that popular support for the cause was not simply motivated by the desire to ‘save souls’ but also encompassed a

much wider range of cultural, social, political and economic factors. Moving beyond the historiographical preoccupation with Church-state relations, this thesis demonstrates the centrality of routine experiences such as reading a missionary magazine, going to see a mission-themed film or dropping a coin into a missionary collection box in creating this ‘traditional’ Catholic Ireland.

Challenging notions of Irish insularity, this thesis argues that the embrace of ‘traditional’ Irish Catholicism did not automatically equate to an isolationist Ireland. Recovering a nation very much in step with the world around it, it demonstrates the substantial crossover between the Irish Catholic experience of ‘the missions’ and that of other western nations. Refracted through the missionary prism, the Irish laity became increasingly familiar with a vision of the world in which they had both a role and sense of agency. This was not a one-dimensional worldview simply concerned with the relationship between the Irish Catholic and the ‘pagan’ other, but also positioned Ireland as a key player in a much broader global system that was ultimately predicated on conceptualisations of race.

This thesis establishes the integral role ‘the missions’ played in creating Irish Catholic identity in the twentieth century. It illuminates the complexities, nuances and contradictions of popular engagement with the missions that was simultaneously distinct yet not quite as exceptional as often contended. Finding the success of Ireland’s Catholic missionary movement to be in part facilitated by the rivalries created between the numerous individual missionary congregations, it offers a nuanced reading of a Catholic Church that was not and is not a monolithic entity.

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Abbreviations

APF	Association for the Propagation of the Faith
CCL	Catholic Central Library
CFCA	Columban Fathers' Central Archive
COFML	Cardinal Ó Fiaich Memorial Library
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archive
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
FMSA	Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa
FMSAA	Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa Archive
GDA	Galway Diocesan Archive
HRA	Holy Rosary Archive
IJA	Irish Jesuit Archive
IMU	Irish Missionary Union
MJHR	Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary
MMM	Medical Missionaries of Mary
<i>MMM</i>	Medical Missionary of Mary Magazine
MMMA	Medical Missionary of Mary Archive
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
OLA	Our Lady of the Apostles
OLAA	Our Lady of the Apostles Archive
SJ	Society of Jesus
SJYP	St Joseph's Young Priests Society
SMA	Society of African Missions
SSC	Columban Sisters
SVD	Society of the Divine Word

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Introduction

In the summer of 1996, with the Atlanta Olympics serving as a time marker, my recently turned six-year-old self, two sisters and parents set off from Dublin on our annual expedition to Galway. In retrospect a very pre-Celtic tiger take on the family holiday, we were to spend one week in the same house that we stayed in every year, situated just a short walk away from the Salthill promenade. The house, necessarily large, not only had to accommodate our direct family but also required enough room to house our usual entourage of holiday companions made up of my maternal grandparents and four of my grandmother's nine siblings, three of whom were religious sisters and one a priest. In addition to all the customary thrills of trips to the amusement arcades, paddling in the Atlantic and impromptu Masses said by my great-uncle from behind a makeshift altar in the living room, 1996 promised an extra layer of excitement. Phyllis, the final of my grandmother's siblings to have entered religious life, was to join the gathering mid-way through the week. Often referred to as a matter of course within the family, neither myself nor my sisters had ever actually met this mysterious figure. All questions on the subject of Phyllis were answered with a variation of the same refrain; she was another of the family nuns and she 'helped Africans' on 'the missions' in Kenya. The arrival of Phyllis herself did little to illuminate matters. Whilst more than happy to describe to us differences between life in Kenya and Ireland on topics such as weather, clothing and food, what exactly she did there and why she lived there remained unclear. Phyllis did explain that she had been on 'the missions' in Kenya for more than twenty years and that after her holiday she would be returning there. Over the course of the few short days of our interactions, the sense of mystery surrounding Phyllis largely disappeared. Having put a face to the name, myself and my sisters passively imbibed the simple line that Phyllis worked on 'the missions' in Kenya.

Whilst aware of this familial missionary connection since childhood, after embarking on this thesis it soon transpired that two other members of our holiday entourage had also spent a number of years on 'the missions' in the 1970s. Probing the subject on my father's side revealed yet another link to the cause. A great-uncle, long since married and living in England, had set out on a similar path. In the late 1950s, he was accepted to the Holy Ghost's missionary seminary in Kimmage, Dublin, on the proviso that he could come up with the required fees. Unable to fund his own way, my grandparents

sold their piano to secure his place. He never completed his studies. This is not an attempt to prove my own family's unique missionary credentials. Far from it. As revealed during the countless casual conversations sparked by the topic of this research, such links to 'the missions' remain commonplace in Ireland. Once prompted many recall an aunt, great-uncle, cousin etc., who had given at least part of their life to the missionary cause. Specifics, however, are often thin on the ground. Even for those reasonably well acquainted with the relative in question, the country in which they laboured is the extent of many people's knowledge. cursory explanations along the lines of that used to describe Phyllis's whereabouts are often deemed to suffice. A product of the once near ubiquitous nature of the concept of 'the missions' in Ireland, for much of the twentieth century no further detail was seemingly required. Such was the cultural potency of the missionary phenomenon, an entire web of meaning, motivation and action could be encapsulated in the concise phrase. Practically all knew or at least were presumed to know what it meant. A major influence on life in twentieth-century Ireland of hitherto unrecognised magnitude, this thesis explores domestic experience of the modern Irish Catholic iteration of 'the missions'.

Predicated on the biblical command 'Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost', the missionary imperative has always been a central tenet of the Christian religion. From the earliest origins of the faith through to the modern day, all efforts at Christian expansion may be designated as missionary activity. The Christian missionary impulse has had a profound impact on shaping the course of human history. Whilst always anchored by the will to expand the reach of the faith, no one cohesive movement can be credited with making Christianity a global religion. A complex, spasmodic and nuanced process, this missionary history is commonly divided into distinct epochal stages including the Christianisation of Europe of late antiquity, the crusades of the medieval period and the missionary aspect of the Age of Discovery.¹ This thesis focuses on what is routinely referred to as the modern Christian missionary movement. As is often the case with dating epochs, the exact starting point of this movement is debateable. It is, however, generally accepted that the 1790s mark the start date of the modern missionary phenomenon that would continue to flourish into the second half of the twentieth century. Characterised by the desire to

¹ For an overview of this periodisation see Stephen Neill, *A history of Christian missions* (London, 1964; 2nd edn., London, 1991).

convert the ‘heathens’ of the extra-European world, during the final decade of the eighteenth century British Protestants founded three institutions for that specific purpose.² Lagging behind their Protestant counterparts, France led the way in stimulating renewed Catholic interest in missions to ‘heathendom’. Although certainly influenced by the successes of their Protestant counterparts, the emergence of the Catholic arm of the modern missionary movement was not simply a countermove designed to trump the efforts of their ‘separated brethren’. Born in a France still reeling from the shock of revolutionary upheaval, it was simultaneously shaped by its own specific religious and political context. Beginning in 1822 with the foundation of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith (APF) in Lyon, an organisation that would quickly come to wield major influence on the Catholic missionary landscape, numerous institutions dedicated to the cause emerged in the decades that followed.³ Unlike previous incarnations of the missionary impulse which relied heavily on the patronage of the monarchy and elite, the modern phenomenon was a thoroughly populist movement. Dependent on the masses to provide the missionary sending bodies’ two greatest requirements – donations and vocations – as momentum grew, engagement with the ‘pagan’ missionary bodies became an increasingly common feature of the western Christian experience. Reflecting the mass embrace of the cause, by the close of the nineteenth century both the Protestant and Catholic branches of the modern Christian missionary movement were firmly established. An increasingly international phenomenon, by this time both had expanded their support bases far beyond their land of origin.⁴

As explored in chapter one, the concept of ‘pagan’ missions roused little support amongst Irish Catholics in the nineteenth century. Whilst a handful of French missionary bodies made tentative inroads with some sectors of society, overall Irish contributions to the cause were comparatively insignificant.⁵ However, the twentieth

² Andrew Porter, ‘Religion, missionary enthusiasm and empire’ in Porter (ed.), *The Oxford history of the British Empire: volume iii: the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1999), pp 222-8; Porter, ‘An overview, 1700-1914’ in Porter (ed.), *The Oxford history of the British Empire*, p. 46; Claude Prudhomme, *Missions chrétiennes et colonisation: xvie-xxe siècle* (Paris, 2004), p. 65.

³ J. P. Daughton, *An empire divided: religion, republicanism, and the making of French colonialism, 1800-1914* (Oxford, 2006), pp 33-8.

⁴ Prudhomme, ‘Les missions chrétiennes dans les sociétés coloniales’ in Dominique Barjot and Jacques Frémeaux (eds), *Les sociétés coloniales à l’âge des empires: des années 1850 aux années 1950* (Paris, 2012), p. 290.

⁵ Edmund Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement: a historical survey, 1830-1980* (Dublin, 1990), p. 55.

century witnessed a dramatic shift in this regard. Between the late 1910s and the late 1960s the numbers of Irish Catholics working on the ‘pagan’ mission fields surged. By the mid-1950s it was routinely reported that Ireland had, per capita, more Catholic missionaries working on the ‘pagan’ missions than any other nation.⁶ In 1955 one source estimated that there were 2,162 Irish priests, 2,220 Irish nuns and 479 Irish brothers endeavouring to convert ‘pagans’.⁷ By way of comparison, a similar roundup of figures given the following year indicated that in terms of priests engaged in the ‘pagan’ missionary work, France topped the leader board with a figure of 3,395. Belgium and the Netherlands were the only other countries to outdo Ireland on this front with figures of 2,289 and 2,229 respectively.⁸ By 1961 it was reported that Irish men accounted for a total of ten percent of all Catholic priests working on the ‘pagan’ missions and Irish women were said to make up 10.6 percent of the entire Catholic ‘pagan’ missionary Sister workforce. Religious brothers, a comparative rarity in Catholic Ireland, accounted for four percent of the total of their kind working in the same field.⁹ In the context of Ireland’s falling population, which for much of the period in question failed to breach the three million mark, this contribution to the modern missionary movement is all the more staggering.¹⁰ Although latecomers to the ‘pagan’ missionary scene, the intensity with which Irish Catholics embraced the cause in the twentieth century saw Ireland becoming a significant player on the modern global missionary landscape.

Whilst on one level the thousands of Irish men and women who left Irish shores to convert ‘pagandom’ remain at the heart of this study, they are not its primary focus. Concerned with ‘the missions’ from the domestic perspective, this thesis instead explores the ‘home’ environment which ultimately made these departures possible. Reliant on the masses to both fund and man these endeavours, there is a clear correlation between the numbers of missionaries actually on the field and the level of domestic popular backing. The upsurge in missionaries reflected the upsurge in mass enthusiasm for the cause. Thus, between the late 1910s and the early 1960s the concept

⁶ See, for example, *Irish Independent*, 13 Jan. 1956.

⁷ *Irish Independent*, 8 Jan. 1955.

⁸ *Irish Independent*, 13 Jan. 1956.

⁹ *Sunday Independent*, 18 Jun. 1961.

¹⁰ John Fitzgerald, ‘Irish demography since 1740’ in Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (eds), *The Cambridge social history of modern Ireland*, p. 12.

of the ‘pagan’ missions became an increasingly potent force within Irish Catholic culture. Once sparked, popular Irish missionary zeal gathered rapid momentum. By the outbreak of the Second World War, ‘the missions’ had not only become a routine facet of the Irish Catholic experience but had also been established as a cornerstone of Irish Catholic identity. In the context of the economic failings of the newly independent Ireland, the nation’s growing missionary output provided a much welcome success story. Echoing the narratives generated from within the movement, leaders of both Church and state routinely trumpeted ‘the missions’ as a source of collective pride. Although lacking in material riches, ‘the wonderful Mission-minded people in Dear old Ireland’ could take heart in their nation’s spiritual prowess.¹¹ Deemed the ultimate proof of the nation’s loudly proclaimed Catholic credentials, Catholic missionaries were portrayed as Ireland’s gift to the world. The missionary prism became a key lens through which vast swathes of the Irish public interpreted the world around them and their place within it.

The mid-1960s marked the end of this golden age. Profoundly affected by the sweeping cultural shifts of that era, the Irish missionary movement was knocked from its pedestal.¹² In a post-Vatican II world, the very concept of ‘the missions’ quite suddenly seemed archaic. Despite concerted efforts to rebrand and modernise, the movement would never again regain its previous momentum. The once booming chorus of public adulation rapidly quietened. Popular opinion quickly came to view the emergent NGO sector as the new authority on overseas aid giving. Considered far more enlightened and relevant in the postcolonial world, ‘the missions’ struggled to compete. The vast missionary infrastructure that had been built up over the previous five decades did not, however, simply disappear overnight. Charting the rise, boom and subsequent decline of the modern Irish Catholic missionary movement this thesis asks both how and why Ireland embraced ‘the missions’ with a seemingly unparalleled gusto. It asks why this missionary golden age came to such an abrupt end and it considers what became of the movement in this immediate post-boom era.

¹¹ *The Kerryman*, 13 Jul. 1963.

¹² On wider cultural shifts see Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: the undoing of a culture* (Dublin, 2002).

The modern Irish Catholic missionary movement has attracted little scholarly attention. The exact reason for this remains unclear. One gets the impression that some within the academic community presume it an unworthy topic. Such was the potency of the missionary influence on life in twentieth-century Ireland, whether through first-hand experience or not, most know at least something of ‘the missions’. With a grasp on the fundamentals of the phenomenon, most commonly the racist stereotypes and tropes that underpinned popular missionary discourse, it is dismissed as a predictable subject matter that promises little depth for the academic historian. Although numerous histories of twentieth-century Ireland make reference to the modern Irish missionary movement, these often amount to little more than passing remarks that are in many cases seemingly predicated on anecdotal understandings of ‘the missions’ as opposed to archival research.¹³

It is highly probable that the disparate nature of the missionary movement, and therefore its records, has also played a role in the near exclusion of the topic from Irish historiography. Whilst the public often conceived of ‘the missions’ as if one cohesive entity, the actual makeup of the modern missionary movement was in reality far more complex. As borne out in this thesis, the Catholic missionary phenomenon was comprised of numerous congregations some of whom focused exclusively on missionary work and others like the Jesuits who incorporated a mission-sending wing into their broader sphere of activities. By the time the Irish Catholic missionary movement reached its climax in the mid-1960s, at least twenty one male congregations and fourteen female congregations had become involved in sending missionaries from Ireland to convert ‘pagandom’.¹⁴ Founded for the purposes of assisting mission-sending congregations in the form of financial and material support, mission-aid organisations such as the aforementioned APF and its numerous imitators add a further level of complication. Moreover, in addition to the convoluted nature of the source base, researchers face numerous difficulties when it comes to actually gaining access to these

¹³ For examples of major surveys of the period that fail to make more than passing mention of the modern missionary phenomenon see, F. S. Lyons, *Ireland since the famine* (London, 1971); Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1989); John Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹⁴ Constitution of the Irish Missionary Union, 31 Jan. 1969 (Society of African Missionaries (SMA) Archive, Irish Missionary Union box).

archives and so it is perhaps not surprising that the subject has remained largely unexplored.

Even within the more specific historiography of twentieth-century Irish Catholicism, Ireland's missionary efforts have been overlooked. Following the trend of general Irish history writing, politics dominate the field. This dominance has been evident since the inception of the subject as an area of academic enquiry. Numerous historians of twentieth-century Irish Catholicism have followed the lead of J. H. Whyte as set out in his pioneering work *Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-1970*, published over forty years ago.¹⁵ Church-state relations in both times of unity and discord have been studied extensively.¹⁶ And whilst these political aspects of twentieth-century Irish Catholicism are of significant importance to our understanding of the period, the continued dominance has resulted in a historiography somewhat limited in scope. Irish missionary engagement falls outside of these traditionally narrow political parameters.

These boundaries are challenged in Louise Fuller's broad-based monograph of 2002, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: the undoing of a culture*. In this pioneering study, Fuller charts the rise, peak and subsequent decline of what may be labelled 'traditional' Irish Catholic culture. She provides in-depth analysis of the god-fearing Catholicism that is still widely remembered but remains largely unexplored by the academic historian. This was a society 'steeped' in defensive and triumphant Tridentine Catholicism, preoccupied with sin and the concept of heaven and hell. It was also increasingly about a seemingly ever-growing complex of paraliturgical expressions of faith including shrines, pilgrimages and the cult of indulgences. This culture built to a crescendo in the context of a newly-independent Ireland. Vaunted as evidence of the moral superiority of Catholic Ireland, it was deemed an essential component of Irish identity. As clearly detailed by Fuller, the Second Vatican Council and the attitudes it was based upon 'utterly transformed' this 'traditional' Catholicism. Whilst the core teachings of the faith remained intact, Vatican II revolutionised the practice of the religion. Legalistic,

¹⁵ J. H. Whyte, *Church and state in modern Ireland, 1923-1970* (Dublin, 1971).

¹⁶ See, for example, John Cooney, *The Crozier & The Dáil: Church and state in Ireland, 1922-1986* (Cork, 1986); Tom Inglis, *Moral monopoly : the rise and fall of the Catholic church in modern Ireland* (2nd edn, Dublin, 1998); Dermot Keogh, *The Vatican, the Bishops and Irish politics 1919-39* (Cambridge, 1986); Keogh, *Ireland and the Vatican: the politics and diplomacy of Church-state relations, 1922-1960* (Cork, 1995).

authoritarian and defensive beliefs were replaced by a faith less consumed with ideas of sin and rules. A Catholicism more open to debate emerged. Increasing economic affluence and improvements in communication, notably access to television confirmed this process.¹⁷

Setting out from Ireland's 'oasis of faith' to defend the world from paganism, materialism and later communism, 'pagan' missionary endeavour was in many respects the ultimate expression of this pre-Conciliar Catholic culture.¹⁸ The dramatic decline of the missions conforms to Fuller's post-Vatican II timeline. Although Fuller recognises the role of 'the missions' in the Irish devotional routine, she offers little by way of analysis of the phenomenon or its place within 'traditional' and post 'traditional' Irish Catholicism. Building upon Fuller's work, this thesis addresses this gap. What part did 'the missions' play in shaping day-to-day Irish Catholic experiences? How did they become such an integral feature of 'traditional' Irish Catholicism? How were the fortunes of missionary congregations shaped by wider cultural shifts of the 1960s?

Whilst the academy has shown little interest in the topic, those within the movement have taken up the task of writing this history with vigour. There exists a vast body of 'in-house' histories detailing the stories of specific mission-sending congregations or prominent individual missionaries.¹⁹ Usually written by a member of the institution in question, there is often little by the way of critical reflection or engagement with a wider historical context. This is especially true of the publications that emerged during the golden age of the movement which were primarily intended as a means of self-promotion.²⁰ A further flurry of works began to emerge in the late 1980s. Written by those who recently retired from active service on the mission field, some offer little more than fond reminiscences. Others, however, provide intimate insights into the missionary life, the workings of missionary institutions, and the way in which the decline of the movement was conceived of from those within it.²¹ As the number of

¹⁷ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁹ See, for example, Anastasia M. Taggart, *The Medical Missionaries of Mary in Drogheda, 1939-1999* (Drogheda, 1999).

²⁰ See, for example, Sr M Louis, OSF, *Love is the answer: the story of Mother Kevin* (Dublin, 1964).

²¹ See, for example, Enda Watters, *Missionary memoirs, 1958-2003* (Dublin, 2009).

living retired missionaries continues to dwindle, these works offer a window into a world that is increasingly inaccessible even through the medium of oral history.

Joseph McGlade's 1967 *The Missions: Africa and the Orient* became the first study to break with the tradition of the narrowly focused institutional history or missionary memoir. Although a member of the Columbans, one of Ireland's largest Catholic missionary bodies, as indicated by the title, McGlade offers an overview of the modern Irish Catholic missionary movement. Whilst certainly not devoid of the hagiographical tendencies that often dominate 'in-house' missionary histories, the short volume still serves as a useful introduction into the subject.²²

It would be more than two decades until any further historiographical advance was made. This came in the form of Edmund Hogan's book *The Irish Missionary Movement: A Historical Survey, 1830-1980* published in 1990. Although like McGlade, Hogan is a member of a missionary congregation, his study is widely regarded as the first comprehensive and scholarly contribution to the field. By now almost three decades old, it remains a go-to text, routinely featuring in the footnotes of all manner of histories which make reference to the modern Irish Catholic missionary movement. With access to a source base that contemporary lay historians could only have dreamed of, Hogan's masterful survey authoritatively establishes links between the tentative nature of Irish missionary zeal in the nineteenth century and the eventual surge in popular support for the cause in the twentieth century. In setting out the growth of the institutional infrastructure that collectively made up what was termed 'the missions', Hogan's book has provided a crucial foundation on which this thesis builds upon. However, in terms of the domestic popular experience of 'the missions', the study is limited. Whilst Hogan certainly acknowledges the fundamental role of lay support in the modern missionary phenomenon, aside from a short chapter on the missionary magazines, it occupies a marginal position within his work.²³

Fiona Bateman is one of the few scholars to explicitly focus on the popular domestic experience of the modern Irish Catholic missionary movement. Her 2003 doctoral thesis, 'The spiritual empire: Irish Catholic missionary discourse in the twentieth

²² Joseph McGlade, *The Missions: Africa and the Orient* (Dublin, 1967)

²³ Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement*.

century', is structured around the central paradox that in its highly racialised conceptualisation of the African 'other', Irish Catholic missionary propagandists were often reliant on many of the same negative stereotypes and tropes that had been used by British imperialists in their projections of the Irish in the previous century.²⁴ Building upon this study, she has also published a number of book chapters and articles dealing with Irish projections of Africa and Africans.²⁵

Denis Linehan's 2014 article 'Irish empire: assembling the geographical imagination of Irish missionaries in Africa', similarly asserts the importance of the missionary prism in constructing both Protestant and Catholic Irish perceptions of self in relation to the African 'other'. Like Bateman, he highlights the extensive crossover between the missionary and imperial worldview. Working within the field of cultural geography, Linehan challenges the 'common assumption' that owing to its missionary heritage Ireland is a uniquely positioned 'champion of the Global South'. In addition to pointing out the importance of the missionary magazine in shaping Irish visions of the African 'other', Linehan also asserts that other aspects of visual and material culture including the missionary film, missionary exhibition and missionary lecture also contributed and reinforced popular perceptions of this figure.²⁶

Recognising the absolute centrality of the missionary periodical to the success of the entire missionary movement, this thesis devotes significant attention to the Irish Catholic missionary magazine. The primary vehicle through which mass support was both cultivated and harnessed, these periodicals were a fundamental component of the domestic popular experience of 'the missions'. Expanding upon, and in some cases challenging, the findings of Hogan, Bateman and Linehan, this thesis explores not just

²⁴ Fiona Bateman, 'The Spiritual Empire: Irish Catholic missionary discourses in the twentieth century' (Ph.D. thesis, NUI Galway, 2003).

²⁵ See Bateman, 'Defining the Heathen Irish and the Pagan African: Two Similar discourses a century apart' in *Social Sciences and Missions*, xxi, no. 1 (2008), pp 73-96; Bateman, 'Ireland's Spiritual Empire: The African Mission Field in the Twentieth Century', in Hilary Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion* (London, 2008), pp 267-88; Bateman, 'Ireland and the Nigeria Biafra War (1967-1970): Local connections to a distant conflict' in *New Hibernia Review*, xvi, no.1 (2012), pp 48-67; Bateman, 'The 'battlefield of the schoolroom': Irish children and Ireland's spiritual empire' in David Dickson, Justyna Pyz and Christopher Shepard (eds), *Irish Classrooms and British Empire: Imperial contexts in the origins of modern education* (Dublin, 2012), pp 157-71. Bateman, 'Biafra in the Irish imagination: war and famine in Banville's An End to Flight and Forristal's Black Man's Country' in Ogechukwu Ezekwem and Toyin Falola (eds) *Writing the Nigerian-Biafra war* (Suffolk, 2016), pp 284-3.

²⁶ Denis Linehan, 'Irish Empire: assembling the geographical imagination of Irish missionaries in Africa' in *Cultural Geographies*, xxi, no. 3 (2014), pp 429-47.

the construction of self and the African ‘other’ within these publications but also incorporates that of the Chinese ‘other’ into the mix. Although the primary subject of Catholic Ireland’s most widely read missionary periodical, the *Far East*, existing historiography has wholly neglected to take into account the role of this figure in Irish Catholic missionary discourse.²⁷ Portrayed in a vastly different light than the African, by comparing representations of the African and Chinese ‘other’, this thesis asserts the foundational importance of race in structuring the missionary worldview. Moreover, in exploring the overlooked complexities, nuances and contradictions of this widely consumed vision of the world, this thesis contends that the missionary magazine played a major role in expanding Irish horizons. Not simply concerned with the relationship between the Irish and the ‘pagan’ other, it challenges notions of Irish insularity. It argues that through the prism of the missionary periodical the Irish laity were very much informed of a comprehensive global system and of their own place within it.

Through a combination of content analysis of selected missionary titles and examination of surviving archival papers of the missionary propagandists that produced them, this thesis examines the Irish Catholic missionary genre through a hitherto untapped perspective. Engaging extensively with what is perhaps the most problematic aspect of the existing literature – the reticence to fully engage with issues of consumption – this thesis seeks to fill this historiographical gap. Contending that discourse analysis alone cannot accurately capture the domestic experience of ‘the missions’, it challenges current claims about the circulation figures of these periodicals. It raises questions as to how many people were actually reading these publications, why they were reading them and who was reading them. Whilst certainly not an exact science, by exploiting archival sources to supplement in-depth content analysis, this thesis establishes the typically overlooked scale of the popularity of Catholic missionary periodical. Furthermore, it asks what role did gender play in shaping content and consumption? Why were these magazines so repetitive? How were they sold and how did this affect levels of readership? Who was the target audience? How was the sale of the magazine translated into tangible gains for the individual society in terms of vocations and donations? Not solely concerned with the giants of the genre, this thesis also focuses on the multitude of less popular titles. It asks how many titles made up this

²⁷ For discussion of circulation see chapter one.

genre? How did less popular titles fare in this market? Why were some titles so hugely popular and others filled with much the same type of content were far less successful? It examines the role of gimmicks such as puzzle pages and raffles in the success of these magazines.

This thesis contends that although massively popular, the missionary magazine alone does not account for the once near ubiquity of the concept of ‘the missions’ in twentieth century Ireland. Going beyond the realm of the printed word, it explores the wide variety of other popular forms of engagement with the missionary cause. An almost totally unexplored aspect of the Irish Catholic missionary movement, Bateman and Linehan only touch upon the myriad channels through which popular support for ‘the missions’ was both cultivated and harnessed. Examining missionary fundraising staples such as the ‘penny for the black babies’ box, still a widely recalled feature of the Irish Catholic upbringing, the missionary sale of work, the missionary film and the missionary raffle, this study argues that popular engagement with ‘the missions’ was by no means a wholly sombre affair. Support for the cause was not simply motivated by a desire to save souls. As the Irish Catholic missionary boom progressed, the domestic fundraising landscape became an increasingly competitive environment. As more and more congregations began vying to ensure their supply of donations and vocations to sustain and expand their own works, missionary propagandists were forced to innovate. Exploring the complexities of what Catholic missionary bodies often labelled ‘propaganda works’, this thesis raises questions as to how Ireland’s ever-growing ‘spiritual empire’ was funded. In the context of the nation’s well-documented contemporary economic woes, it asks who supported ‘the missions’? Who was expected to support ‘the missions’? What role did gender play in shaping this support? How did competition between missionary bodies affect popular engagement with ‘the missions’? In addition to examining matters of finance, this thesis also explores the way in which potential recruits were targeted beyond the realm of the missionary magazine.

Whilst not predominately concerned with ‘the missions’, Kevin O’Sullivan’s work on the Irish and international NGO sector provides the backdrop against which the decline of the modern Irish missionary movement is explored in this thesis.²⁸ In many respects

²⁸ Kevin O’Sullivan, ‘Biafra to Lomé: the evolution of Irish government policy on official development assistance, 1969-75’ in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, xviii (2007), pp 91-107; O’Sullivan, *Ireland*,

O'Sullivan's research and this study dovetail neatly. Whilst 'the missions' serve as a sort of prologue for his work on the emergence of the NGO in the 1960s, the rise of this new form of overseas aid giving acts as a sort of epilogue for the modern missionary phenomenon. Both O'Sullivan and Bateman, in her more recent work, point to the influence of the Biafran War (1967-1970) as a turning point in Irish history.²⁹ This conflict had a profound impact on the way in which the Irish conceived of and engaged with what increasingly became known as the 'Third World'. Building upon this existing scholarship, this thesis exploits the missionary lens to further contribute to understandings of the way in which the seismic shifts of the 1960s affected Irish society. Both Bateman and O'Sullivan acknowledge the influence of the concept of 'the missions' in shaping the new narratives that underpinned Irish identity in relation to aid-giving in the post-colonial context. In contrast to their work, the gaze of this thesis remains primarily fixed on the Irish Catholic missionary movement. Whilst other manifestations of Ireland's thriving Catholic culture of the pre-Vatican II era such as sodalities and Marian pilgrimages could quietly wind down, it asks what became of the nation's many mission-sending congregations in this increasingly changed domestic landscape? In what way did this new form of aid giving differ from the approach of 'the missions'? How did the missionary movement seek to adapt to this new environment? How did the decline of popular missionary zeal affect the missionary magazine? How did it impact upon the wider popular domestic experience of 'the missions'?

Whilst the historiography of the modern Irish Catholic missionary movement remains at a nascent stage, this thesis is part of a broader swell of interest in the phenomenon. Working within the field of visual culture, Fiona Loughnane, for example, has recently undertaken research on the photograph albums compiled by Irish missionaries.³⁰ Ailish Veale's doctoral thesis examining the Medical Missionaries of Mary, one of Ireland's most prominent missionary congregations, was completed in 2015.³¹ Moreover, the

Africa and the end of empire: small state identity in the Cold War, 1955-75 (Manchester, 2012); O'Sullivan, "'Ah, Ireland, the caring nation": foreign aid and Irish state identity in the long 1970s' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii, no. 151 (2013), pp 476-91; O'Sullivan, 'Humanitarian encounters: Biafra, NGOs and the imaginings of the Third World in Britain and Ireland, 1967-70' in *Journal of Genocide Research*, xvi, no. 2-3 (2014), pp 299-315.

²⁹ O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, pp 108-15; Bateman, 'Ireland and the Nigeria Biafra War'; Bateman, 'Biafra in the Irish imagination'.

³⁰ Fiona Loughnane, 'Irish Catholic missionary photography' in Salvador Ryan (ed.), *Treasures of Irish Christianity, volume 3: to the ends of the earth* (Dublin, 2015), pp 218-24.

³¹ Ailish Ellen Veale, 'It's all a matter of balanced tensions: Irish medical missionaries in Nigeria, 1937-1967' (Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2015).

2017 *Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* contains a contribution from Sarah Roddy examining Irish missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³² Providing a succinct overview of the phenomenon itself, the existing literature and setting out avenues of potential future research, the inclusion of this chapter would seem to reflect this recent upsurge of interest.

This has likely been at least in part stimulated by the wider international flourishing of missionary historiography, most notably but not exclusively examining the British and French iterations of the modern missionary phenomenon. Over the course of the last three decades historians working in both of these fields have made significant progress in rehabilitating the perceptions of missionary history. Once considered a niche topic, and thereby relegated to the margins of religious history, the modern missionary movement now occupies a far more prominent position within the mainstream of British and French imperial scholarship. The two former powerhouses of empire, substantial attention has been devoted to challenging assumptions that missionaries were little more than the ‘handmaids’ of empire.³³

With the existing literature on the British and French missionary movement confined primarily to the nineteenth century, this thesis contains a necessarily limited comparative element rather than a sustained comparison throughout. Given that the numerical strength of the British Protestant and French Catholic movements peaked in the twentieth century, this continued narrow chronological focus is somewhat surprising. Further patterns and trends are sure to be uncovered with the expansion of this field. Constrained by time and space, it was not possible to undertake primary research on the international missionary phenomenon. Instead, engaging with the existing European scholarship, this thesis moves away from ideas of Irish exceptionalism to explore similarities in missionary discourses and promotional methods. It draws upon the work of Norman Etherington, Andrew Porter, Jeffery Cox and, in particular, the more recent offerings of Esme Cleall, to demonstrate the high levels of crossover between the British Protestant missionary discourses of the long

³² Sarah Roddy, ‘Missionary empires and the worlds they made’ in Biagini and Daly (eds), *The Cambridge social history*, pp 534-50.

³³ David Maxwell, ‘Decolonisation’ in Norman Etherington, *Missions and empire* (Oxford, 2007), p. 287.

nineteenth century and those presented to Irish Catholic readers in the twentieth century.³⁴

Although primarily dominated by the nineteenth century, a small number of French scholars have expanded their horizons to encompass the twentieth century, most notably Jean Pirotte and Claude Prudhomme. Fortunately for this thesis both of these historians have explored aspects of the domestic experience of ‘the missions’ in France. Belgium is also occasionally incorporated into this analysis. These works have proved invaluable for the comparative element of this project. They allow for the vital contextualisation of the Irish missionary phenomenon which, as this study demonstrates, was very much a part of and engaged with the wider modern missionary movement.³⁵

This thesis is primarily driven by the material preserved in the archives and the published periodicals. Conscious to avoid the narrow focus of the institutional history, it uses as broad a range of sources as possible. Missionary archives were a vital yet problematic source of information. Accessibility has been a problem throughout the research phase of this PhD. In the wake of the scandals uncovered within the Catholic Church in recent decades some congregations are hesitant to grant researchers access. Some flat out refuse. A total of twelve archives belonging to various mission-sending bodies across Ireland were visited in the quest for sources. Many of these archives are still in the process of professionalization. Whilst some have clear catalogues and full-time archivists, others are more haphazard. In one case, the congregational archivist informed me that owing to what was perceived to be the mundane nature of the content an entire box containing records on ‘propaganda works’ had only been discarded a few

³⁴ See especially Etherington, *Missions and empire*; Porter, *Religion versus empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester, 2004); Jeffrey Cox, *British missionary enterprise since 1700* (London, 2008); Esme Cleall, *Missionary discourses of difference* (Basingstoke, 2012).

³⁵ See especially Jean Pirotte, *Périodiques missionnaires belges d'expression française, reflets de cinquante années d'évolution d'une mentalité, 1889-1940* (Louvain, 1973); Pirotte, ‘Aux sources des propagandes modernes, l’appel à la mission’ in Gilles Routhier and Frédéric Laugrand, *L’espace missionnaire: lieu de innovations et de recontres interculturelle* (Paris, 2002), pp 115-39; Prudhomme, ‘De l’aide aux missions à l’action pour le tiers monde: quelle continuité?’ In *Le mouvement social: bulletin trimestriel de l’institut français d’histoire sociale*, iv, no. 6 (1996), pp 9-28; Prudhomme, ‘Les missions chrétiennes’; Claude Prudhomme, ‘Mission religieuse et action humanitaire: quelle continuité?’ in *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l’Ouest*, cxii, no. 2 (2005), pp 11-29; Prudhomme, ‘L’argent des missions et les enjeux de pouvoir’ in M. Aubrun, G. Ardiso, B. Dompnier and A. Gueslin (eds), *Entre idéal et réalité: actes du colloque international d’histoire de finances et religion* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1993); Prudhomme, *Missions chrétiennes et colonisation*.

weeks before my visit. In some instances even when one is granted entry to an archive, there remains a reticence to actually produce primary documents. Thankfully, many have been more than welcoming and amenable. Building trust and good working relationships has opened important doors. Some archivists went above and beyond in seeking out material requested. Others kindly granted almost free reign of the archive. Conversations with members of numerous congregations as to where to seek out records have proved extremely fruitful. The Spiritan (formerly called the Holy Ghost Fathers) central archive in Paris was a crucial repository providing a wealth of information on the Irish branch of the society that was not actually available in their Dublin archive. This has been supplemented by material held in other Irish Catholic repositories including the Dublin Diocesan archive, the Galway Diocesan archive, the Cardinal Ó Fiaich Library, Armagh, and the Catholic Central Library, Dublin. State documents held in the National Archives and collections of private papers in UCD archives were also consulted.

A crucial medium for understanding the movement, the thesis also undertakes close reading of missionary publications. Whilst the archival material offers insight into matters of production and consumption, reading the titles themselves is of course crucial to understanding the popular domestic experience of ‘the missions’. This thesis concentrates on the home-produced periodicals published by the missionary congregations themselves. This was the primary means through which the majority of the Irish Catholic laity engaged with the missionary movement. Priority was given to the first wave of magazines that first emerged in the 1910s. Not only did they provide the blueprint which practically all other Irish Catholic missionary congregations would come to replicate but they are an almost totally unexamined resource. With the early years of these publications only available in the archives of the congregations that produced them, they have to date only been used by Edmund Hogan.

These magazines were read in their entirety. To understand the content, archival approaches were merged with the well-established theoretical frameworks of post-colonial scholarship, most notably Frantz Fanon and Edward Said.³⁶ To ascertain the

³⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979); Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth* (New York, 1963); Fanon, *Black skin, white masks* (3rd edn., London, 1993; 1st edn., 1952).

extent to which these missionary discourses filtered into wider identity and informed notions of Irishness, national and local newspapers were consulted.

It must be noted that this thesis makes no claims to represent those who were the subject of missionary endeavours. Focusing exclusively on the domestic perspective, it does not set out in any way to probe the realities of the peoples and places depicted in missionary literature. The inherently pejorative phrases ‘pagan’ and ‘heathen’ are used throughout this work. Whilst aware that some scholars favour the use of the neutral term non-Christian, after careful consideration it was decided that the contemporary terms will be used as they remain a vital component in understanding the lived experience of ‘the missions’. Moreover, this thesis uses the term ‘the missions’ to refer exclusively to ‘pagan’ missionary activity. Although the term could be used to denote the practice of Irish clerics and religious going to minister to Catholics in the English-speaking world, in the context of the twentieth century it most commonly referred to ‘pagan’ missionary endeavour. The terms congregation, society and order are used interchangeably. Whilst in the eyes of the Church all three are technically distinct types of religious institutions, this is of little relevance in the context of this thesis. Similarly, reflecting contemporary common usage, the term nun may be used to designate what is actually a religious sister. Finally, highly aware that not all Irish missionaries nor missionary supporters were Catholic, efforts have been made throughout to indicate that this thesis is dealing with the Irish Catholic ‘iteration’ of the modern missionary movement. However, for purposes of clarity it was not always possible to denote this specificity of meaning. Unless otherwise stated, in the context of this thesis the terms ‘the missions’, Irish missions and Irish missionaries refer to the Catholic manifestation of the phenomenon.

Reflecting the centrality of the magazines to the entire success of the modern missionary phenomenon, the first two chapters of this thesis examine the popular missionary periodical. Chapter one is divided into two main sections. Owing to the enormity of the influence of the broader movement on the Irish Catholic iteration of ‘the missions’, it begins in the nineteenth century. Through the prism of the missionary magazine, it explores the French influence in stirring Irish missionary enthusiasm in this period and its impact on shaping the indigenous Irish movement of the early twentieth century. It then moves on to analyse the development of what would become one of Ireland’s most consumed forms of literature – the home-produced missionary magazine.

It examines the importance of the Maynooth Mission to China in sparking mass Irish interest in the cause and highlights the central role that its periodical the *Far East* played in the creation of this growing missionary zeal. It scrutinises the construction of both the African and Chinese ‘pagan’ other within the discourse propagated in these magazines. Section two is primarily devoted to the construction of the Irish Catholic ‘self’ within this discourse. It looks at what tactics were used to ensure that mass readership translated into tangible gains for the individual mission-sending society.

Remaining with the prism of the missionary periodical, the boom of the Irish Catholic missionary movement from the early 1930s to the early 1960s is explored in chapter two. Focusing primarily on the second-wave of periodicals, the growth of this literary genre is analysed. With the emergence of the first female produced titles, the chapter examines how gender shaped content and sales. Issues of production, consumption and distribution are considered. The dramatic fall off in sales in the mid-1960s was to be an important alarm bell for the Irish Catholic missionary movement. Accordingly, the final part of the chapter uses the lens of the missionary magazine to understand the decline of the movement. Perceived to be crucial to the success and health of missionary endeavour, the desperate efforts of editors to revive the fortunes of their titles is discussed.

Chapter three looks beyond the magazine to other forms of popular engagement with ‘the missions’. The growing complexities of Irish missionary ‘propaganda works’ are examined. The importance of the missionary sale of work, the missionary film, missionary exhibition and school recruitment visits are, for example, considered. Efforts to engage American Catholics in the Irish Catholic missionary movement are probed. This chapter also explores the competition that emerged between mission-sending bodies as they vied to secure vocations and donations. The ways in which the Irish hierarchy sought to crack down on what they came to consider the overly zealous methods of promotion are analysed. The overlap with the methods employed by the protestant missionary movement in Ireland is also discussed in this chapter.

The final chapter scrutinises the relationship between the Irish Catholic missionary movement and the Irish state in its broadest definition. Recognising neither to be monolithic entities, the chapter also deals with the role of personality and takes into

account disparities in the experiences of different congregations. It embraces the complexity of these relationships, in particular the willingness of politicians to publicly embrace the concept of ‘the missions’ whilst simultaneously keeping the mission-sending bodies at an arm’s length. It analyses the role of the political elite in making ‘the missions’ such an integral component of Irish Catholic identity and explores the way in which missionary endeavour was exploited in political discourse. It probes the idea of the ‘spiritual empire’ so commonly associated with the Irish Catholic missionary movement. It highlights the importance of the Biafran War in confirming changing popular attitudes the missionary movement and examines the ways in which Irish politicians reimagined the Ireland’s missionary endeavours in the postcolonial context to assert the nation’s anti-imperialist credentials.

Chapter one

The missionary magazine: origins and ascent

For much of the twentieth century the success of Irish missionary endeavours was hugely reliant on the humble missionary magazine. Produced by numerous individual missionary societies, the most popular of these periodicals appeared monthly or bi-monthly. Titles with a smaller circulation appeared less frequently. The goal of all missionary magazines was the same: to attract vocations and donations. Content was dominated by popular, entertaining material which revolved around the theme of the congregation's own specific mission.¹ Serious religious debate was not on the agenda. A small team of appointed, at times reluctantly so, priests or sisters edited these publications in-house. Aside from printing, lay involvement was rare. In some cases only one or two individuals worked on the entire production.² Costs were usually kept to a minimum with the aim of selling the magazines as cheaply as possible and thus reaching the widest possible audience. Most missionary periodicals were sold for little more than the price of a daily newspaper, costing just two or three pence.³ Yearly subscriptions offered readers a discounted rate. This strategy proved enormously successful. Whilst the sale of these cheap publications was not lucrative in itself, the indirect income generated through appeals placed in their pages and the opportunity to attract new recruits were of immense value to the religious society.⁴ Missionary magazines became crucial to the entire enterprise of Irish missionary expansion. Demonstrating this importance, the rise, boom and sudden decline of Irish Catholic missionary zeal in the twentieth century was mirrored almost exactly in the sale of these home-produced periodicals. They provided the backbone to the vast missionary fundraising networks that stretched across Ireland and extended to reach Irish diaspora communities throughout the world. Reflecting on this importance one editor of the *African Missionary* noted, 'many of the people I met for the first time assured themselves of my missionary credentials by asking what magazine I belong to – though in not so many words "oh you belong to the *Africa* crowd or *The Word* crowd or the *Far*

¹ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

² See, for example, editors' papers relating to *Tidings* (Our Lady of Apostles Archive (OLAA), *Tidings* file) and *Missionary Annals* (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers).

³ See, for example, *African Rosary*; *Daystar in Africa*; *Far East*; while the price of missionary magazines slowly increased across the twentieth century, so too did the corresponding cost of a daily newspaper see, for example, the *Irish Independent*.

⁴ 'Minutes of meeting of missionary editors' (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 3, p. 3).

East”⁵ It was these magazines that would be the public face of ‘the missions’ in twentieth-century Ireland. It was through this medium that Irish Catholic missions became a collective enterprise, directed by religious congregations but supported, funded and manned by the mission literate masses.

This highly successful method of utilising popular periodicals to support extra-European missionary expansion was by no means an Irish invention. Cheap popular periodicals played a fundamental role in both the Protestant and Catholic missionary revival. Predicated on the basic principle that ‘Little streams make great rivers’, these publications both created and harnessed popular mass missionary zeal.⁶ Utilised by mission-sending organisations of seemingly all denominations, missionary periodicals were integral to the globalisation of Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By the time Irish missionary societies began to produce their own publications in the 1910s, a tried and tested formula for engaging the masses had been well established.

Adhering to the broad outline of this already proven formula, the content of Irish missionary magazines can be divided into two major categories: items related to the mission field and items related to the ‘home front’. Staple features included letters and progress reports sent home from missionaries, accounts of peoples and places encountered, mission-themed short stories, the chronicles of the respective society and acknowledgements of donations made. Characteristic of the missionary genre, Irish missionary periodicals were at once static and changing. Despite shifts in quality, rhetoric and tone, the missionary magazine of the 1910s was remarkably similar to that of the late 1950s. And yet, they enjoyed enormous success. With a regular mass circulation they became the primary means through which the laity understood, engaged with and contributed to the modern Irish missionary movement.

A wide assortment of printed missionary propaganda circulated during the golden era of Irish missions. The laity was presented with an array of material ranging from simple

⁵ ‘Report of editor of the *African Missionary* to the annual recruitment meeting, Blackrock’, 1 Dec. 1973 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 5).

⁶ Claude Prudhomme, ‘Les missions chrétiennes dans les sociétés coloniales’ in Dominique Barjot and Jacques Frémeaux (eds), *Les sociétés coloniales à l’âge des empires: des années 1850 aux années 1950* (Paris, 2012), p. 290.

promotional pamphlets to more extravagant offerings such as missionary almanacs and annuals. The home-produced periodical, however, reigned supreme. As Irish missionary zeal gathered momentum, a successful regular publication was considered a highly prized asset for congregations seeking to ensure their own constant stream of donations and vocations. Between 1914 and 1953 thirteen mission-sending societies in Ireland began producing their own periodicals intended for popular consumption.⁷ At the peak of their popularity in the early 1960s the collective readership of these publications was likely well in excess of one and half million.⁸ Despite such staggering figures, the Irish missionary magazine remains largely neglected in Irish historiography. The 2014 collection *Periodicals and Journalism in twentieth-century Ireland*, for example, includes just one brief passage on the subject.⁹ Recognising the significant role of these publications not only in the success of the Irish missionary movement itself but also in the formulation of Irish Catholic identity and the Irish Catholic worldview for much of the twentieth century, this chapter seeks to remedy, at least in part, this deficiency.

This chapter is divided into two sections. So integral in shaping the Irish missionary print medium, the first section begins by exploring the emergence of the French Catholic missionary genre in the nineteenth century and its limited appeal to an Irish audience. It then moves on to examine the influence of this continental model on the establishment of the first wave of Irish Catholic home-produced missionary periodicals in the twentieth century which consisted of just three titles – the *African Missionary*, the *Far East* and the *Missionary Annals*. Part of a booming religious print culture, the popularity of these publications is set within this wider contemporary context. Reflecting the substantial discursive crossover between imperialist and missionary

⁷ In chronological order: *African Missionary* (SMA) 1914; *Far East* (Columbans) 1918; *The Missionary Record of the Holy Ghost Fathers* (Holy Ghost Fathers) 1919, this publication was retitled *Missionary Annals* in 1920; *Bulletin of the Kiltegan Fathers* (St Patrick's Missionary Society) 1931, relaunched in 1937 under the title of *Africa*; *African Rosary* (Holy Rosary Sisters) 1936; *Medical Missionary of Mary* (Medical Missionaries of Mary) 1940; *Daystar in Africa* (Franciscan Missionary Sister of Africa) 1943; *Brief* (Irish Franciscans) 1946; *Eastern Star* (Columban Sisters) 1947, retitled *Star of the East* in 1950; *Tidings* (Our Lady of Apostles) 1948; *Augustinian Mission News* (Irish Augustinians); *Oriflamme* (St Louis Sisters) 1952; *The Word* (Society of the Divine Word) 1953; this list may not be exhaustive as lesser-known and short-lived titles prove exceptionally difficult to trace.

⁸ 'Religious magazine survey', 1969 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 2).

⁹ John Horgan, 'The Furrow: navigating the rapids, 1950-77' in Felix Larkin and Mark O'Brien (eds), *Periodicals and Journalism in twentieth-century Ireland: writing against the grain* (Dublin, 2014), p. 183; a short discussion on missionary magazines also features in Andrew McCarthy, 'Publishing for Catholic Ireland' in Clare Hutton and Patrick Walsh (eds), *The Oxford history of the Irish book, volume v, the Irish book in English, 1891-2000* (Oxford, 2011), pp 258-9.

narratives, the magazines are also situated in this broader milieu. Section one then provides an in-depth content analysis of these titles, with a particular focus on the construction of the ‘pagan’ other.

This allows section two to concentrate on constructions of the Irish self, Irish identity and notions of Irishness. It explores the way in which these titles engaged with the nationalist cause. Depictions of the missionary archetype are also considered.

Reinserting the Irish experience into the broader Catholic missionary system, traditional ideas of Irish exceptionalism and understandings of the Free State as an inward-looking nation are challenged. Mechanisms introduced with the hope of encouraging engagement with the cause – and thereby tangible gains for the congregations – are examined. Finally, situated into the broader context of Protestant and imperial discourses this chapter interrogates ideas of a shared, white, civilising mission and analyses a more elastic sense of the constructed ‘Us’.

I.

As mentioned, the Irish missionary periodical was very much a product of a much broader transnational phenomenon. The original popular Catholic missionary periodical was produced in France in the early nineteenth century by the *Oeuvre de la Propagation de la foi* or the Association for the Propagation of the Faith (APF).¹⁰ Founded in 1822 by a small group of mostly lay Catholics in Lyon, they began publishing a periodical, *Annales de la propagation de la foi*, in 1823.¹¹ In response to its enormous success an illustrated weekly version, *Missions Catholiques* was added in 1868.¹² Essentially a fundraising agency, the aim of the society was simple: to ‘furnish missionaries their daily bread and help them build missionary establishments abroad’.¹³ The society enjoyed enormous popularity. At the heart of its success was a simple but highly efficient fundraising system. The APF acted as a channel through which donations were gathered and redistributed amongst mission-sending institutions. Operating a simple cell

¹⁰ Yannick Essertel, *L’avenure missionnaire lyonnaise, 1815-1962* (Paris, 2001), pp 26-7.

¹¹ Edmund Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement: a historical survey, 1830-1980* (Dublin, 1990), p. 145; historians differ on the exact year that the society began to publish this periodical.

¹² James Patrick Daughton, *An empire divided: religion, republicanism and the making of French colonialism* (Oxford, 2006), p. 41.

¹³ As quoted in Daughton, *An empire divided*, p. 36.

system, a group of ten individuals formed a section, ten sections formed a century, and ten centuries formed a division. Each member agreed to give a small donation of just one ‘sou’ a week, as well as a commitment to daily prayer.¹⁴ Subscriptions were forwarded to a central committee.¹⁵ This contribution entitled each member to gratuitously access the society’s bimestrial publication, which was also sold by individual edition.¹⁶ By 1846 circulation had reached 180,000.¹⁷

Over the course of the nineteenth century French missionary zeal flourished. France became the commanding European leader of Catholic missionary expansion, sending more Catholic missionaries overseas than any other nation.¹⁸ The APF was the ultimate manifestation of a wider revival of post-revolutionary French missionary fervour. The populist appeal of its publications was vital in stimulating this zeal.¹⁹ The front cover of the bi-monthly journal proclaimed the periodical to be a continuation of the *Lettres édifiantes*, the acclaimed eighteenth-century Jesuit publication that printed letters sent home by pioneer missionaries working around the world.²⁰ As with its nineteenth-century incarnation, the primary aim was to induce support. The society’s periodicals offered an updated version of this format.²¹ Descriptive letters were sent from missionaries abroad to the society in France where they were selected and heavily edited before appearing in print.²² Heavily influenced by the Romantic movement and particularly Chateaubriand’s sentimental portrayal of missionaries in his famous work *Génie du christianisme*, missionaries were invariably depicted as brave heroic figures

¹⁴ Although strongly rejected by one of the founding members, it is likely that this cent- or penny-a-week system took inspiration from the already established Protestant missionary associations in England, see Edward Hickey, *The Society for the Propagation of the Faith: its foundation, organization and success* (Baltimore, 1922), pp 14-17; Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement*, p. 62; when the society later expanded to Britain and Ireland the weekly donation was a halfpenny.

¹⁵ Hickey, *The Society for the Propagation*, pp 27-8.

¹⁶ As set out in the revised rules of 1834, see *ibid.*, pp 31-2.

¹⁷ Prudhomme, ‘De l’aide aux missions à l’action pour le tiers monde: quelle continuité?’ In *Le mouvement social: bulletin trimestriel de l’institut français d’histoire sociale*, iv, no. 6 (1996), pp 11-12 ; as set out by Prudhomme, 100,000 of the 180,000 copies were the French edition with the remainder made up of editions printed for other countries.

¹⁸ Michael Pasquier, *Fathers on the frontier* (Oxford, 2010), p. 206.

¹⁹ Daughton, *An empire divided*, p. 35; Prudhomme, ‘De l’aide aux missions’, p. 11.

²⁰ Pasquier, *Fathers on the frontier*, p. 144.

²¹ See, for example, *Annales de l’Association de la Propagation de la Foi*, xxxv (Jan. 1834).

²² Pasquier, *Fathers on the frontier*, p. 92.

who withstood all manner of suffering in dangerous and exotic lands in the name of Christ.²³

Reflecting the global expansion of Catholic missions in the nineteenth century, the *Annales* initially published accounts from Asia and the New World (America and Canada), with letters from Oceania appearing from 1835, North Africa from 1839, and ‘black Africa’ from 1841.²⁴ Relevant images were increasingly included alongside these accounts. Supporters were asked to give regular prayers and alms. Countless missionary vocations were fostered by the idealised, and at times somewhat inaccurate, portrayal of life on the missions.²⁵ By avoiding divisive topics, particularly politics, these periodicals sought to attract the widest possible support base. Readers were drawn from all social classes.²⁶

This extensive reach even transcended national boundaries. Although the APF would remain firmly linked to its French roots, within a decade of its foundation efforts began to internationalise the organization. Versions of its *Annales* subsequently followed in all the major languages of the Catholic world including Italian, Spanish, German, Polish and Portuguese.²⁷ The launch of an English language version in 1839 brought the first Catholic missionary magazine to Ireland. Initially printed in Paris and then briefly in London, the Irish branch of the APF which had been established in 1838 was soon granted permission to take over printing and distribution. Reflecting the growing Irish support for the society and its aims, the popularity of the Dublin-printed *Annales* expanded steadily. By 1841 circulation had reached 12,000 copies per issue.²⁸ However, Edmund Hogan contends that the ‘*Annals* would not have made congenial reading for the majority of the Irish clergy’. He argues that aside from the regular detailed reports of income and expenditure, and the ‘infrequent accounts of work among Irish emigrants’, much of the magazine’s message would have ‘jarred’ with the Irish mindset.

²³ Jean Pirotte, ‘Aux sources des propagandes modernes, l’appel à la mission’ in Gilles Routhier and Frédéric Laugrand, *L’espace missionnaire: lieu de innovations et de recontres interculturelle* (Paris, 2002), p. 121; Pasquier, *Fathers on the frontier*, p. 5.

²⁴ Prudhomme, ‘Mission religieuse et action humanitaire: quelle continuité?’ in *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l’Ouest*, cxii, no. 2 (2005), pp 14-15.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁶ Daughton, *An empire divided*, p. 36.

²⁷ Prudhomme, ‘De l’aide aux missions’, p. 12.

²⁸ These figures are taken from Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, p. 67; the original documents from which these figures were obtained are no longer accessible to researchers.

Tales and descriptions of ‘exotic’ lands and ‘exotic’ people alongside romantic accounts of brave and heroic missionaries lacked appeal for the insular Irish Church, struggling to overcome the effects of penal oppression and devastating famine.²⁹ Whilst the arrival of the *Annales* certainly stirred Irish enthusiasm for non-Christian missions, it did not trigger the widespread release of missionary fervour as had been seen elsewhere in Continental Europe.

As this continental zeal gathered momentum, France, and to a lesser extent the rest of industrialized Catholic Europe, witnessed an ‘*efflorescence extraordinaire*’ of missionary organisations.³⁰ Numerous religious institutions, both male and female, were founded for the specific purpose of sending missionaries to convert pagans abroad. In addition, the spectacular success of the APF encouraged the foundation of a number of similar mission support societies. The aims of these imitation agencies were much narrower than those of the APF. The Leopoldine Society (*Die Leopoldinenstiftung*), for example, founded in Vienna in 1829, sought solely to provide support to the Catholic missions in North America.³¹ Three such organizations were subsequently established in France, the most notable of which was *L’Oeuvre de la Sainte-Enfance* (The Holy Childhood Association). Founded in 1843 by Mgr.de Forbin-Jansin, the bishop of Nancy, it aimed to save Chinese babies from infanticide and abandonment.³² The society was primarily targeted at children under the age of twelve who would donate a small ‘child size’ subscription to the cause.³³ The Holy Childhood came to be regarded as an auxiliary or ‘daughter’ association of the APF.³⁴ Its financial success was second only to its ‘parent’ organization, which would remain the largest and most influential of all the Catholic missionary support agencies.³⁵

²⁹ Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, pp 67-8.

³⁰ Pirotte, ‘Aux sources des propagandes modernes’, p. 121.

³¹ Prudhomme, ‘L’argent des missions et les enjeux de pouvoir’ in M. Aubrun, G. Ardiso, B. Dompnier and A. Gueslin (eds), *Entre idéal et réalité : actes du colloque international d’histoire de finances et religion* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1993), pp 375-6; see Raymond Payne, ‘Annals of the Leopoldine Association’ in *The Catholic Historical Review*, i, no. 1 (1915), pp 51-63.

³² Henrietta Harrison, ‘A penny for the little Chinese: The French Holy Childhood Association in China, 1843-1951’ in *American Historical Review*, cxiii, no. 1 (2008), p. 73.

³³ Sophie Heywood, ‘Missionary Children: The French Holy Childhood Association in European Context, 1843-c.1914’ in *European History Quarterly*, cdlix, no. 3 (2015), p. 447; Heywood notes that the idea of children’s missions was pioneered in Britain by Methodists and Baptists in the early 1840s.

³⁴ ‘The Association of the Holy Childhood’ in *The Irish Monthly*, ix, no. 96 (1881), p. 325.

³⁵ Heywood, ‘Missionary Children’, p. 447.

Like the APF the Holy Childhood sought to internationalise its operations, hence its arrival in Ireland in 1854. Perhaps indicative of the differing political and religious sensitivities or perhaps for logistical reasons, the Holy Childhood once again followed the example of its ‘parent’ agency by setting up a separate Irish branch in Dublin at the same time as establishing an English branch in London.³⁶ As with the APF, the Irish contribution soon outstripped that of England and Scotland combined.³⁷ However, the impact of the Holy Childhood in Ireland was substantially less than that of its ‘parent’ organization; even tracing the early decades of the Irish branch proves comparatively difficult. In 1880 the Director-General of the association, Canon du Fougerais, arrived in Ireland to promote the cause. On a return visit the following year he appointed a Holy Ghost priest, Fr Hyland, as the national director of Ireland. The organisation of the Irish branch Holy Childhood henceforth remained in the hands of the Holy Ghost society.³⁸ Perhaps owing to du Fougerais’ visits or perhaps following a public endorsement of the Holy Childhood by Pope Leo XIII in 1880, a handful of articles promoting the society subsequently appeared in the Jesuits’ *Irish Monthly*. The first, appearing in 1881, stated that it is ‘an absolute certainty that Irish Catholics are quite insufficiently acquainted’ with the association.³⁹ Those wishing to become ‘regular subscribers’ were directed to write to the central committee in Dublin to ‘obtain annals, pictures, medals and collecting-cards, all of which are provided gratis’. Three years later a subsequent article criticised the poor uptake of the work amongst the ‘general Catholic public’ in Ireland, noting that the majority of support came from convent schools and to a lesser extent the Catholic colleges.⁴⁰

Hugely dependent on cheap periodicals to attract supporters, the proliferation of these aid societies gave rise to a specialised Catholic missionary press. Expanding the genre significantly, from the 1870s an increasing number of mission-sending congregations sought to directly reap the benefits of mass engagement by launching their own regular journal.⁴¹ Undoubtedly facilitated by growing literacy rates, by the end of the nineteenth

³⁶ Bernard Arens S.J., *Manuel des missions Catholiques* (Paris, 1952), p. 375, p. 397.

³⁷ Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, p 62; see, for example, ‘Report of subscriptions received in 1865’ in *Annals of the Society of the Holy Childhood*, no. 70 (Mar. 1866).

³⁸ ‘History of the Irish Province’ (Spiritan Archive Paris, Province de l’Irlande, 7G1.6a1).

³⁹ ‘The Association of the Holy Childhood’ in *The Irish Monthly*, ix, no. 96 (1881), pp 323-5.

⁴⁰ ‘Irish Children and the Holy Childhood’ in *The Irish Monthly*, xii, no. 131 (1884), p. 269.

⁴¹ Pirotte, ‘Aux sources des propagandes modernes’, p. 129; for a list of Catholic missionary publications see Arens, *Manuel des missions Catholique*, pp 363-414.

century much of the western world was awash with popular missionary literature.⁴² This included a vast array of Protestant periodicals that were remarkably similar in their function, style and content. Over three hundred such publications existed in Britain alone.⁴³ On the Catholic side, the French unsurprisingly led the way. ⁴⁴ By 1900 twenty-five Catholic missionary periodicals were in print in France. Germany followed with eighteen, Belgium and Italy produced fifteen each, and Holland thirteen. Countries less prominent in the Catholic missionary revival printed far fewer, for example, Spain and Poland produced six and three respectively.⁴⁵ Reflective of the French influence on the early modern Irish missionary movement the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith* and the *Annals of the Holy Childhood Association* remained the only two titles available in Ireland right up until the 1890s. It was primarily through these publications that continental missionary zeal slowly made inroads in Ireland. They provided a channel through which popular missionary support could be both promoted and harnessed.

In the final years of the nineteenth century these two titles of French origin were joined by a more homegrown or indigenous missionary publication – *St Joseph's Sheaf*.⁴⁶ The oft forgotten quarterly was set up in 1895 by Olivia Taaffe, a wealthy and devout laywoman. The publication became the germ of the St Joseph's Young Priests organization for which it would act as a propaganda organ. The aim of the association was to provide financial assistance to boys who wished to train as priests for the foreign missions but did not have the means to do so. According to the society's founding narrative, Taaffe was inspired by both the French influence on her education and her later travels to France. On one such visit in 1867 she met Cardinal Joseph Leon Roy who had established a shrine to St Joseph in Maranville, east of Paris and its connected confraternity. She henceforth began a lifelong friendship and involvement with the association. Upon the death of her husband and son, Taaffe, dedicated herself to the

⁴² For discussion on growing literacy in the nineteenth century, see Ciaran O'Neill, 'Literacy in Education', in Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (eds), *The Cambridge social history of modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), pp 244-60.

⁴³ Felicity Jensz, 'Origin of missionary periodicals: form and function of three Moravian publications' in *Journal of Religious History*, xxxvi, no. 2 (2012), p. 235.

⁴⁴ Albert Monshan Wu, *From Christ to Confucius* (New Haven, 2016), p. 32.

⁴⁵ These figures are as listed in Arens, *Manuel des Missions Catholique*, pp 379-405.

⁴⁶ It should be noted that in 1891 a periodical entitled *The missionary record of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate* was launched; despite the name, extant copies suggest that this little-known publication was in fact primarily a devotional magazine with the majority of content focused on Marian devotions, particularly the Oblate shrine to Mary in Inchicore, Dublin; in 1930 the periodical was subsumed by *The Lourdes Messenger*, which explicitly focused on Marianism.

propagation of the devotion in Ireland.⁴⁷ The resultant periodical, *St Joseph's Sheaf*, was originally intended to closely imitate its French devotional counterpart, *Le Gerbe de Sainte Joseph*. However, under Taaffe's direction and the editorship of noted classicist, Fr Henry Browne, SJ, the publication took on a character of its own.⁴⁸

Initially concerned with supporting students for work amongst Irish emigrants the thrust of the society and its publication soon took 'a definite tendency in the direction of the pagan missions with a particular focus on China and the 'Far East'.⁴⁹ The somewhat complex background of the periodical gave rise to a sort of hybrid publication with elements typical of both the missionary and the increasingly popular devotional genre. Readers were provided with updates from mission fields, accounts of fundraising activities, and reports on the progress of its students alongside popular devotional material, primarily focused on Saint Joseph.⁵⁰ Reflecting wider trends the society's emphasis on China and the 'Far East' intensified, and in 1915 the Irish Hierarchy officially recognized the association and its 'purpose of educating priests to preach the Gospel in China and the Far East'.⁵¹ However, neither the society nor its publication confined its focus to one particular mission field.⁵²

Compared with the French missionary funding organizations Taaffe's venture was extremely modest. However, it would appear that in the context of hesitant Irish missionary enthusiasm it was largely deemed a success. In 1900, readers were proudly informed that the number of students supported by the society had grown to eighteen.⁵³ Taaffe's influential and wealthy connections undoubtedly played a role in establishing the organisation but the *Sheaf* was crucial in promoting and expanding the work.⁵⁴ Somewhat more convoluted than the highly centralised systems of the main French

⁴⁷ J. Anthony Gaughan, 'Taaffe, Olivia Mary Blake' in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (<https://dib-cambridge-org.elib.tcd.ie/quicksearch.do>) (3 May 2019).

⁴⁸ The magazine was briefly edited by another Jesuit, Fr Joseph Darlington, who quickly passed the task to Brown, see J. Anthony Gaughan, *Olivia Mary Taaffe* (Dublin, 1995), p. 87.

⁴⁹ Stephen J. Brown, SJ, 'St Joseph's Young Priests' Society' in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, xxxii (1928), pp 130-7.

⁵⁰ See, for example, *St Joseph's Sheaf*, ii, no. 9 (1897).

⁵¹ Brown, *St Joseph's Young Priests' Society*, p. 132.

⁵² See, for examples, *St Joseph's Sheaf*, v, no. 33 (1903) and *St Joseph Sheaf*, xvii, no. 131 (1927).

⁵³ *St Joseph's Sheaf*, v, no. 24 (1900).

⁵⁴ The editor of a 1927 edition noted the importance of the *Sheaf* stating 'it has been our experience during many years that a large proportion, perhaps the greater part of our funds come to us from readers of the *Sheaf*' see *St Joseph's Sheaf*, xvii, no. 131 (1927).

missionary aid bodies, the society took on a structure more akin to a confraternity or sodality. A network of branches that relied heavily on laymen and women to provide organisational support slowly began to develop. ‘Promoters’ would collect subscriptions either under the auspices of a local branch, or where no such branch existed directly under the council.⁵⁵ Subscribers were then entitled to copies of the *Sheaf* sent either directly from headquarters in Dublin or from their Promoter. Initially this system proved haphazard with Promoters sometimes ‘months in arrears with payments’ and ‘disappointed subscribers’ lodging complaints that they had never received their magazine.⁵⁶ Participation in the society was a relatively expensive affair. In 1897 in order to become a subscriber it was necessary to donate ‘no less than £1’. Those who could not afford this could opt to become a ‘joint-subscriber’ by forming a group of four with each person ‘paying five shillings a piece’ to reach one pound.⁵⁷ Smaller donations were also acknowledged. Whilst readers of the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith* could see the name of their diocese and the amount it contributed in print; readers of the *Sheaf* could see their own name printed alongside the exact amount contributed. The small-scale or local nature of the Irish magazine afforded room for readers’ ‘Thanksgivings’ and ‘Intentions’ to be listed. For example, in an edition from 1903, one anonymous subscriber asked for prayers for a ‘young person suffering a sore foot’, another promised to donate one pound ‘if St. Joseph grants my mother her request and removes her present trouble’, and another for the ‘conversion of a man dreadfully addicted to drink’.⁵⁸ Premium spiritual benefits were reserved for ‘Life Benefactors’ who had donated upwards of seven pounds.⁵⁹ Official spiritual advantages were granted to the society through its continued connection with the Archconfraternity of St Joseph at Maranville. In return for these benefits an annual affiliation payment was sent from the central committee in Dublin.⁶⁰

Despite its French links, *St Joseph’s Sheaf* may be regarded as Ireland’s first indigenous Catholic missionary magazine. Unlike the periodicals produced by the APF and the

⁵⁵ For a discussion on confraternities and sodalities in Ireland see Colm Lennon (ed.), *Confraternities and sodalities in Ireland: charity, devotion and sociability* (Dublin, 2012).

⁵⁶ *St Joseph’s Sheaf*, v, no. 33 (1903).

⁵⁷ *St Joseph’s Sheaf*, ii, no. 8 (1897).

⁵⁸ *St Joseph’s Sheaf*, v, no. 33 (1903).

⁵⁹ *St Joseph’s Sheaf*, ii, no. 8 (1897).

⁶⁰ Gaughan, *Olivia Mary Taaffe*, p. 87.

Holy Childhood, content was not under the control of a central body in France. It was an Irish publication aimed exclusively at an Irish audience supporting Irish priestly aspirants.⁶¹ Using circulation as a gauge, the overall success of the *Sheaf* was limited, particularly when compared with later Irish missionary periodicals. By 1904, circulation had reached 9,000 copies.⁶² Whilst taking on many features of the French missionary aid associations St Joseph's Young Priest Society was not, as yet, a truly became a populist missionary organisation. Examining extant copies of the *Sheaf* one gets the impression that this may of course never have been the original intention. Perhaps a reflection of Taaffe's own wealth and connections in 'fashionable society', the primary target audience appears to have been the upper and middle classes.⁶³ The requested standard yearly donation of one pound cost almost ten times the amount of annual membership to the APF.⁶⁴

Whilst *St Joseph's Sheaf* certainly furthered the cause of non-Christian missions in certain quarters, mass engagement with the concept in Ireland was ultimately dependent on the proliferation of a specific version of the missionary periodical – the home-produced magazine. Independent of the missionary aid organizations these modest publications were produced in-house by individual mission-sending congregations and societies. This type of Catholic missionary magazine began to appear in continental Europe in the final decades of the nineteenth century and became an increasingly popular method of providing both donations and vocations. In France, a total of fifty-four such publications were in print in 1924. The circulation of the majority of these was limited, often reaching only one or two thousand copies. Only a handful of the most popular titles exceeded a figure of 10,000.⁶⁵ The publications of the major support agencies including the APF and Holy Childhood remained crucial to growth of French missionary zeal in the twentieth century. However, in the Irish context the home-produced periodical dominated. The rise, boom and sudden decline of Irish Catholic missions was mirrored almost exactly in the sale of these publications. Although primarily intended to simply support each institution's own specific work, their

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 204.

⁶² Of this figure a small number were circulated in Australia and New Zealand, see *ibid.*, p 93.

⁶³ Ibid.; Gaughan, 'Taaffe, Olivia Mary Blake'.

⁶⁴ Membership to the Irish Branch of the APF cost one halfpenny per week, or 27p per annum, versus £1 or 240p to join the St Joseph's Young Priests organization.

⁶⁵ Prudhomme, 'De l'aide aux missions', p. 13.

cumulative effect was profound. Whilst quality and popularity varied, these periodicals were typical of their genre, providing remarkably similar conceptualisations of Catholic missionary enterprise. As circulation expanded and new titles emerged this combined output increasingly acted as an informal or piecemeal information network with each publication constantly reinforcing the same vision of Irish extra-European missions. This was the medium through which Catholic Ireland would become a truly ‘mission-minded’ nation.

The growth of the genre was not simply a representation of growing missionary zeal in Ireland; it played a fundamental role in the creation and expansion of that zeal. As witnessed in the French context, the success of one periodical not only encouraged existing missionary institutes to follow suit but also inspired a more general missionary enthusiasm, which brought about the foundation of more missionary institutions who in turn launched their own publications. Put simply, in the right atmosphere, missionary magazines spawned missionary magazines.

It is perhaps not surprising that the first home-produced missionary magazine in Ireland came from the Society for African Missions (SMA), a religious society of French origin. Established in Cork in 1878, the French motherhouse retained control of the Irish branch until 1910 when it became an autonomous Province. Up until this point Irish recruits had been sent to headquarters in Lyon for their priestly training.⁶⁶ Home of the APF and a number of mission-sending institutions, the diocese of Lyon played a dominant role in the support of Catholic missionary expansion.⁶⁷ The French SMAs began publishing their own regular periodical in 1902.⁶⁸ Likely influenced by this connection, in 1914, the Irish province launched the *African Missionary*, providing the first Irish take on the popular French format. Initially launched as a quarterly, within two years it was deemed sufficiently popular to increase to a bi-monthly frequency.

This SMA publication stood alone until 1918 when the Columbans launched the *Far East* (discussed below) followed one year later by *The Missionary Annals of the Holy Ghost Fathers*. Much like the SMA, the Holy Ghost Fathers were a French

⁶⁶ Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement*, pp 85-90.

⁶⁷ Essertel, *L'avenure missionnaire lyonnaise*, pp 16-19.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 51; the *Écho des missions africaines de Lyon* was published between 1902 and 1967.

congregation who had arrived in Ireland in the nineteenth century seeking recruits to staff missions in the British colonies.⁶⁹ Whilst results for many years were rather lacklustre, the presence of both societies in Ireland slowly helped to further Irish interest in the ‘pagan’ missions.⁷⁰ The launch of this first wave of home-produced missionary periodicals marked a significant turning point in the fortunes of both the individual organisations as well as Irish missionary enthusiasm more generally. Unfortunately, comprehensive circulation figures for missionary magazines prove elusive. This information was not typically preserved. However, the exceptional detail found in the surviving editors’ papers in the Spiritan archive (formerly known as the Holy Ghost Fathers) provides at least a partially exact insight into readership patterns. *The Missionary Annals of the Holy Ghost Fathers*, or simply the *Missionary Annals* as it was commonly known, was initially intended as a bi-annual publication.⁷¹ The 2,000 copies printed of the first edition quickly sold out.⁷² Enthused by this ‘gratifying reception’ and the public’s ‘eagerness to secure missionary literature’ it was decided that the *Missionary Annals* would appear as a monthly periodical.⁷³ By December 1920, circulation was reported to be close to 10,000. Reflecting the growth of Irish missionary zeal and the increasing demand for mission-themed reading material, sales grew rapidly. Writing in the late 1940s the editor stated: ‘since 1930 its circulation has soared from thirty thousand copies to its present almost 70,000.’⁷⁴ In the mid-1950s circulation was regularly in excess of 90,000 copies, reaching a crescendo in the years leading up the Second Vatican Council.⁷⁵ As attitudes towards Irish missionary activity began to change in the 1960s, the popularity of the *Missionary Annals* went into decline. This fall in circulation was evident even before the close of Council and by 1966 had dropped below 70,000.⁷⁶ Despite numerous efforts to rebrand the magazine, circulation figures never again reached boom time figures.⁷⁷ Reflecting the inextricable link between

⁶⁹ Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, p. 79.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 87.

⁷¹ *Missionary Annals*, i (Aug. 1919).

⁷² Myles Fay, ‘Finance’ in Enda Watters (ed.), *Go teach all nations: a history of the Irish province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit* (Dublin, 2000), p. 309.

⁷³ *Missionary Annals*, i (Aug. 1919); the earliest editions of the *Missionary Annals* can be found in the Spiritan archive.

⁷⁴ ‘Report on *Missionary Annals* for potential advertisers’, c.1949 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 7).

⁷⁵ Cahill & Co. printers to Fr Watters, 7 Dec. 1956 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 7).

⁷⁶ ABC certificate (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 9).

⁷⁷ ‘Letter worded by the ABC on behalf of *Missionary Annals*’, 4 Jul. 1966 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 9).

missionary zeal and corresponding publications it appears that all other Irish missionary magazines experienced a similar trajectory of steady growth, rapid expansion, and then decline beginning in the mid-1960s.⁷⁸

Compared with its rivals the *Missionary Annals* had a mid-range circulation.⁷⁹ It was the aforementioned *Far East* that would dominate the market. Launched in 1918 as the propaganda organ of the Maynooth Mission to China (commonly known as the Columbans), this monthly periodical set the gold standard of home-produced missionary publications in Ireland. Whilst certainly not thriving as mission-sending institutions, both the SMA and Holy Ghost Fathers had managed to survive in Ireland for a number of decades without a periodical. In contrast, the fledgling Maynooth Mission, which had been founded in 1916, was, from the outset, hugely dependent on the success of its publication. This periodical was an essential component of the society's wider intensive propaganda campaign. Seeking to optimize the "little streams make big rivers" approach to missionary funding, Columban priests traversed Ireland; travelling from parish to parish to give promotional talks, distribute pamphlets and make contacts with the local clergy and religious. By the time the *Far East* launched in 1918, an eager readership was already in place.

Reflecting on the inception of the *Far East* one founding member who had assisted with the publication, Fr Edward McCarthy, noted that 'of course we had talked a lot about a magazine from the very start.' Adding that 'the idea of starting a new magazine seemed to us at the time a very formidable affair'. And so, on the advice of Dr Mac Cafferey, the vice-president of Maynooth, the inexperienced Columbans became 'associated with Fr Browne S.J.' who 'had a magazine called "*St Joseph's Sheaf*". With the future of the society riding on the success of the *Far East*, the editor was certainly motivated to succeed. Indicative of high expectations, a substantial print-run was envisaged from the beginning. However, launched in the midst of the First World War these ambitions were somewhat thwarted by war-time regulations which meant that they 'could get a permit for only a 10,000 edition' and even for that they 'had to do a lot of wire-pulling at

⁷⁸ One of the less popular titles, *Tidings*, for example, was launched by the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles in Cork in 1948 and had reached circulation of 18,000 by 1962; by 1967 this figure had dropped to 15,500 (OLAA, *Tidings* folder); see also documents conveying reactions to declining circulation figures (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 5).

⁷⁹ 'Annotations on religious magazine survey', 1969 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 2).

Dublin Castle'. Evidently pleased with their first effort which 'appeared on the Dublin news-stands on January 1st, 1918', the editor 'insisted' that McCarthy accompany him on a "walk down Grafton Street" in order 'to mark the occasion'.⁸⁰

Examining the first edition of the *Far East*, one can appreciate the editor's sense of accomplishment. With its clear layout and neat format, the final product conveyed a sense of professionalism. Compared with the *African Missionary*, its sole direct competitor at the time, the appearance of the *Far East* was irrefutably more impressive. For example, of the fifteen images included in the first *Far East*, twelve were photographs whilst the corresponding edition of the *African Missionary* included six images only two of which were photographs.⁸¹ Writing to congratulate the society Rev. Frances E. Ross, the director of the British branch of the APF and editor of its propaganda organ asserted that:

It easily outdistances, to my mind, all other efforts at missionary journalism which have been made of late years. The combination of deep sincerity, clear exposition and lucidity which comes from theological training, together with the up-to-date journalistic method of setting out the matter presented, has furnished an instrument which will not only fashion your own great movement, but will also greatly help the whole missionary cause in these islands especially.⁸²

As Ireland's second home-produced missionary periodical the *Far East* was simultaneously both conventional and innovative. Typical of the genre, content was primarily focused on the society and its work with the ultimate aim of inducing readers' support. However, in addition to the high-quality format a number of features were combined to maximise the appeal of the magazine, and by extension the society. The most obvious of these was the huge emphasis on Irishness. Unlike all other Catholic missionary bodies operating in Ireland the Maynooth Mission to China was the sole organization with no direct French links. Nurtured as an embryonic organisation in the National Seminary at Maynooth and subsequently granted official support by the Irish Hierarchy the society's origins were deemed a unique advantage. Since the Revolution of 1789, all things French had been viewed with a degree of suspicion by the Irish

⁸⁰ Reflections of business manager of the *Far East*, E.L. McCarthy, 11 Nov. 1949 (Columban Archive, USA 1/11).

⁸¹ *Far East*, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1918); *African Missionary*, no. 23 (Jan.-Feb. 1918).

⁸² Quote from letter written by Rev. Frances E. Ross printed in *Far East*, i, no. 3 (Mar. 1918).

Catholic Church.⁸³ Seeking to exploit growing nationalist sentiment the *Far East*, from the very first edition, was used to further propagate the triumphant rhetoric surrounding this Irish pedigree. The subtitle of early editions informed potential readers that the *Far East* was ‘a magazine devoted to the organization of an Irish National Mission to China’ appeared alongside what McCarthy deemed to be ‘a weird looking Celtic cover design’.⁸⁴ The significance of this Irishness was constantly reinforced in the content.

As if to further authenticate the claim an Irish language feature printed in traditional Gaelic script became a staple of the publication, despite the poor literacy rates in the language.⁸⁵ Discourse linking nation and mission had long been a feature of British protestant missionary literature and had, since the 1890s, become an increasingly common element in French missionary propaganda.⁸⁶ The adaptation of this rhetoric for an Irish audience, discussed further below, proved popular. An Irish language feature printed in traditional Gaelic script became a staple of missionary magazines in Ireland, appearing in the *Missionary Annals* from the very first edition in 1919 with the *African Missionary* following suit in 1921.⁸⁷

Seeking to add further appeal the *Far East* also included a section specifically for children. Written by a fictional character named Colum (presumably a shortened version of Columba, the society’s patron saint) the feature entitled ‘Our Little Missionaries’ was included from the very first edition. Short stories, puzzles and prizes were used to attract the attention of young readers. Further aligning itself with an increasingly popular vision of Catholic Ireland, a child-friendly Irish language piece was also included. Again, this strategy was nothing new. The concept of engaging children as supporters of missionary expansion had originated in British protestant missionary circles in the early 1840s and was subsequently popularized amongst European Catholics by the aforementioned Holy Childhood Association. Likely

⁸³ Edmund Hogan, *The turning of a tide: Ignace Lissner and the Society of African Missions in the USA* (Rome, 2016) p. 96.

⁸⁴ This cover design was created by Dublin based artist Joseph Tierney who later found acclaim for his stained-glass work; unfortunately, the original cover was removed in the process of creating bound volumes, but a reproduction can be seen in the American *Far East*, xxvi, no. 9 (Oct. 1943).

⁸⁵ Aidan Doyle, *A history of the Irish language: from the Norman invasion to independence* (Oxford, 2015), p. 262.

⁸⁶ Daugton, *An empire divided*, p. 19.

⁸⁷ *Missionary Record of the Holy Ghost Fathers* (Aug. 1919). The name of the publication was changed to the *Missionary Annals of the Holy Ghost Fathers* in Feb. 1920; *African Missionary* (Mar.-Apr. 1921).

influenced by the success of the Holy Childhood as well as the more general embrace of children's literature, the *Far East* pioneered the use of the children's section in the Irish missionary magazine.⁸⁸ Again, this feature proved popular and it became a regular feature in the *Missionary Annals*, the *African Missionary* and nearly all other subsequent missionary periodicals produced in Ireland.⁸⁹

Upon the removal of wartime restrictions, the editor could finally set about fulfilling his early aspirations for the *Far East*. Circulation grew rapidly reaching approximately 45,000 in February 1920, 62,000 in April 1921, and growing to 75,000 by March 1926.⁹⁰ In 1949, a decade before the peak of Irish missionary zeal one approximate estimate placed the figure at 135,000.⁹¹ Whilst the foundation of the Maynooth Mission to China has been recognized as 'the great watershed moment in the history of the modern Irish missionary movement', the pivotal role of its propaganda organ in shaping the lay experience of Catholic missions in Ireland goes largely unnoticed.⁹²

In addition to rapidly advancing popular missionary zeal in Ireland, the extraordinary success of the *Far East* also influenced the nature of the Irish Catholic missionary genre for much of the twentieth century. Just as the *Far East* had drawn inspiration from *St Joseph's Sheaf* as well as missionary periodicals published outside of Ireland, it in turn became a source of inspiration.⁹³ One particularly explicit demonstration of this influence comes from an account of the origins of the *Missionary Annals* which directly credits the popularity of the *Far East* as having inspired the undertaking. Although the

⁸⁸ In October 1917 Fr John Blowick, the co-founder of the Columbans, gave a speech to the Catholic Truth Society which highlighted his awareness of the Holy Childhood Association as well as their aims and methods see 'The Maynooth Mission to China', Oct. 1917 (Columban Archive, USA 1/12); Sarah-Anne Buckley and Susannah Riordan, 'Childhood since 1740' in Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (eds), *The Cambridge social history of modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 335.

⁸⁹ A children's section was included in the Holy Ghost publication from the very first edition in Aug. 1919 and first appeared in the *African Missionary*, no. 47 (Jan.-Feb. 1922)

⁹⁰ The first two figures are taken from a document written by Fr Mullen in 1961, recounting the early years of the Columbans. Given the number of figures included in the document it appears that Fr Mullen was not relying solely on memory (Columban Archive, USA, 1/12); the third figure is taken from Stephen J. Brown, 'Foreign Missions: A Survey' in *Studies*, xv, no. 57 (1926), p. 113.

⁹¹ T. J. Martin to Provincial, 20 Jun. 1949 (Irish Jesuit Archive (IJA), ADMN/44/4/9/3 16); memorandum sent in response, 1949, (IJA, ADMN/44/4/9/3 17).

⁹² Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, p. 91.

⁹³ Demonstrating knowledge of foreign periodicals in the first edition, a short quote from the propaganda organ of the American Maryknoll Fathers, *Field Afar*, appeared in *Far East*, i, no. 1 (Jan 1918); similarly an article expounding the virtues of *Catholic Missions*, the propaganda organ of the British branch of the APF was printed in *Far East*, i, no. 3 (Mar. 1918).

SMA's *African Missionary* had been in print since 1914 the Holy Ghost Fathers only sought to produce their own magazine after witnessing the enormous response to the Columban effort. Seeking to at least partially emulate this success two Holy Ghost priests visited the Columban headquarters in Galway where the methods of producing such a publication were explained.⁹⁴ Despite the emergence of the second and third wave of home-produced missionary magazines the *Far East* continued to dominate the market. Reflecting this ongoing success, twenty years later, in 1939, Ireland's youngest missionary congregation, the MMM, also sought the expertise of the Columbans when setting up their own periodical. Dr Maguire (Colum of the *Far East*) graciously obliged and 'fixed up everything' for their first edition.⁹⁵

The growth of the *Far East* and its competitors should of course be read not only within the context of increasing Irish missionary zeal but also as part of the wider embrace of popular Catholic reading material. Facilitated by growing access to low cost printing methods, print media became a key feature of the religious revival that swept across Europe in the nineteenth century. The rise of the original Catholic missionary magazine, *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, and its imitators coincided with the emergence of what Christopher Clark has termed 'New Catholicism' which was marked by 'a proliferation and elaboration of popular devotions, church buildings, religious foundations and associations, and confessionally motivated newspapers and journals'.⁹⁶ Examining this process within the Irish context, Emmet Larkin's pioneering work has described this 'flowering of Catholic religious life' in the nineteenth century Ireland as a 'devotional revolution'.⁹⁷ In keeping with the general orientation of 'New Catholicism' this 'revolution' introduced a whole host of paraliturgical practices that encouraged mass participation in a regularized version of *Roman* Catholicism. Attracted by the promise of spiritual rewards the laity increasingly engaged with 'a whole series

⁹⁴ Fay, 'Finance', p. 309.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 309; Mary Martin to Sr Columbana, 27 Jun. 1939 (Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) Archive, 1/Cong/1(n)/64)

⁹⁶ Christopher Clark, 'The New Catholicism and the European culture wars' in Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (eds), *Culture wars, secular-Catholic conflict in nineteenth century Europe* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 11.

⁹⁷ Ibid; Emmet Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875' in *American Historical Review*, lxxvii, no. 3 (1972), pp 625-52; subsequent scholarship has convincingly challenged the periodization of Larkin's thesis, arguing that the 'devotional revolution' had in fact begun much earlier than 1850 see, for example, Theodore K. Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society in Ireland 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984), pp 197-211.

of devotional exercises designed not only to encourage more frequent participation in the sacraments but to instil veneration by an appreciation of their beauty and intrinsic mystery'.⁹⁸ Supplemental to the wide variety of devotions such as the rosary, forty hours, novenas, shrines, pilgrimages and processions, popular devotional reading material began to emerge in Ireland towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The most notable publication was the *Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. Launched in 1888 under the editorship of Fr James Cullen, SJ. Promotion of the cult of the Sacred Heart had been associated with the Jesuits since 1844 when the Apostleship of Prayer, an organisation devoted to the cause, was founded by a Jesuit priest in France. The original French *Messenger to the Sacred Heart*, which followed seventeen years later, spawned numerous spin-offs in a variety of languages. The Irish (English language) version proved hugely popular and by 1904, the circulation had reached approximately 73,000.⁹⁹ This figure continued to climb as the Irish laity increasingly embraced the popular piety of the 'devotional revolution' right up until the 1960s when shifts in Catholic behaviours and attitudes associated with Vatican II began to emerge. Despite entering a period of decline, one estimate from 1969 puts the circulation at an impressive 256,000, making it probable that the *Irish Messenger* was the most widely read religious periodical ever sold in Ireland.¹⁰⁰ The Jesuits also played a key role in the proliferation of other popular religious publications; in 1898 they launched the *Madonna*, the organ of the Sodality of the Children of Mary, and in 1911 began publishing *Timire an Chroí Ró-Naofa* an Irish language version of the *Messenger*.

A number of other religious organisations also contributed to the massive upsurge in Catholic reading material available to the Irish laity. Fr Stephen Brown's book *The Press in Ireland: a Survey and a Guide* published in 1937 provided a comprehensive examination of the breadth of this growing market. Brown, a well-known figure in Catholic literary circles and former editor of *St Joseph's Sheaf*, attempted to list every

⁹⁸ Emmet Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution', p. 644.

⁹⁹ Síle de Cléir, *Popular Catholicism in 20th-century Ireland: locality, identity and culture* (London, 2017), pp 3-4.

¹⁰⁰ See document annotations relating to the market research readership survey on religious magazines conducted in 1969 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 2); the same survey also estimated that the readership as opposed to circulation of the *Irish Messenger* in 1969 was 500,000 see report of editor of the *African Missionary* to the annual recruitment meeting, Blackrock, 1 Dec. 1973 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 5).

periodical available in Ireland.¹⁰¹ Charting the specifically Catholic publications nine magazines were categorized as ‘mainly devotional’ and in addition to the popular Jesuit titles included *The Little Flower Monthly*, the official organ of the Little Flower Guild produced by the Sisters of Charity, *The Golden Hour*, the official organ of the Eucharistic League, and *The Imeldist*, ‘a tiny devotional magazine for children’ published by the Dominicans with a circulation of approximately 60,000. Under the title ‘Organs of Religious Orders’ eight publications were listed including *Carmel*, ‘a monthly review conducted by the Carmelite Fathers’ and *Good Counsel*, ‘an Augustinian quarterly’.¹⁰² The ‘Monthlies’ category featured ten periodicals including the Capuchin’s *Father Mathew Record*, *The Cross* by the Passionist Fathers and the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* published by St Patricks College, Maynooth. Three ‘Periodicals for the Young’ were listed and included the popular *Our Boys* published by the Irish Christian Brothers.¹⁰³ Fifteen Catholic ‘School Magazines’ were identified and four items appeared in the ‘Annuals’ section. The *Irish Catholic*, founded in 1888, and the much more recent *Standard* were the only explicitly Catholic ‘Weeklies’.

Assessing the state of Ireland’s Catholic Press Brown lamented the ‘very restricted circulation ... of our leading Catholic reviews’, presumably referring to the more cerebral offerings such as the Jesuits’ *Studies* or the Dominican’s *Irish Rosary*. However, he went on to praise the ‘more widely popular periodicals which have a very extensive circulation’, noting the particular success of the *Irish Messenger*, *St Anthony’s Annals*, the *Little Flower Monthly* and the *Madonna*. Commenting on the content of these popular publications Brown asserted that ‘it would be a mistake to think that these periodicals, classified elsewhere in the survey as devotional, confine themselves wholly to piety. They convey by stories, articles etc., much moral and devotional instruction and practical guidance for everyday life.’¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Brown founded the Central Catholic Library in Dublin and wrote numerous books and articles on a variety of Catholic matters.

¹⁰² Brown notes that certain titles could have featured in more than one category but are only listed once.

¹⁰³ For further discussion on the success and circulation of *Our Boys* see Louis M. Cullen, *Eason and son: a history* (Dublin, 1989), pp 224-37.

¹⁰⁴ Stephen Brown, S.J., *The press in Ireland: a survey and a guide* (Dublin, 1937), pp 242-68.

Further expanding the genre, pamphlets were also disseminated by a number of organizations.¹⁰⁵ The Catholic Truth Society of Ireland (CTSI) was one of the most prolific producers of this form of material. Established in England in 1884 the Irish branch was set up in 1899. They produced a vast array of devotional literature as well as material on more general Catholic related subjects. Although they published both books and magazines, pamphlets were their primary mode of communication and they were distributed in their millions. At its peak in the 1940s and 50s, the society was circulating between two and three million publications annually.¹⁰⁶ Under the auspices of the Irish Messenger Office (IMO) the Jesuits also began to produce penny booklets on an array of Catholic related subjects and by 1914 were advertising over 200 such publications. Reflecting the link between relevant popular reading material and the expanding embrace of ‘New Catholicism’, the IMO’s list of publications continued to grow in the decades that followed. By 1955, in addition to their periodicals, they offered 451 pamphlets, an annual, prayer books, as well as a variety of religious ephemera including pictures, medals and cards.¹⁰⁷ It was in this context of intensifying popular piety that the concept of ‘pagan’ missions became an increasingly integral element of the Tridentine Irish Catholicism that would dominate in the pre-Vatican II era. The missionary magazine became a standard feature of the thriving religious print culture that facilitated the climax of the Irish ‘devotional revolution’. Moreover, as moral panic gathered momentum in the newly founded Free State, missionary publications significantly added to the popular Catholic-orientated genre that was deemed to provide at least a partial counter to the ‘tainted tide of foreign non-Catholic and unchristian literature’, particularly the ‘lurid’ British tabloids.¹⁰⁸

Missionary magazines not only entertained they were also a leading source of information about the non-Christian world.¹⁰⁹ With readership expanding throughout the nineteenth century and reaching a peak in the mid-twentieth century, missionary periodicals provided generations of Western supporters a lens through which they could

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 268.

¹⁰⁶ De Cléir, *Popular Catholicism*, pp 2-4.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ *Missionary Record of the Holy Ghost Fathers*, ii, no. 1 (Jan. 1920).

¹⁰⁹ Felicity Jensz and Hanna Acke, ‘Introduction’ in Felicity Jensz and Hanna Acke (eds), *Missions and media: the politics of missionary periodicals in the long nineteenth century* (Stuttgart, 2013), p. 12.

interpret the wider world as well as their own place within it.¹¹⁰ Scholars of both the Protestant and Catholic missionary revival have recognised the centrality of the constructed ‘other’ in the discourse promulgated in missionary literature.¹¹¹ This analytical framework of ‘the other’ and ‘otherness’ as a means of elucidating the relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans is a foundational concept in postcolonial studies.¹¹² The works of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said have been hugely influential in the development of this field. Fanon, a leading intellectual in the post-war decolonisation movement primarily explored the impact of the racist ‘colonial gaze’ on the people of the Caribbean and Africa. Describing the ‘Manichean’ nature of the colonial world Fanon asserted that it is ‘a world cut in two...inhabited by two different species’ where ‘the native’ is separated and subjugated from ‘the settlers’. ¹¹³ The ‘superior’ ‘white’ ‘civilized’ ‘Us’ versus the ‘inferior’ non-white ‘uncivilized’ ‘Them’. In *Black Skin, White Masks* published in 1952 Fanon writes: ‘In Europe the Negro has one function: that of symbolizing the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of *homo occidentalis*, the Negro - or, if one prefers, the color black – symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine.’¹¹⁴

Reductive binary distinctions are also a central element of Edward Said’s widely celebrated book *Orientalism*. First published in 1978, Said explored presentations of ‘the Orient’ in the context of secular western imperialism. He asserted that this ‘Us’ in relation to ‘Them’ approach to study of Eastern cultures maintained a hierarchical understanding of civilizations that sought to justify western interference in the non-

¹¹⁰ Whilst little scholarship exists on the exact circulation figures of Protestant missionary magazines, it is likely that consumption of the British Protestant missionary periodicals peaked in the 1920s and 1930s which Jeffery Cox notes was ‘the high watermark’ of the movement; see Jeffrey Cox, *British missionary enterprise since 1700* (London, 2008), pp 115-17; worldwide readership of Catholic missionary periodicals appears to have peaked one generation later and coincided with the climax of Tridentine devotion-orientated Catholicism. For readership of French Catholic missionary journals see Prudhomme, ‘De l’aide aux missions’, pp 12-14.

¹¹¹ Françoise Jacquin and Jean-Francis Zorn (eds), *L’altérité religieuse: un défi pour la mission chrétienne*, (Paris, 2001); Anna Johnston, *Missionary writing and empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge, 2003); Esme Cleall, *Missionary discourses of difference* (Basingstoke, 2012); Felicity Jensz, ‘Firewood, Fakirs and Flags: The Construction of the Non-Western “Other” in a Nineteenth Century Transnational Children’s Missionary Periodical’ in *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte*, cv (2011), pp 167-91.

¹¹² Prudhomme ‘De l’aide aux missions’, p. 12; Cleall, *Missionary discourses*; Johnston, *Missionary Writing*.

¹¹³ Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth* (New York, 1963) translated by Constance Farrington.

¹¹⁴ Fanon, *Black skin, white masks* (3rd edn., London, 1993; 1st edn., 1952), pp 190-1 translated by Charles Lam Markmann.

western world.¹¹⁵ This framework has subsequently been modified, nuanced and adapted to explore interactions between the coloniser and colonised across a range of settings.¹¹⁶

More recently, this conception of ‘the other’ has been applied in the emerging area of mission history, particularly by historians of British Protestant missionary enterprise.¹¹⁷ Binary distinctions permeated missionary discourses produced by all shades of Christian denomination with the addition of religion as a crucial element of the formula. Religion was interwoven with other key markers of identity such as race and culture to establish the supremacy of the white Christian civilized ‘Us’ over the non-white non-Christian ‘uncivilized’ ‘Them’. Although by no means a monolithic discourse, this worldview constructed on the assertion of difference remained a core message of missionary propaganda right into the second half of the twentieth century.¹¹⁸ Tales and accounts of the depraved or pitiful ‘pagan’ other were an indispensable staple of missionary publications. The constant reiteration of alleged moral, cultural, and racial failings of non-Christians served to reinforce the base assumptions of Western superiority. This sense of otherness was further established through descriptions of the ‘exotic’, hostile’ or ‘untamed’ descriptions of the physical landscapes, climates and wildlife encountered.¹¹⁹ Binary opposition was not simply a convenient literary device used to induce public support it was a fundamental concept that characterized both Catholic and Protestant missionary enterprise. The Catholic teaching *extra ecclesiam nullus salus* or ‘outside the Church there is no salvation’ was perhaps the most explicit assertion of this mindset. You were baptized and therefore had a chance of reaching heaven or you were not and were therefore condemned to ‘eternal damnation’. There was no grey area.¹²⁰ This dogma remained central to Catholic thinking until the 1960s

¹¹⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979).

¹¹⁶ Cleall, *Missionary discourses of difference*, p. 9.

¹¹⁷ See, for examples, Johnston, *Missionary writing*; Cox, *The British missionary enterprise*.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, Gareth Griffiths, ‘Popular Imperial Adventure Fiction and the Discourse of Missionary Texts’ in Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths (eds), *Mixed messages: materiality, textuality, missions* (New York, 2005), pp 62-3.

¹¹⁹ See, for examples, *Annales de l’Association de la Propagation de la Foi*; the Church Missionary Society’s *Missionary Register*.

¹²⁰ See, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 54 (Mar-Apr 1923).

when the Second Vatican Council championed a more tolerant interpretation in the wake of the shifting attitudes that emerged in the post-colonial era.¹²¹

Missionary discourses intermingled with contemporary imperial discourses with much overlap between the two. Both relied upon many of the same recurrent tropes, images, and themes.¹²² Both offered similar interpretations of the non-Western world, seeing it and its inhabitants as in need of constant remedy. As summarized by mission historian Felicity Jensz, these discourses ‘often used the same language of discovering, conquering and freeing indigenous peoples from lives perceived to be primitive’.¹²³ Narratives of adventures and heroics glorifying their Western protagonist while infantilising or even animalising ‘others’ encountered were a standard of both.¹²⁴ Metaphors of light and darkness are a particularly pervasive example of this discursive crossover. Typifying the Manichean presentation of the world, these metaphors symbolized good versus bad.¹²⁵ At the most basic level missionary discourses used light to represent God and Christianity whilst darkness stood for the lack thereof. Drawing on enlightenment ideals of progress secular uses of the metaphor used light to symbolize civilization and darkness to represent a myriad of negatives such as inferiority, chaos, the unknown, ignorance, barbarism and backwardness. However, the exact symbolism was not always clear-cut. Meanings could meld and blur, light could be used to represent or infer Christianity and God at the same time as all things ‘civilized’ whilst darkness could at once denote non-Christian and all things ‘uncivilized’.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Frédéric Laugrand and Olivier Servais, ‘Des missionnaires ethnologues? Trajectoires, débats et méthodes’ in Laugrand and Olivier Servais (eds), *Du missionnaire à l’anthropologue. Enquête sur une longue tradition en longue tradition en compagnie de Mike Singleton* (Paris, 2012), p. 6 ; Jean Pirotte, *Périodiques missionnaires belges d’expression française, reflets de cinquante années d’évolution d’une mentalité, 1889-1940* (Louvain, 1973), pp 281-2.

¹²² For a discussion of representations of mission travel and adventure see Griffiths, ‘Popular Imperial Adventure Fiction’.

¹²³ Felicity Jensz, ‘“Poor heathens”, ‘Cone-headed natives, and ‘Good water’: the production of knowledge of the interior of Australia through German texts from around 1860’ in *Postcolonial Studies*, xxi, no. 1 (2018), p. 96.

¹²⁴ Fiona Bateman’s research explores this discursive crossover focusing on Irish missionary discourse in the twentieth century in relation to British imperial discourses, see Fiona Bateman, ‘The Spiritual Empire: Irish Catholic missionary discourses in the twentieth century’ (Ph.D. thesis, NUI Galway, 2003).

¹²⁵ Albert Wu, ‘Narratives of conversion in nineteenth-century German missionary periodicals’ in Felicity Jensz and Hanna Acke (eds), *Missions and media, the politics of missionary periodicals in the long nineteenth century*, (Stuttgart, 2013), p. 84.

¹²⁶ Hanna Acke, *Missionary periodicals as a genre, models of writing, horizons of expectations* in Jensz and Acke (eds), *Missions and media*, pp 225-43.

Such metaphors were all the more potent when applied to the ‘Dark Continent’ of Africa, widely regarded for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as ‘the core of heathendom, darkness and evil’. The negative connotations of darkness could be further reinforced by ‘blackness’ of African bodies that stood in contrast to the ‘whiteness’ of Europeans.¹²⁷ Race was of course a central component in the construction of both discourses. In the context of vigorous imperial expansion and the rise of popular science, conceptualisations of race underwent a transformation over the course of the nineteenth century. Attitudes ‘hardened’ as cultural understandings of race gave way to biological racism.¹²⁸ These pseudo-scientific racial theories asserted an unalterable hierarchy of civilization that viewed white Europeans as the apogee of man. Whilst missionary discourse largely eschewed ‘scientific’ racial theories such as polygenesis and phrenology, it did absorb many elements of this hardened racial outlook. Apart from steering clear of the extremes of this rhetoric there appears to have been no clear line on the presentation of race in missionary publications.¹²⁹

Exploring the importance of missionary literature in shaping French understandings of empire, J.P. Daughton examines this evolution in attitudes. He asserts that ‘missionaries increasingly portrayed savage behaviour as being linked to culturally and racially determined practices, not simply to a lack of faith’, and so began to view empire ‘as a place in need of both evangelisation and civilisation’.¹³⁰ As with secular colonial discourses, missionary discourses were ‘slippery’ containing many contradictory assertions.¹³¹ Declarations about human universalism often appeared alongside explicitly racist representations of the non-white ‘other’.¹³² Whilst avoiding simplistic conclusions about the overall role of missionaries in empire, missionary propaganda ‘at home’ constituted a powerful element of colonial discourse. The ethnocentrism that informed secular representations of the non-Western ‘other’ was not simply propagated by missionary literature, it itself provided the basis for many of the stereotypical tropes and images that came to dominate the Western European perception of the extra-

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Cleall, *Missionary discourses*, pp 5-6.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 43, p. 164 -5.

¹³⁰ Daughton, *An empire divided*, p. 19.

¹³¹ Cleall, *Missionary discourses*, p. 4.

¹³² Ibid., p 165.

European world.¹³³ With the aim of encouraging popular support missionary discourses were, however, rarely provocative. Crucial to the success of the missionary revival missionary propagandists demonstrated an enormous capacity to adapt their message in response to their own specific context as well as wider religious, cultural and political trends.¹³⁴ Observing this phenomenon Jean Pirotte, a scholar of Francophone missionary propaganda, notes that missionary discourse ‘Does not take the crowd aback ... It plays to the benchmark tastes of the public, current stereotypes, old archetypes and shared myths’.¹³⁵

With Ireland a relative latecomer to the modern Catholic missionary movement, by the time the first wave of home-produced missionary periodicals emerged in the 1910s a tried and tested formula for engaging the masses had been firmly established. Irish missionary societies had no reason to deviate. Drawing on existing concepts of conversion, race and the ‘pagan’ other, Irish missionary propagandists crafted an indigenised version of this discourse that propagated the ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ worldview amongst Irish Catholics. It was hoped that the customisation of the missionary message would significantly further the appeal of the cause in Ireland. Summing up this sentiment, upon the launch of the *African Missionary* in 1914, the Bishop of Cork, T.A. O’Callaghan wrote:

Many of our people have long been interested in the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, and have learned to admire the noble deeds of missionaries in distant countries. The writers, however, are of other nationalities and it seems to me the “African Missionary” will supply a want and will tell what Irishmen are doing in these far-away places!¹³⁶

As consumption of missionary literature grew, the Irish laity became increasingly familiar with this missionary outlook. The non-Christian world was understood as a place in need of saving and Irish Catholics were presented as potential saviours. Typical of missionary discourses, this Irish version was malleable and adapted in response to shifting domestic and international events and trends. However, the supremacy of ‘Us’ always remained central. Irish missionary supporters were constantly assured that they

¹³³ Felicity Jensz and Hanna Acke, ‘Introduction’ pp 9-15 in Jensz and Hanna (eds), *Missions and media*, p. 12.

¹³⁴ Cleall, *Missionary discourses*, p. 169.

¹³⁵ Pirotte, ‘Aux sources des propagandes modernes’, p. 136.

¹³⁶ *African Missionary*, no. 3 (Jul.-Sept 1914).

were at least the equivalent of their Western Catholic counterparts, if not actually more 'special'. Although scholarship of Christian missionary enterprise has had a tendency to skim the religious underpinnings of these movements, instead placing emphasis of the crossover between colonial and missionary expansion, religion played an absolutely central role in the conceptualisation of this superiority. By combining the fundamentals of Catholic theology and the shifting currents of both popular religious and nationalist sentiment, Irish missionary magazines presented a Catholic version of the missionary message styled to appeal to an Irish audience. These publications forged a vision of the world that at once sustained the broad outline of the imperialist western worldview at the same time as allowing for a triumphalist projection of Catholic Ireland. Ireland's first wave of Catholic missionary periodicals was vital in the dissemination of this indigenised discourse. Introducing the Irish laity to Ireland's two major fields of missionary endeavour, Africa and China, they set the discursive blueprint that would sustain Irish Catholic missionary expansion for over five decades.

The SMA's *African Missionary* and the Holy Ghost's *Missionary Annals* were hugely significant in shaping Irish perceptions of Africa and Africans in the twentieth century. Very much in keeping with wider ideas about race that dominated contemporary Western thought, both publications constructed a 'Them' premised on the assumption that black Africans formed the lowest rung of the racial hierarchy. Drawing on a patchwork of well-established stereotypes and tropes, both periodicals projected the same vision of the 'Dark Continent' and its inhabitants. Readers were regularly informed of the 'inferiority' of black Africans whom amongst other charges were alleged to be 'uncivilised', 'primitive', 'savage', 'childlike', 'lazy', 'degraded', 'immoral' and 'barbaric'. Using just one of many examples of such discourse, a feature entitled 'Some Beliefs and Practices of the African Heathen' which appeared in a 1915 edition of the *African Missionary* asserted that

This abandoned savage, though in spite of all a man, with his passions aspirations, energies and weaknesses remains, nevertheless but a full-grown baby ... devoid of all stability of purpose ... he wanders about to-day in the forests as did his ancestors of thousands of years ago. The eternal monotony of his situation contrasts strikingly with the rapid progress of his more favoured European brethren¹³⁷

¹³⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 5 (Jan.-Feb. 1915).

Despite the routine use of this derogatory rhetoric neither publication reads as an unbroken diatribe against black Africa. As with most contemporary Christian missionary publications such aspersions appeared as part and parcel of a wider missionary discourse, interwoven in a matter of fact manner into the variety of fictional and non-fictional features that made up the missionary magazine. For example, the piece quoted above was included alongside an editorial addressing the impact of the First World War on the ‘pagan’ missions, a letter from the Archbishop of New York praising the publication, a poem about the nativity called ‘Oh! Baby Christ!’, a story about the conversion of an Egyptian boy, the announcement of the society’s new Superior General, a short description of one missionary’s life, a history of Dahomey – one of the society’s mission territories – and a brief narrative about a shepherd who joined the society. This is not to suggest that material that did not explicitly assert the ‘failings’ of Africans played no role in the othering process. Usually such content worked with varying degrees of subtlety to reinforce the Catholic missionary worldview that sought to affirm the ‘superiority’ of ‘Us’ and resultant need to evangelize Them.

Typical of imperial and missionary discourses, Africa and Africans were often referred to as if one undifferentiated mass or singular country.¹³⁸ The default image of the continent was of a dangerous and exotic land populated by ‘untamed’ ‘negro’ ‘pagan’ ‘savages’ as outlined above. Existing outside of this construct, all other inhabitants such as ‘the Mahomedans’ of Egypt and North Africa or white settler communities were never designated as simply ‘African’. Although ethnographical style accounts of individual peoples and tribes encountered were a staple of popular missionary literature, the stereotypical image of the African was an ever-present feature. Such descriptions, whether reinforcing or challenging this stereotype, were always constructed in relation to this established stock image. One account of the ‘the Bura people’ of East Africa explained that ‘the men, like all their African brethren are not models of industry’. However, playing off western perceptions of African primitiveness, readers were also informed that the Buras had in fact an aptitude for growing certain crops and had ‘little to learn from the European on the subject of irrigation’.¹³⁹ Highlighting at least some ‘positive’ aspect of peoples encountered was a standard of missionary rhetoric. Few

¹³⁸ See, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 54 (Mar-Apr 1923).

¹³⁹ *Missionary Record* [later renamed *Missionary Annals*], no. 1 (Aug. 1919).

tribes or peoples were ever deemed to wholly conform to the African stereotype. Missionary propagandists could usually find at least one ‘redemptive’ quality, which at the same time as challenging the ‘savage’ stereotype quite often also reinforced its existence.

Much like the account of the Buras, a description of the ‘Eberié tribe’ of the Ivory Coast stated that these people were ‘carelessness personified’ and as a ‘simple poor and backward people love of work is not their chief virtue’. Again, employing the same rhetorical device, the author asserted a comment that at once seemed to praise the tribe in question whilst also engaging with the western image of the ‘dirty’ African, declaring that ‘they are remarkable for their cleanliness – at least in this district’ as ‘they take baths practically everyday.’¹⁴⁰ As found in other strands of imperial and missionary discourse, Irish missionary propaganda could shift seamlessly between accounts of individual places and peoples to mass generalisations. Occasionally, all black Africans were referred to as ‘the benighted children of Cham’. Based on a biblical story in the book of Genesis, the dark complexions and ‘inferiority’ of Africans were understood to be the result of a curse imposed by Noah on Ham’s son Canaan, who was believed to be the common ancestor of all Africans.¹⁴¹

Central to both the Catholic and Protestant missionary worldview, the concept of paganism was, of course, a dominant theme in Irish missionary propaganda. Through the pages of the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* a growing Irish readership learned of the ‘miserable condition’ of ‘the poor abandoned negro race’ who were understood to be ‘imprisoned in the darkness of unbelief’.¹⁴² These ‘lost sheep’ were alleged to be ‘under the sway of Satan’. The missionary’s primary task was to sever this tyrannical ‘bondage’ thus saving as many souls as possible from eternal damnation.¹⁴³ Living without ‘the privileges of Children of God’, ‘pagans’ were often presented as

¹⁴⁰ *African Missionary*, no. 18 (Mar.-Apr. 1917).

¹⁴¹ See, for examples, *African Missionary*, no. 1 (Jan-Mar 1914), *African Missionary*, no. 5 (Jan.-Feb. 1915) and *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 4 (Apr. 1926). The curse of Ham could also be referred to as the curse of Cham or the curse of Canaan. The Hamitic theory played a prominent role in shaping certain racial theories popularised in the nineteenth century. For further discussion, see Jean-Pierre Chrétien *L’émergence de l’idéologie hamitique au XIXe: entre la science et le Bible* (Paris, 2010), pp 147-82.

¹⁴² *African Missionary*, no. 54 (Mar.-Apr. 1923) ; *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 3 (Mar. 1920) ; *African Missionary* no. 58 (Nov.- Dec 1923).

¹⁴³ *African Missionary* no. 47 (Jan.-Feb. 1922); *African Missionary* no. 54 (Mar.-Apr. 1923).

pathetic figures, desperately in need of ‘the precious gift of Faith’ not only to save their soul in the afterlife but also to elevate them from their ‘moral and physical degradation’ on earth.¹⁴⁴ If the evocation of pity for ‘the millions of souls’ who ‘have not heard the sweet Name of Jesus’ was not enough to induce public support, readers were constantly informed that it was in fact their ‘duty’ to assist the cause. Accounts of the wretchedness of paganism were nearly always followed by some reference to this concept of Catholic obligation. Based mainly on the biblical command ‘Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost’, the faithful were constantly reminded that they *must* do their part in answering the missionary ‘clarion call’ and ‘help draw all men to the bosom of the Church’.¹⁴⁵

Although all those who did not belong to the main monotheistic world religions were deemed to be pagans, a long-established rhetoric was employed to delineate the particularly ‘degraded’ nature of the African ‘pagan’.¹⁴⁶ In addition to asserting the ‘pitiful’ state of ‘these poor creatures’, the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* propagated the idea commonly asserted in wider missionary and imperial discourses that ‘the most wretched souls’ were found in the ‘dark pool of Africa’.¹⁴⁷ All the perceived ‘evils’ and deficiencies of Africa and the African could be merged with the concept of paganism to conjure stereotypical images of ‘The Continent of Satan and Sin, of dusky skins, dark deeds and darker souls’.¹⁴⁸ Metaphors of darkness and light abound, readers were informed of the plight of the ‘poor blacks’ ‘wounded by every moral evil, enslaved by pagan habits, crushed under social tyranny, their lives a constant night-time of fear and danger’.¹⁴⁹ The ‘uncivilised’, ‘primitive’ and overall ‘inferior’ nature of Africans was imagined to compound the ‘horrors’ of paganism and *vice versa*.

¹⁴⁴ *African Missionary*, no. 54 (Mar-Apr. 1923).

¹⁴⁵ *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 4 (Apr. 1920); *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 6 (Jun. 1920). The concept of the Great Commission, sometimes referred to as the Divine Commission, is a key tenet of Christian theology, and is at the foundation of Christian missionary enterprise.

¹⁴⁶ Bernard Salvaing, ‘Missionnaires catholiques français et protestants face à l’Afrique : le cas de la Côte du Bénin et du pays yoruba (1841-1891)’ in *Revue française d’histoire d’outre-mer*, lxxi, no. 262-3 (1984), pp 31-57. In one of the few studies to compare protestant and catholic missionary discourses, Salvaing explores the use of the of this rhetoric to describe black Africans of the ‘slavery coast’, west Africa. He notes the association between sin and dark skin was in existence before the middle ages but became much more widely known in the nineteenth century.

¹⁴⁷ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 7 (Jul.-Aug. 1926); *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 10 (Oct.1921).

¹⁴⁸ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 5 (May 1924).

¹⁴⁹ *African Missionary*, no. 47 (Jan.-Feb. 1922).

Cautiously engaging with the most sensationalised contemporary popular image of Africans, both publications periodically declared that ‘traces of cannibalism’ remained in Africa.¹⁵⁰ As noted by Jeffrey Cox in his examination of British missionary enterprise, cannibalism was widely considered the ‘universal and definitive emblem of moral depravity among a people’.¹⁵¹ Occasionally, Irish missionary propagandists veered even closer to the extremes of contemporary racist ideologies, animalising the African ‘pagan’ with the assertion that without the ‘light’ of Christianity he actually ‘sinks to the level of beast’.¹⁵²

Whilst this stereotypical characterisation of the ‘benighted’ ‘savage’ could be used to describe all or specifically male ‘pagan’ Africans, a separate and more simplistic discourse was used in the depiction of African women. Victimhood was the dominant and quite often sole theme of this distinct rhetoric. African women were portrayed as oppressed and ‘degraded’ figures with no voice or agency. During the course of the nineteenth century the position of women in a society emerged as a widely acknowledged index of civilisation in European thought.¹⁵³ Unsurprisingly, missionary discourses usually identified paganism as the main cause of this ‘degradation’.¹⁵⁴ Catholic articulations of this argument asserted that without the influence of Christ, and particularly ‘His Immaculate Mother Mary’, ‘pagan’ women were apparently doomed to their ‘deplorable present situation’.¹⁵⁵ Although the general ‘tyranny of paganism’ was given as the underlying explanation of female oppression, the ‘vile pagan’ African man was portrayed as the active oppressor.¹⁵⁶ Reinforcing the image of the ‘uncivilised savage’ and ‘lazy’ wastrel, he was regularly alleged to treat woman as nothing more than a ‘slave’ or ‘chattel’.¹⁵⁷ Readers were implored to ‘Listen to that piteous cry for help from a poor heathen wife lying under the heel of a brutal heathen husband’.¹⁵⁸ As with practically all constructions of ‘the other’ in Irish Catholic missionary publications,

¹⁵⁰ *Missionary Record of the Holy Ghost Fathers* (later retitled *Missionary Annals*) (Nov. 1919).

¹⁵¹ Cox, *British missionary enterprise*, p. 118.

¹⁵² *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 11 (Nov. 1921).

¹⁵³ Ann E. Towns, *Women and states: norms and hierarchies in international society* (Cambridge, 2010), pp 69-72.

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 14 (Jul.-Aug. 1916).

¹⁵⁵ *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 10 (10 Oct. 1926); *African Missionary*, no. 14 (Jul.-Aug. 1916).

¹⁵⁶ *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 10 Oct 1926; see, for example, *Missionary Record of the Holy Ghost Fathers* (Aug. 1919).

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 19 (May-Jun. 1917).

¹⁵⁸ *African Missionary*, no. 14 (Jul.-Aug. 1916).

this image of oppressed woman was not original. Esme Cleall is one of a number of scholars to also observe this ‘single narrative of female degradation’ in nineteenth-century British protestant missionary writings.¹⁵⁹ Exploring the intersections between race, gender and sexuality in the demarcation of otherness, she notes the belief that ‘pagan’ gender relations were “disordered”, ‘oppressive, cruel and misogynistic was a staple of “Enlightened” colonial discourse’.¹⁶⁰

The *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* periodically engaged with an overarching narrative of ‘the sad plight of women among pagans and Mohommedans’ the world over, however both publications were primarily concerned with the African manifestations of this female ‘degradation’. Reflecting the ethnocentric vision of gender ideals and gender roles upheld in missionary discourses, practically all descriptions of ‘African womankind’ were intertwined with marriage and/or children. ‘The sordid marriage system that prevails all over Africa’ was a central theme. According to missionary analysis of African marriage arrangements, woman was rendered ‘simply a pawn in a game of finance’ as a ‘pagan’ man could ‘literally purchase’ a wife from her family with ‘little or no account ... of her own choice.’¹⁶¹ Although specifics were never given, the age at which African females married was sometimes added to this critique.¹⁶²

Denunciation of polygamy was also a constant of this narrative. The practice was presented as one of the main obstacles impeding not only the ‘elevation’ of ‘pagan’ women but also the spread of Christianity as ‘pagan’ men were reportedly disinclined to renounce it. Both Irish publications regularly criticised the make-up of the African family unit. Missionaries strived to replace the system in which ‘divorce is quite customary’ and ‘polygamy the rule’ with the ideal Christian family of ‘one man living peaceable with one wife of his choice’. Filial relations could be included in this account of the ‘disordered’ African family. Children were alleged to be not properly ‘devoted to their parents’ as ‘all within the tribe are considered brethren’.¹⁶³ Although rarely

¹⁵⁹ Cleall, *Missionary discourses of difference*, p. 26; see also Johnston, *Missionary writing and empire*.

¹⁶⁰ Cleall, *Missionary discourses of difference*, p. 7.

¹⁶¹ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 9 (Sept. 1922).

¹⁶² See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 3 (Mar. 1922).

¹⁶³ *African Missionary*, no. 19 (May-Jun. 1917),

explicitly acknowledged, the missionary's determination to reform the African family reflected the much wider western or 'home' concern with containment of sex and sexuality. The 'degraded' state of African women, marriage, and the family unit was a core strand of the 'Us' versus 'Them' worldview. All were regularly used to compound the image of the untamed, 'uncivilised' and inferior African.

Evaluation of indigenous African belief systems was also a fundamental component of this discourse. Typical of the Western interpretation of the 'Dark Continent', the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* propagated the view that religions native to Africa were not actually proper religions.¹⁶⁴ Usually lumped together under the broad title of paganism or the slightly more specific sub-headings of fetishism, juju, sorcery, magic and witchcraft, indigenous religions were presented as both a cause and expression of African 'inferiority'. 'False gods', 'idol worship' and 'ancient superstitions' were all one could 'expect from the savage and primitive peoples'.¹⁶⁵ Again, consistent with the overall thrust of contemporary western perceptions of Africa, indigenous beliefs were generally deemed to be 'childish' and 'silly' but could also possess a 'darker' more sinister or even 'satanic' quality. It was often unclear as to what exactly constituted a native African religion. Indigenous beliefs, rituals, customs, traditions and ceremonies, no matter what their origin or motivation, could all be conflated under the title of paganism. The term could similarly denote a state of being or a way of life, an existence 'imprisoned in the darkness of unbelief'. Whilst adherents to paganism were often deemed to be figures of pity, oppressed by their 'religion of fear', practitioners of indigenous religions were portrayed with much less sympathy.¹⁶⁶ Accounts and photographs of local 'sorcerers', 'magicians', 'witches' and 'fetish doctors' were a standard of Christian missionary publications. These figures who attended to 'the spiritual and bodily ills' of their community were often associated with dark magic or 'necromancy'. However, the overriding narrative asserted that they were in fact greedy con artists, skilled in the art of 'deception' with the sole aim of extracting payment from naive locals.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ See, for examples, *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 1 (Jan. 1922); *African Missionary*, no. 5 (Jan.-Feb. 1915).

¹⁶⁵ *African Missionary*, no. 81 (Sept.-Oct. 1927).

¹⁶⁶ *Missionary Annals* v, no. 8 (Aug. 1923).

¹⁶⁷ See, for examples, *African Missionary*, no. 13 (May-Jun. 1916); *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 2 (Feb. 1920); *African Missionary* no. 2 (Apr.-Jun. 1914).

Attempts to examine the ‘intricate’ and ‘foggy’ indigenous religions proper often concluded that although not ‘monotheistic in the sense that the Jews are, or the Mahometans’, Africans did indeed believe in a ‘Supreme Being’.¹⁶⁸ Readers were informed that for Africans this concept was however ‘something more or less vague, unprecise [sic], and entirely indefinite’. Using just one of the many concrete examples of direct French influence on Irish missionary propaganda, a 1922 edition of the *Missionary Annals* featured a lengthy article penned by Archbishop Le Roy, a well-known figure of French Catholicism and Superior General of the Holy Ghost Fathers, entitled ‘God, according to the savage idea’. After a relatively in-depth exploration of the ‘planes’ of indigenous religious beliefs, the Archbishop concluded that the ‘savage’ did indeed believe in one singular ‘almighty against Whom man is powerless’¹⁶⁹

Insistence of a ‘pagan’ belief in a ‘Supreme Being’ became an increasingly common feature of both Catholic missionary rhetoric in the early twentieth century.¹⁷⁰ Despite the constant reiteration of all the perceived faults of indigenous belief systems readers were also, often simultaneously, provided with this more ‘positive’ interpretation of these religions whereby ‘paganism’ was treated more sympathetically and could even be understood as a stepping-stone to the ‘one True faith’. Archbishop Le Roy played a key role in shaping and propagating the Catholic version of this vision of native African religions. In 1909, as part of the burgeoning trend of missionary ethnography and the wider contemporary debate about the origins of religion, Le Roy published his magnum opus, *La religion des primitifs*, which primarily explored the religious beliefs of Bantu speaking Africans.¹⁷¹ Testament to the influence of the work, it was reviewed in the *American Anthropologist* journal which declared it to be ‘a really remarkable book’ and in 1922 an English version was published by Macmillan in New York.¹⁷² Both the

¹⁶⁸ *African Missionary*, no. 73 (May-Jun. 1926); *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 2 (Feb. 1922).

¹⁶⁹ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 2 (Feb. 1922).

¹⁷⁰ James L. Cox, *The invention of god in indigenous societies* (New York, 2014) pp 11 -12; Henk J. Van Rinsum, ‘Knowing the African’, Edwin W. Smith and the Invention of African Traditional Religion’ in James L. Cox and Gerrie Ter Haar (eds) *Uniquely African? African Christian Identity from cultural and historical perspectives* (New Jersey, 2003), pp 56-8.

¹⁷¹ Alexandre Le Roy, *La Religion des Primitifs* (Paris, 1909); Alyward Shorter, *Les Pères blancs au temps de la conquête coloniale; histoire des Missionnaires d'Afrique 1892-1914* (Paris, 2011), p. 250.

¹⁷² Frederick Starr, ‘Le Roy: La Religion des Primitifs’ in *American Anthropologist*, xxiii, no. 1 (1911), pp 144-6; Le Roy, *The Religion of the Primitives* (New York, 1922). Giving some insight into the contemporary contentions surrounding the origins of religion, Starr’s review notes the anthropologist’s

African Missionary and the *Missionary Annals* drew explicitly and implicitly on Le Roy's work to provide truncated accounts of indigenous African religions. As posited by Le Roy, such accounts asserted that these religions were forms of primitive monotheism and were in fact evidence of a primordial revelation that was corrupted by the fall of man, and henceforth degenerated into different forms of paganism.¹⁷³ Readers were regularly assured that 'However abandoned and steeped in degradation the African native may appear to be, the primal truths are written in his heart and mind as vestiges of an original revelation' and although always 'vague', he does indeed possess 'ideas on the existence of God, the soul and the next life'.¹⁷⁴ Concluding his 1922 feature in the *Missionary Annals* quoted above, Le Roy stated:

With what is known of peoples of inferior civilisation it might be truly said that behind their legends, their taboos, their totems, their ceremonies, their cults, behind the expression of their beliefs, such as they are, ridiculous, childish, touching or even gross, there can be found everywhere and always the idea, more or less clear, of a Supreme Being, who the men of these peoples say, dwells in the sky, whom they sometimes confound with the heavens, but who is nevertheless neither the sky nor the heavens but a Being entirely distinct, a Supreme Being indeed.¹⁷⁵

Whilst it certainly appears that it was Le Roy's conceptualisation of primitive monotheism that influenced Irish missionary rhetoric, the Frenchman was just one of a number of European proponents of the Catholic take on this theory. Fr Wilhelm Schmidt, a member of the German missionary Society of the Divine Word, is widely acknowledged as a primary champion of this thesis. In 1906 he established the acclaimed journal *Anthropos*, an international review of anthropology and linguistics, and was a leading figure in the development of the affiliated *Anthropos-Institut* in Austria.¹⁷⁶ Schmidt was at the centre of this emerging field of professional Catholic anthropology that sought to use modern scientific methods of research to provide a plausible challenge to the dominant secular evolutionist models of the origins of

instinct is to dismiss a book on African religions written by a Catholic bishop but that Le Roy 'is a man of candid spirit and broad views' and his work is deemed worthy of academic consideration.

¹⁷³ Daniel Gold, *Aesthetics and analysis in writing on religion: modern fascinations* (California, 2003), pp 171-85.

¹⁷⁴ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 5 (May 1924); *African Missionary*, no. 5 (Jan.-Feb. 1915).

¹⁷⁵ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 2 (Feb. 1922).

¹⁷⁶ Martin Gusinde, 'Wilhelm Schmidt, S.V.D., 1868-1954' in *American Anthropologist*, lvi, no. 5 (1954), pp 868-70; Le Roy wrote the introductory article in the first ever edition of the international anthropological journal *Anthropos*, see Alexandre Le Roy, 'Le rôle scientifique des missionnaires' in *Anthropos*, i, no. 1 (1906), pp 3-10.

religion.¹⁷⁷ Employing ‘academic rigour’ to the study of ‘primitive’ peoples, Schmidt and his fellow missionary scientists sought to provide systematic evidence of a universal belief in a Supreme Being, and therefore primordial revelation and God.¹⁷⁸ Essentially an apologetics argument, this theory inverted the evolutionist worldview and can be read as a defence of the biblical version of the origins of mankind.¹⁷⁹ As set out in the book of Genesis, all humanity descended from a common source (Adam and Eve), and according to the narrative of the Tower of Babel scattered across the earth speaking different languages. Religious scholar James L. Cox has noted that this concept of primitive monotheism served missionary theology as it ‘fitted nicely into the Christian doctrine of a fallen humanity, which could only be rescued by accepting Christ and returning to the true pure monotheism of biblical faith’.¹⁸⁰ As summarized by the *African Missionary*, Catholicism would ‘raise him up and reinstate him in his primeval prerogatives’.¹⁸¹

Although clearly influenced by these continental discourses, as popular publications neither the *African Missionary* nor *Missionary Annals* engaged with the complexities of the contemporary and largely academic debates surrounding the origins of man, religion or civilisation. Primitive monotheism was simply presented as fact. Often the concept went unnamed, sometimes only addressed with a passing reference to the ‘vague’ ‘pagan’ belief in a ‘Supreme Being’.¹⁸² Nevertheless by the early 1920s, it had become

¹⁷⁷ An Vandenberghe, ‘Beyond Pierre Charles the emergence of Belgian missiology refined’ in Carine Dujardin and Claude Prudhomme (eds), *Mission and science: missiology revised/missiologie revisitée 1850-1940* (Leuven, 2015), pp 151-70; For an overview of the secular models that Schmidt sought to challenge see Léonce de Grandmaison, ‘The Louvain Congress of Ethnology’ in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, i, no. 4 (1912), pp 655-64; for a detailed summary of Schmidt’s role in the establishment of professional Catholic ethnology see Stefan Dietrich, ‘Mission, local culture and the “Catholic ethnology” of Pater Schmidt’ in *The Journal of the anthropological society of Oxford*, xxiii, no. 2 (1992), pp 111-25.

¹⁷⁸ Gold, *Aesthetics and analysis*, pp 171-85.

¹⁷⁹ For a succinct summary of key proponents of the evolutionist model of religion see Arvind Sharma, *A primal perspective of the philosophy of religion* (Dordrecht, 2006), p. 8.

¹⁸⁰ James L. Cox, *The Invention of God in Indigenous Societies* (Abingdon, 2014), p. 11; as Cox observes, although the assertion of primitive monotheism became much more widespread in the early twentieth century, the basic concept was not a new one; in the early seventeenth century the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci had made similar claims about the monotheistic origins of Chinese Confucianism; similarly, there were Protestant advocates of this interpretation of indigenous religion.

¹⁸¹ *African Missionary*, no. 15 (Sept.-Oct. 1916).

¹⁸² See, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 42 (Mar.-Apr. 1921).

an established strand of Irish Catholic missionary rhetoric.¹⁸³ This presentation of indigenous religions as a useful stepping-stone to conversion was very much a product of the ethnocentric western mind-set. Although often described in a ‘detached’ ethnographical fashion, missionary accounts of native religions examined them in accordance with a prefabricated framework. By asserting a pan-African belief in a ‘Supreme Being’, the complexities, actualities and individualities of native beliefs systems were often disregarded in the quest to bolster the religious missionary worldview.¹⁸⁴

As pointed out by certain scholars of Christian missionary discourses, whilst scientific theories were instrumental in shaping the imperialist worldview for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the influence of missionary propaganda should not be overlooked.¹⁸⁵ The mass consumption of missionary periodicals was seemingly unmatched by any printed source asserting solely scientific interpretations of the world.¹⁸⁶ And however much ‘certain so-called learned men with long Greek words pretend he descends not from Adam’, biblically inspired accounts of the origins of humanity and the world as propagated by missionary propaganda arguably dominated the western/European worldview, at least from a popular perspective, right into the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁷

In addition to fortifying a biblical interpretation of the world, the concept of primitive monotheism also fed into the broader and ever-present missionary narrative of redemption. With the aim of securing alms, prayers, and vocations, missionary propagandist had little to gain from spinning tales of wild barbaric savages who were

¹⁸³ The *African Missionary* featured an account of indigenous African beliefs in which Le Roy is credited as early as 1915, see *African Missionary*, no. 5 (Jan.-Feb. 1915); the assertion of a primitive monotheism becomes much more regular from/in the 1920s.

¹⁸⁴ Cox, *The invention of God*, pp 1-2.

¹⁸⁵ For discussion of the scientific theories and Africa in Britain, see Patrick Brantlinger, ‘Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent’ in *Critical Inquiry*, xxii, no. 1 (1985), pp 166-203; see, for examples, Douglas A. Lorimer, *Science, race relations and resistance: Britain, 1870-1914* (Manchester, 2013), pp 110-1 and Cox, *British missionary enterprise*.

¹⁸⁶ For discussion of circulation see Prudhomme, ‘De l’aide aux missions’, pp 11-13; see also Douglas A. Lorimer, *Science, race relations and resistance; Britain, 1870 – 1914* (Manchester, 2013), pp 110-11, Jeffrey Cox, *British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (Abingdon Oxford, 2008), p 114-15.

¹⁸⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 28 (Nov.-Dec. 1918); Mary Heimann, ‘Christian Piety in Britain during the ‘Long’ Nineteenth Century, c 1780-1920’ in Anders Jarlert (ed.), *Piety and modernity* (Leuven, 2012), pp 27-9.

beyond saving. Readers were constantly assured that ‘in spite of his dark skin, in spite of his ignorance, in spite of his degradation, the Black Man is our brother in Jesus Christ’. ¹⁸⁸ This idea of Christian equality was a core tenet of Catholic and Protestants missionary rhetoric. Typical of missionary discourses, the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* detailed the ‘inferiority’ of the ‘pagan’ alongside proclamations of ‘the great Family of man – the great brotherhood – Blacks, Reds, Browns, Whites and Yellow skins’ all of whom ‘are our brothers, all created by the same God’. ¹⁸⁹ As pointed out by Douglas Lorimer in his examination of British protestant missionary rhetoric, such declarations of ‘a common humanity’ should not be confused with ‘a commitment to racial equality’ but as assertions of an equality that ‘was not actual but potential’. ¹⁹⁰ According to missionary logic, ‘these pagan peoples’ did indeed ‘have souls’ and these souls were ‘equally dear’ in the eyes of God, however, the ‘heathen’ could only be rescued from ‘eternal damnation’ and this ‘potential’ realised through missionary intervention. ¹⁹¹

This constant emphasis on the potential of the African ‘pagan’ was inextricably intertwined with the theologically based interpretations of race often propagated in popular missionary propaganda. Through the pages of the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals*, a growing Irish readership was informed that the root cause of all African ‘deficiencies’ was the absence of Christianity. Fitting into the wider biblically inspired account of humanity, this narrative asserted that the Fall of man ‘plunged the whole human race into misery as a punishment for his sins’, and ‘the leash of Reason on the passions of humanity was loosened, to be slipped at will’. ¹⁹² And so, all humans ‘have within ourselves infinite capabilities for good or evil’ and ‘Our corrupt nature is constantly urging us towards evil’. ¹⁹³ Fortunately for Christians, ‘the sacred doctrine of Jesus Christ’ was understood to provide ‘a bulwark against temptation’ and ‘gently and strongly draws us towards the good’. ¹⁹⁴ Christianity was presented as the core factor dividing ‘Us’ from ‘Them’. Accordingly, under the guidance of the missionary the

¹⁸⁸ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 2 (Nov. 1921).

¹⁸⁹ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 6 (Jun. 1924).

¹⁹⁰ Lorimer, *Science, race relations and resistance*, p. 111.

¹⁹¹ *African Missionary*, no. 31 (May-Jun. 1919); *African Missionary*, no. 7 (May-Jun. 1915).

¹⁹² *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 2 (Feb. 1926); *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1925).

¹⁹³ *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1925).

¹⁹⁴ *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1925); *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1925).

African could be, at least theoretically, transformed and made equal. As the ‘African mind and African’s will’ were deemed ‘essentially ... not different from ours’, conversion had the power to rid the African of all his alleged faults.¹⁹⁵ ‘The sweet power of our religion’ could ‘elevate’ their ‘ideals’, ‘senses’, ‘lives’ and ‘minds’, making the ‘black or brown’ convert’s soul ‘as white as alabaster’.¹⁹⁶

On one level, this religious understanding of race stood in stark contrast to the secular ‘scientific’ racial theories popularised in the nineteenth century. And yet, in many respects these ostensibly divergent worldviews shared key commonalities. Primarily influenced by social Darwinist, Herbert Spencer, the dominant secular understandings of racial difference promoted the idea that ‘societies evolve according to the laws parallel to the evolution of species’, and believed ‘Northern Europeans and their American descendants’ to be at ‘the forefront of human development’, superior in all respects to other racial groups. These ‘other’ races ‘represented stages of evolution that whites had long surpassed’, with black Africans deemed to be at the lowest stage in this process.¹⁹⁷ Missionary rhetoric echoed similar conceptualisations of race. White westerners were presented as the acme of humankind and all other racial groups deemed inferior. Whilst scientific racism posited biological explanations for the assertion of a hierarchy of races, Irish missionary discourses maintained the view that ‘our minds and our wills have grown superior to those of the African people’ because of European ‘contact with the blessed mysteries of our Redemption’.¹⁹⁸

As pointed out by the aforementioned Pirotte, missionary discourses often played off existing myths and narratives. Irish missionary supporters, like many of their Catholic and Protestant counterparts elsewhere, were informed of a Christianised vision of race that chimed, at least in part, with contemporary scientific racist thought. Both viewpoints revolved around notions of discrete racial groups, both relied upon a hierarchical understanding of race, both focused on the concepts of a civilised ‘Us’ in relation to a savage and primitive ‘Them’, and both were used explicitly to justify

¹⁹⁵ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 5 (May 1922).

¹⁹⁶ *African Missionary*, no. 14 (Jul.-Aug. 1916); *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 8 (Aug. 1924); *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 9 (Sept. 1924).

¹⁹⁷ Ladelle McWhorter, ‘From Scientific Racism to Neoliberal Biopolitics’ in Naomi Zack (ed), *The Oxford handbook of philosophy and race* (Oxford, 2017), p. 287.

¹⁹⁸ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 5 (May 1922).

western intervention. Although always insistent on the Adamic unity of man, missionary rhetoric routinely co-opted elements of the logic and language of pseudo racial science. Exemplifying this discursive blurring, a 1927 edition of the *African Missionary* declared that the African mentality was ‘born of the hereditary ages’, and so ‘For themselves the change to Christianity is no light one. It entails an arduous fight against an atavism [a biological term for an evolutionary throwback] so much stronger in a primitive people than in our civilised nations, whose racial instincts have long been trained into subjection by centuries of Catholic and Christian practice.’¹⁹⁹

By focusing on the potential that could or would be realised at some, often indefinite, point in the future, missionary discourses could at once sustain the contradictory assertions of Christian human equality and African inferiority. Moreover, this idea of potential was central in both explaining and justifying conversion methods. Typical of Christian missionary discourses and clearly echoing the fundamentals of the colonial *mission civilisatrice*, Irish missionary propagandists presented conversion as closely bound to a process of civilisation.²⁰⁰ Readers were routinely informed that Catholicism inherently bestowed ‘the highest form of Civilisation’, and that the ‘Holy Ghost’ was the ‘source’ of the ‘only real civilisation’.²⁰¹ This ‘civilising influence’ was understood to be integral to ‘uplifting’ the ‘backward and savage’ African who, was widely believed to have no proper culture or civilisation of his own.²⁰² It was recognised both explicitly and implicitly as a constituent element of conversion that brought ‘light into their minds and love in their hearts’, making ‘Them’ more like ‘Us’ or at least more acceptable to ‘Us’.

By the time home-produced missionary magazines emerged in Ireland, the methods by which missionaries attracted followers had been firmly established. Planting the Church was deemed essential to the missionary’s task.²⁰³ Although dramatic accounts of deathbed conversions and the last-minute baptising of dying infants featured regularly in Irish missionary periodicals, much more attention was devoted to reports and updates

¹⁹⁹ *African Missionary*, no. 81 (Sept.-Oct. 1927).

²⁰⁰ Patrick Brantlinger, ‘Victorians and Africans’.

²⁰¹ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 6 (Jun. 1924).

²⁰² *African Missionary*, no. 13 (Mar.-Apr. 1916); *African Missionary*, no. 20 (Jul.-Aug. 1917).

²⁰³ For further discussion on Christian missionaries and church planting see Stefan Pass, *Church planting in the secular west: learning from the European experience* (Michigan, 2016).

on efforts to develop Catholic communities.²⁰⁴ In addition to building mission stations, churches and chapels, individual societies sought to develop their missions by establishing ‘charitable institutions’ such as schools, training colleges, orphanages and medical facilities.²⁰⁵ These undertakings were considered crucial to the realisation of the ‘pagan’s’ potential as well as to the wider Catholicisation of the ‘pagan’ world. Conversion was not simply a case of arriving off the boat and proclaiming the gospel. The ‘grace of conversion’ did not automatically ‘take away the inclinations and heredity qualities’ associated with the ‘benighted African’.²⁰⁶ Utilising the ‘multiplicity of works undertaken for the evangelisation, education and advancement of the African’, the missionary had to struggle ‘patiently and gradually’ to gather a ‘flock’ that could be evangelized and therefore civilized.²⁰⁷

Whilst maintaining an unshakeable belief that Catholicism and civilising went hand in hand, explanations of the exact mechanics of this process were ambiguous. Perhaps in an attempt to obviate too close association with secular imperialism or perhaps as a result of religious conviction, direct references to civilising usually emphasised the principle role of the divine as opposed to the human missionary in this process. Civilising was presented as a natural and holy by-product of Catholicism for ‘though the African Missionary does not go to Africa expressly to civilize, but to evangelize, the fruit of his teaching are the highest form of Civilization’.²⁰⁸ The teachings of the Gospel were proclaimed to have the power to overcome or transform the full spectrum of ‘uncivilised’ African behaviour and customs including alleged vestiges of cannibalism, abuse of women, infanticide, and polygamy.²⁰⁹

Beyond this type of sweeping pronouncement, discussion surrounding civilising in the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* was often centred around schools and education, which constituted a major element of both societies’ work on the mission

²⁰⁴ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 3 (Mar. 1920); Catholic missionaries were expressly forbidden from administering baptism unless they were certain that the baptized would go on to receive full instruction in the faith; baptisms in *articulo mortis* (at the point of death) were the only exception.

²⁰⁵ *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1925).

²⁰⁶ *African Missionary*, no. 44 (Jul.-Aug. 1921).

²⁰⁷ *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1925).

²⁰⁸ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 9 (Sept. 1924).

²⁰⁹ *Missionary Record* [*Missionary Annals*], Nov. 1919; see, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 19 (May- Jun. 1917).

field. Readers were routinely informed of the importance of Catholic schooling for successful conversion. Missionary schools were sometimes presented simply as tools of conversion – an inducement used to persuade ‘chiefs ... keenly alive to the advantage of education’ to grant access to their people.²¹⁰ However, both publications also regularly asserted the role of the school in forming the African. Whilst the actual term ‘civilising’ was often notably absent from the discourse, it was clearly often inferred. By expressly exploiting the lure of secular education, the missionary had the opportunity to ‘form intelligent Catholics’ who had been ‘raised to the level of Gospel teaching’.²¹¹ In addition to saving the souls of converted pupils, the missionary school was also understood to be contributing to the general betterment not only of the individual but also of the ‘pagan’ world more generally, for Catholic schooling was ‘bound to make every rational being more helpful to himself, to his country, and more worthy of God’.²¹²

This ‘intellectual and moral formation’ was conceptualised through a distinctly gendered prism. Imitating the dominant Western model of education, most colonial and missionary schools were single-sex institutions.²¹³ Through the provision of Catholic schooling for boys male missionaries were understood to be moulding men who ‘in the course of time is destined to become a man who may occupy any position, from the head of the family to the chieftaincy of important tribe’. Whilst it was envisaged that the ‘well- instructed’ schoolboy would become a ‘sturdy’ and ‘enlightened’ example of ‘Christian manhood’ who would act as a ‘tower of strength to the Catholic cause’, a much more specific path was set out for African girls.²¹⁴ Unlike their male counterparts who may occupy ‘any position’, the converted girl was deemed destined for the role of wife and mother. Building upon the narrative of ‘pagan’ female ‘degradation’ discussed above, ‘the education of good Catholic girls’ was regarded as integral to both the salvation of African womanhood and the overall spread of Catholicism. According to missionary logic, female ‘education’ would result in ‘the regeneration of the black

²¹⁰ *Missionary Record* [*Missionary Annals*], Aug. 1919.

²¹¹ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 6 (Jun. 1921); *African Missionary*, no. 44 (Jul.-Aug. 1921).

²¹² *African Missionary*, no. 15 (Sept.-Oct. 1916).

²¹³ *African Missionary*, no. 71 (Jan.-Feb. 1916); Gertrude Mianda, ‘Colonialism, Education, and Gender Relations in the Belgian Congo: The Évolué Case’ in Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi (eds) *Women in African colonial histories* (Bloomington, 2002), p. 144.

²¹⁴ *African Missionary*, no. 11 (Jan.-Feb. 1916).

woman' who could then become 'worthy helpmates, quite capable of taking their stand side by side with their young husbands in the struggle to establish the Christianity of the country on its only permanent basis - the Christian family'.²¹⁵

This projection of the idealised Eurocentric vision of 'traditional' gender roles and relations was of course not unusual. Through the pages of the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* readers were informed of a particularly Catholic manifestation of a much broader Western gender narrative. Both publications routinely echoed the Vatican's official summation of the importance of Christian marriage as the foundational unit of society as set out in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Arcanum* published in 1880. In addition to denouncing polygamy and divorce, the encyclical clearly detailed the gender hierarchy within marriage - 'The husband is the chief of the family and the head of the wife' who 'must be subject to her husband and obey him; not indeed as servant, but as companion.'²¹⁶ Thus, in order to properly 'implant Christianity', missionaries understood that they would need to 'train up Catholic wives in proportion to the number of Catholic boys'.²¹⁷

The means of fulfilling this ambition was an equally gendered undertaking with its own distinct 'feminised' rhetoric. Whilst Protestant missions relied upon laywomen to carry out this work, religious sisters were deemed essential to Catholic missions. Practically all accounts of African female 'degradation' were followed by an urgent appeal for more 'gallant Irish girls' to 'consecrate their lives to God' by becoming missionaries.²¹⁸ Typical of the gendered nature of missionary discourses, the dominant image of the missionary sister was that of nurturer. Religious sisters in Africa were commonly associated with the care of infants. Although the figure of the 'black baby' is one of the most commonly recalled aspects of the Irish missions, the care of young children was just one element of the Sisters' work. Both Irish publications actually devoted more attention to the Sisters' role in educating Catholic girls for the role of Catholic wife and mother. Readers were regularly informed that although the priest may provide 'Baptism

²¹⁵ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 9 (Sept. 1922).

²¹⁶ Leo XIII, *Arcanum*, 10 Feb. 1880; for further discussion, see Karen Offen, *Debating the woman question in the French Third Republic, 1870-1920* (Cambridge, 2018) p. 218; this 'traditional' Catholic vision of the family was reinforced in the encyclical *Casti Connubii* published in 1930.

²¹⁷ *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 10 (Oct. 1926); *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 3 (Mar. 1922).

²¹⁸ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 9 (Sept. 1922); *Missionary Annals*, v, no. 3 (Mar. 1922).

and all the sacraments' to both sexes, 'It is Sisters alone, who already possess the truth, can educate the pagan girl, and prepare her mind to accept Christianity'.²¹⁹ Anchored by the image of the Virgin Mary as the paragon of 'true womanhood', it was believed that Religious Sisters 'first as women, and secondly as holy religious', would 'add the sanctifying influence of encouragement and example ... to the healing and saving power of the sacraments'.²²⁰ The exact nature of this 'influence' although often deemed 'indefinable' was always considered to be stereotypically 'feminine'. As 'teacher', 'healer', and 'comforter', the religious sister 'can train the future mothers of Christian families'.²²¹

The type of education offered to African girls reflected this ultimate goal. Accounts of the subjects provided in the boys' and girls' school differed dramatically. Whilst boys studied subjects that would prepare them for participation in the public sphere such as maths and languages, girls studied 'all those things that make the good girl' and 'good mother' including religious instruction, 'training in mothercraft', 'cleanliness' and 'household and manual work'.²²² The course of study available to girls further reinforced the critique of the 'pagan' African woman and family. Owing to this moral and material instruction African girls were understood to have the opportunity to become 'decent women'.²²³ The successful student would go on to marry a Catholic man and raise Catholic children in clean and well-kept Catholic homes. As with discussion surrounding boys' education, despite the evident crossover between the rhetoric of the secular *mission civilisatrice*, the actual term civilising is again notably absent from this discourse. Reflecting the perception of the idealised woman in the subordinate role of wife and mother the lesser term of 'training' was regularly used to specifically designate the type of education African girls received.²²⁴

Whether 'formed', 'trained', 'educated', or 'shaped', children of both sexes played a central role in the missionary narrative. Children were deemed central to the success of the entire effort to Catholicize Africa and used to both explain and justify the existence

²¹⁹ *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 3 (Mar. 1926).

²²⁰ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 9 (Sept. 1922); *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 10 (Oct. 1926).

²²¹ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 8 (Aug. 1924).

²²² *African Missionary*, no. 15 (Sept.-Oct. 1916); *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 10 (Oct. 1926).

²²³ *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 10 (Oct. 1926).

²²⁴ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 9 (Sept. 1922).

of the missionary school – ‘The principle object on which the Missionary must direct his best efforts are the school. It is his only hope of ultimate success. As a rule very little can be done with the old people. The most elementary instruction must suffice for them’.²²⁵ Unsullied by the evils of paganism the African child was quite often set apart from the stereotypical image of the ‘benighted’ and ‘degraded’ ‘savage’. The paternalism so integral to missionary discourses was particularly evident in discussions of indigenous children. Seemingly exempt from any discussions of African genetic inferiority, readers were routinely informed that ‘the young African possesses many natural good qualities; they are so simple and confiding, so wont to lean on the missionary for support that, in time, they become irresistible’.²²⁶ African children were seen to ‘have a charm of their own’ and sometimes were even alleged to be as ‘quick to learn quite as much so, possibly, as European children’.²²⁷ Both Irish publications routinely propagated the well-established tenet of the civilising mission that by winning ‘the heart of the child, you are insensibly winning the heart of the race: when you bring the loving trustful smile to a child’s face you slowly, perhaps, but surely, working a change in the face of Africa’.²²⁸

Whether conjuring sentimental images of the ‘most adorable’ children or imploring pity for the degraded ‘pagan’ victim or savage, both the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* propagated a Catholicised vision of the stereotypical ‘Dark Continent’. All constructions of black Africans were ultimately underpinned by the belief that they were the most primitive, the most untamed and the most uncivilised people on earth. The process of converting Africans to the ‘one True faith’ was inextricably bound to a program of ‘fixing’ indigenous Africa. Premised on the widely held belief that Africa was essentially a blank canvas or *terra nullius*, popular missionary discourses had absolutely no qualms in asserting the unquestioned right of the missionary to effect profound changes on the African family, society, religion and culture in the quest to spread the gospel.

²²⁵ *African Missionary*, no. 76 (Nov.-Dec. 1926).

²²⁶ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 3 (March 1922).

²²⁷ *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 1 (Jun. 1921); *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 1 (Jan. 1920).

²²⁸ *Missionary Annals*, i, no. 1 (Aug. 1919).

The constructions of China and the Chinese as propagated in the *Far East* relied upon an almost totally distinct discourse. In keeping with the broad outline of the Western worldview and stereotypical conceptions of ‘the mysterious Orient’, China was deemed to be a place of ‘ancient civilisation’ with its own unique ‘perplexing maze’ of history and way of life.²²⁹ The magazine constantly pointed out the sheer ‘vastness’ of this ‘far-off’ country. With its ‘teeming millions’ it was apparently home to ‘Almost half of the pagans of the whole world’.²³⁰ China was depicted as a ‘strange’ and ‘fascinating’ place filled with ‘pagan temples’, pagodas, ‘superstitious practices’, incense, lanterns and firecrackers.²³¹ However, reflecting the trend of imperial and missionary discourses to view Asian cultures as far more complex than those of Africa, representations of China were never dominated by this one-dimensional image. China was also deemed to be a nation of ‘contradictions’ where ‘antiquated conservatism’ existed alongside the newly emerging ‘modern China’.²³² The ‘magnificent stretches of fertile country’ stood in contrast to the ‘congested’ and ‘noisy’, ‘tangle of streets’ found in the cities and the ‘traditional’ life of China’s ‘poor peasants’ was distinguished from the cosmopolitan Treaty ports or Concessions that offered ‘all the conveniences of modern life’.²³³ Readers of the *Far East* learned not only of the static or ‘ancient’ China that had ‘not changed practically one iota from the time of Confucius’ but through regular updates of the political developments and unrest were also kept abreast of a nation in flux.²³⁴

As a missionary publication, the concept of paganism was of course an essential and ever-present feature of the *Far East*. Readers were constantly informed of the ‘sad’ plight of China’s ‘abandoned pagans’ who lived and died without ‘the consoling truths of our holy religion’.²³⁵ Adhering to the biblically based account of the family of man, Chinese ‘pagans’, like their African counterparts, were presented as ‘our brothers in Jesus, begot amid the tortures of His crucifixion’. It was therefore incumbent upon ‘Us’ to fulfil the obligations of Catholicism and ‘carry to Them the tidings of the fruits of His Redemption’.²³⁶

²²⁹ *Far East*, iv, no. 1 (Jan. 1921); *Far East*, i, no. 8 (Aug. 1918); *Far East*, xi, no. 4 (Apr. 1919).

²³⁰ *Far East*, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1918); *Far East*, iv, no. 5 (May 1921); *Far East*, ix, no. 11 (Nov. 1926).

²³¹ *Far East*, ii, no. 4. (Apr. 1919); *Far East*, iii, no. 2 (Feb. 1920).

²³² Cleall, *Missionary discourses*, p. 168; *Far East*, ii, no. 3 (Apr. 1919); *Far East*, i, no. 7 (Jul. 1918).

²³³ *Far East*, iv, no. 5 (May 1921); *Far East*, iv, no. 8 (Aug. 1921); *Far East*, i, no. 7 (Jul. 1918).

²³⁴ *Far East*, iv, no. 5 (May 1921).

²³⁵ *Far East*, i, no. 9 (Sept. 1918); *Far East*, i, no. 9 (Sept. 1918).

²³⁶ *Far East*, ii, no. 6 (Jun. 1920); *Far East*, vii, no. 4 (Apr. 1924).

However, beyond the core missionary narrative of the Christian human family, the assessment of Chinese people differed dramatically from that of the African as set out above. Whilst still very much presented as an ‘other’ who was in need of pity and salvation, the Chinese ‘pagan’ was presented in a relatively positive light. The *Far East* regularly asserted the ‘many natural virtues’ of the Chinese, painting an image of ‘a good, kind, hospitable people’, and often proclaiming a particular affinity for China’s poor who ‘know little of the vices of modern civilization’ but are ‘by no means backward or uncivilised’.²³⁷ Unlike African ‘paganism’ that was deemed to compound the alleged ‘defects’ or ‘shortcomings’ of the black man, Chinese ‘paganism’ was far less racialised. Appraisals of the Chinese could seamlessly contain condemnation of Chinese ‘profound superstition’ and ‘idolatry’ whilst also commending this ‘good, patient, industrious people’ who were ‘not only, not harmful, but exceedingly kind’.²³⁸ That is not to say that the overall positive portrayal of the Chinese was not in itself informed by a racialised understanding of humanity. According to the Western hierarchy of races, the Chinese were identified as belonging to the ‘Yellow races’ who were widely understood to occupy a mid-table position in the Social Darwinist tabulations of race.²³⁹ Unlike assessments of the African, the *Far East*’s positive accounts of the Chinese were not primarily confined to what they could become once they had converted to Christianity but often as they were even before missionary intervention. With its ‘old civilization’ and ‘ancient race’ China and the Chinese were considered far closer to the white man and more particularly the Irish than the ‘savage’ black African. Encapsulating this broad sentiment one missionary’s description of an encounter with a Chinese man asserted that ‘He had a fine, noble-looking face, such as one might meet amongst the hills of Donegal – simple, open, hospitable’, further adding that ‘China is full of such men’.²⁴⁰

As with the missionary assessment of indigenous African religions, Chinese belief systems and customs were often denounced as ‘devil worship’ and ‘idolatry’ or

²³⁷ *Far East*, v, no. 11 (Nov. 1922); *Far East*, i, no. 5 (May 1918).

²³⁸ *Far East*, i, no. 9 (Sept. 1918); *Far East*, v, no. 3 (Mar. 1922); *Far East*, iv, no. 8 (Aug. 1921).

²³⁹ Although used infrequently, the term ‘yellow races’ does appear in the *Far East* see, for example, *Far East*, v, no. 9 (Sept. 1923).

²⁴⁰ *Far East*, i, no. 10 (Oct. 1918); *Far East*, v, no. 2 (Feb. 1922).

dismissed as ‘silly’ and ‘quaint’ ‘superstitious’ practices.²⁴¹ Periodic attempts to provide more in-depth explanations, which explicitly focused on China’s major traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism but also included comment on aspects of Chinese folk religions usually concluded that there was ‘no fixed beliefs’ or ‘definite system or doctrine’ in China as ‘all is vague and superstition.’²⁴² The ‘intermingled’, overlapping and seemingly indefinable nature of these beliefs and customs added to the overall image of China as a ‘strange’, complex and somewhat impenetrable place.²⁴³ Frequent descriptions and photographs of China’s pagodas, temples and shrines as well as accounts of the ‘hundreds’ of gods, idols and ‘heathen deities’ worshipped added to this sense of Chinese ‘peculiar’ otherness as did commentary on the ‘hundreds’ of ‘superstitious’ practices and customs like incense burning, chanting and ‘pagan feasts’.²⁴⁴ Whilst often uncertain as to the exact origins or motivations underpinning Chinese beliefs the *Far East* was sure that they all had ‘one thing in common’ – ‘ancestor’ and ‘devil worship’.²⁴⁵ Similar to the examinations of indigenous African religions, Chinese ‘paganism’ was understood to be driven by ‘fear and cowardice’.²⁴⁶ Living in ‘constant dread of evil spirits’ the Chinese were apparently compelled to ‘appease their gods’ and worship the devil ‘not indeed because they love him but because they fear him.’²⁴⁷

However, typifying the multi-layered and often contradictory nature of missionary discourses, the same belief systems and customs were also employed to bolster the positive image of the Chinese. The complexity of devotion and ritual carried out to honour or appease ‘pagan’ gods and ‘their cities abound with temples’ could be held up as a demonstration of the ‘intensely’ and ‘naturally religious’ nature of the Chinese.²⁴⁸ These practices could be interpreted as a ‘sign of the eternal striving of the heart towards Him’ and presented as an encouraging basis for conversion.²⁴⁹ However, with

²⁴¹ *Far East*, i, no. 9 (Sept. 1918); *Far East*, ix, no. 6 (Jun. 1926).

²⁴² *Far East*, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1918).

²⁴³ *Far East*, xii, no. 12 (Dec. 1929).

²⁴⁴ See, for examples, *Far East*, v, no. 2 (Feb. 1922); *Far East*, v, no. 11 (Nov. 1922); *Far East*, xi, no. 1 (Jan. 1928); *Far East*, xii, no. 12 (Dec. 1929).

²⁴⁵ *Far East*, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1918).

²⁴⁶ *Far East*, i, no. 9 (Sept. 1918).

²⁴⁷ *Far East*, v, no. 11 (Nov. 1922); *Far East*, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1918).

²⁴⁸ *Far East*, iv, no. 3 (Mar. 1921); *Far East*, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1918), *Far East*, v, no. 11 (Nov. 1922).

²⁴⁹ *Far East*, i, no. 11 (Nov. 1918).

the constant emphasis on the polytheistic nature of Chinese beliefs and likely reflecting the greater level of esteem afforded to this ‘ancient race’ when compared with the African, the *Far East* refrained from imposing the reductive theory of primitive monotheism onto Chinese religions.²⁵⁰ Instead, the most positive appraisals of Chinese beliefs argued that there were ‘many doctrines which Catholicity may utilize in directing the pagan mind from darkness to light’ and a ‘number of beliefs in China on which Christianity can build’. Although clearly echoing the Jesuit method of accommodation associated with Matteo Ricci’s mission to China in the late sixteenth century, the *Far East* masterfully demonstrating the constant centrality of ‘Us’ in missionary discourses, attributed this approach to St. Patrick. The magazine proclaimed that when the Irish patron saint was converting ‘our pagan ancestors’, he ‘respected the existing civilization’ and ‘Christianized it without introducing a new one’. ²⁵¹ This more respectful approach was very much in line with a much broader shift in attitudes within missionary organisations and the Vatican towards China that emerged in response to the anti-western and anti-missionary sentiments that had motivated the Boxer Uprising of 1900. This change in perspective was further accelerated by the calamitous impact of the Great War on missionary endeavour, discussed further below, which exposed the vulnerability of the dependence of the missions on western manpower and funding, thereby highlighting the need to indigenise the church. ²⁵² Within this more positive assessment of Chinese beliefs, particular praise was given to Confucius who ‘although a pagan’, ‘set a remarkably high standard in the domain of Ethics, political and domestic’.²⁵³ The *Far East* proclaimed that ‘The civilization based on Confucianism was after all a spiritual civilization’ and under his influence the Chinese had become ‘the most moral and most humane’ pagans in the world. ²⁵⁴

Further adding to this narrative of the world’s best pagans, the *Far East* explained that the Chinese would not only ‘make excellent subjects for the saving waters of baptism’ but as a ‘laborious’ and peaceful’ people who were ‘obedient to the voice of authority’

²⁵⁰ *Far East*, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1918).

²⁵¹ *Far East*, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1918).

²⁵² Ricci’s method of accommodation which sought to Sinicize Catholicism in China ignited intense and long lasting controversy within the Catholic Church and also between the Vatican and Chinese rulers, for further discussion see Wu, *From Christ to Confucius*, pp 20-1; for discussion of the shift in attitudes towards missionary work in China see *ibid.*, pp 1-2, p. 125.

²⁵³ *Far East*, ii, no. 8 (Aug. 1919).

²⁵⁴ *Far East*, iv, no. 11 (Nov. 1921); *Far East*, i, no. 10 (Oct. 1918).

they would be ‘a much desired asset to the Church’.²⁵⁵ The characterisation of the Chinese ‘pagans’ as almost Christian-like shaped the discourse surrounding the nature of missionary work in China. Unlike the ‘savage’ and ‘benighted’ African who had to be civilized, formed or trained as well as evangelized, the missionary in China had to simply (but usually not so simply in reality) add ‘the sweetening influence of the Gospel’ to this already ‘civilized’ and ‘virtuous’ people.²⁵⁶

This divergence in rhetoric is notable in discussions surrounding schooling. In keeping with the general *modus operandi* of Catholic missionary enterprise the provision of schools and education remained core to the Columbans’ vision for evangelizing China. Whilst accounts and updates of the society’s schools in China did appear in *Far East*, the institutions were not presented as tied to a missionary vision of the civilizing mission as in Africa. Eurocentric paternalism was however by no means absent from this discourse. For example, in one edition from 1922 China was proclaimed to ‘look to foreigners as their superiors in learning’ and therefore apparently welcomed the establishment of missionary schools. However, the major emphasis on discussions of missionary education in China concentrated on the school as the principal battleground for faith. The school ‘above all is the great means of propagating religion’.²⁵⁷ It was through the school that the missionary would ‘battle for the faith’ against paganism as well as Protestantism.²⁵⁸

The portrayal of Chinese women, womanhood and family life also reflected and furthered this construction of the world’s best pagans. ‘Pagan’ Chinese women were considered far closer to the ideal of Christian womanhood than their African counterparts. Whilst the conversion of women was recognised as crucial to the propagation of Catholicism, critiques of the Chinese woman and family were not a prominent feature in the *Far East*. The publication rarely engaged with the wider missionary narrative of female pagan degradation and victimhood. Chinese women were not deemed in need of training in order to fulfil their designated function as wife, mother, and homemaker. One exceptionally in-depth account of the ‘Family in Chinese

²⁵⁵ *Far East*, iii, no. 9 (Sept. 1920); *Far East*, xii, no. 11 (Nov. 1929); *Far East*, v, no. 11 (Nov. 1922).

²⁵⁶ *Far East*, v, no. 11 (Nov. 1922).

²⁵⁷ *Far East*, v, no. 3 (Mar. 1922).

²⁵⁸ *Far East*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1923).

Life' asserted that 'We must not imagine from exaggerated statements of travellers that the Chinese woman in her home is a kind of slave'.²⁵⁹ Further adding, although 'she may not be able to read or write...she is familiar with the poems and sagas of her country' and 'it is known that a Chinese girl can recite a poem of 800 lines somewhat in the same fashion and unerring accuracy as a seanachaidhe at a feis'.²⁶⁰ With Chinese women understood to be 'adept in the art of cooking' and 'needle-work', they were considered capable of preparing their female children 'for their Chinese homelife'.²⁶¹ Chinese children were generally considered to be well cared for, and Chinese filial relations were often praised. Beyond the addition of the 'sweetening influence' of Catholicism, the missionary had seemingly little cause to intervene in domestic Chinese life.

Reflecting the Church's intense concern about the containment of sex, the *Far East* praised the 'extremely modest' nature of Chinese women, with special mention given to the Chinese ladies 'who observed the vow of virginity in their homes – a practice very common in China which recalls the early days of Christianity'.²⁶² In 1920 the magazine featured a quote on the subject by German priest, Fr Friedrich Schwager, a well-known figure in missiology (the academic study of missions) and a contemporary of Fr Wilhelm Schmidt that stated

Chastity is held in comparatively high respect in China. The moral writings of the great moral teachers contain many wise admonitions about it, and tell of the heroism of virgins who preferred death to dishonour. Parents even have been known to kill their children when they found they have transgressed. These facts and the love the Chinaman ordinarily has for his children make missionaries sanguine about winning the great empire to the true faith.²⁶³

Although not exactly endorsing honour suicide or killings, the conclusion that the missionary could take heart in what it represented was indicative not only of the Catholic contempt for sex outside of marriage and the fallen woman but also of the dramatically different missionary view of Africa and China. Whilst practices such as infanticide and the mistreatment of women were denounced in the context of 'pagan'

²⁵⁹ *Far East*, vii, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² *Far East*, i, no. 10 (Oct. 1918); *Far East*, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1918).

²⁶³ *Far East*, iii, no. 3 (Mar. 1920).

Africa where they were deemed a manifestation of a godless existence, amongst the Christian-like Chinese honour suicides and murders in the name of chastity could be almost celebrated.

The *Far East*'s commentary on female foot binding followed a similar pattern. The practice which took a prominent position in Western imaginings of China had since the late nineteenth century been denounced by British protestant missionaries amongst others as harmful to women and read as an indicator of the inferiority of Chinese civilization.²⁶⁴ However, the issue only featured occasionally in the *Far East* with most references simply observing the existence or decline of this 'strange' practice as opposed to actually condemning it. ²⁶⁵ One of the few more detailed commentaries on the practice focused on the impact it had on the missions as opposed to the women noting that those with bound feet 'are unable to come to Church for instruction, and as a result, scarcely ever see a priest. This is ruinous to the progress of Catholicism, for unless Chinese mothers are well instructed in the faith they cannot instruct their children.'²⁶⁶

Denunciations of infanticide in China were similarly muted. Although contemporary western commentators on China failed to find consensus over the scale of this practice, infanticide had been to the fore of the popular Catholic conceptualisation of China in the nineteenth century. Founded in 1843 specifically for the cause of rescuing, baptising and caring for abandoned infants in China, the Holy Childhood played a major role in forging the western Catholic association between the Chinese and infanticide. Exploring this still controversial subject, historian D.E. Mungello comes to the broad conclusion that Protestant missionaries were more likely to ignore the practice in order to defend the image of the Chinese and attract sympathy for their work whilst Catholics, in part motivated by their belief in the salvific grace of baptism, were more likely to highlight infanticide in China with the same aim of winning support.²⁶⁷ Whilst the *Far East* did include occasional reference and commentary on the practice, and did sometimes point out the much higher incidence of female infanticide, the issue was by no means a staple

²⁶⁴ Shih-Wen Chen, *Representations of China in British children's fiction, 1851-1911* (Burlington, 2013).

²⁶⁵ *Far East*, ii, no. 6 (Jun. 1918); see also *Far East*, v, no. 8 (Aug. 1922).

²⁶⁶ *Far East*, v, no. 6 (Jun. 1922).

²⁶⁷ D.E. Mungello, *Drowning girls in China: female infanticide since 1650* (Plymouth, 2008), pp 64, 80-3.

feature of the publication. The culturally embedded Chinese preference for sons, which played a key role in the sex-selective nature of the practice, although often observed, was not held up as something that the missionary could or should attempt to change.

Following the arrival of the first band of priests in 1920, the *Far East* began to increasingly assert the need for religious sisters to ‘help’ in their ‘very important work’.²⁶⁸ Although Chinese girls were clearly not considered in need of the same training as African girls in order to fulfil the role of wife and mother, the *Far East* maintained the gendered division of missionary labour. The ‘heroic’ sisters ran orphanages for ‘abandoned babies’, hospitals and dispensaries for the poor, educated girls and trained impoverished women in the ‘lucrative trade’ of needlework and silk whilst also ensuring their charges were ‘grounded in the Catholic faith’.²⁶⁹ In addition the provision of female education and ‘caring’ services, the religious sister in China were also considered to possess particularly ‘feminine’ qualities that were deemed necessary for the success of a mission. Reporting the opening of the Columban college for missionary sisters in County Clare in June 1922, the *Far East* proclaimed that the ‘mind of the pagans’ is captivated by

the sight of those ladies who, urged by faith and love of which they are ignorant, tend their sick, instruct the ignorant, and bring the sunshine of Christian pity into their darkened lives ... Having no knowledge beyond the day, at the mercy of old customs and traditions, the pagan women lead lives of hopeless drudgery. Christianity alone has raised the dignity of women, and the Sisters, proving by their lives and existence of a higher love and telling them of Jesus and Mary, often win a way into those pagan hearts where the missionary would fail.²⁷⁰

Although the *Far East*’s narrative of the world’s best pagans focused predominantly on the spiritual shortcomings of the Chinese, the publication was not wholly devoid of outright criticisms of the Chinese. Whilst largely eschewing the extremes of the western Sinophobia that had intensified over the course of the nineteenth century with the growth of European imperial ambitions, the publication did occasionally propagate negative racial stereotypes associated with the ‘Chinaman’ that went beyond the depiction of the Chinese as ‘strange’.²⁷¹ For example, despite the tendency to valorise

²⁶⁸ *Far East*, iv, no. 4 (Apr. 1921).

²⁶⁹ *Far East*, xii, no. 10 (Oct. 1929); *Far East*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1924).

²⁷⁰ *Far East*, v, no. 6 (Jun. 1922).

²⁷¹ Wu, *From Christ to Confucius*, pp 164-5.

China's 'ancient civilization', it was also periodically presented as a stagnant, insular, and even primitive place.²⁷² The Chinese were also sporadically criticised for their 'love' of "'face'" which was understood as trait somewhat akin to 'pride'.²⁷³ One edition of the *Far East* from 1924 informed readers that the missionary had to wary of this 'racial characteristic' as it could drive the 'Chinaman' to attempt to 'gratify his ambitions' by gaining a position of influence within the mission. Once there, such a 'cunning schemer' would exploit the position 'for his own advantage' by using 'corrupt practices' in order to satisfy his greed and desire for influence.²⁷⁴ However, in keeping with the Columbans' proclaimed affinity for China's poor, these occasional criticisms were usually not attributed to the entire Chinese race. Differentiations could be made between the ordinary population and the rich and/or powerful as illustrated by one feature in 1919 that ascribed an apparent 'lack of religion and moral sanction' in China to 'those in power', asserting that the 'unfortunate' poor were the victims of elite corruption.

Seeking to ensure sympathy for the Chinese, similar differentiation was also evident in the *Far East's* commentary on political movements and upheaval in China. Since the arrival of the first Jesuit missions in the sixteenth century Christianity in China had close associations with west and western imperialist designs. The rapid expansion of the western presence in China in the nineteenth century and the resultant growth of Chinese anti-imperialist sentiment also encompassed a strong anti-Christian element. Foreign Christian missions to China therefore existed on a politically precarious footing. Whilst the discourse surrounding missions to the 'savage' Africa emphasised the elemental dangers of the 'extreme' climatic conditions and disease, the *Far East* was more focused on detailing the threats posed by political developments. However, violence towards missionaries was never presented as an indicator of Chinese inferiority or as a general rejection of the missionary message. Often it was instead read as some sort of misunderstanding or ascribed to a fanatical or ill-informed minority. For example, one of the few retrospective accounts of the Boxer Uprising claimed that the rebellion 'was not naturally against the Catholic Church'. Apparently the intended target had actually only been 'the agents' of 'Foreign Powers' who were 'scattered across China'.

²⁷² See, for example, *Far East*, iii, no. 9 (Sept. 1920).

²⁷³ See, for example, *Far East*, xi, no. 1 (Jan. 1928).

²⁷⁴ *Far East*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1924); see also *Far East*, xii, no. 8 (Aug. 1929).

However, since these officials fled to safety it was the missionaries who had ‘remained like true soldiers at their posts’ that bore ‘the brunt of the persecution’. The Boxers’ ‘fanaticism’ was apparently further inflamed ‘by the harangues of the pagan Taoist priests’.²⁷⁵

Exoneration of the ‘ordinary’ Chinese also shaped assessments of the contemporary political discord and violence in China that had gathered momentum in the early 1920s. Reflecting the growth of this unrest, the *Far East* began to devote increasing attention to China’s political situation. Letters sent home from priests relaying reports of the ‘disturbed’ state of the country often with an emphasis on how it affected their own mission work or that of other missionaries became a staple feature.²⁷⁶ With the outbreak of civil war in 1927, persecution of Christians increased. Reports of violence, chaos and threats intensified. Accounts of ‘Christians massacred’, ‘nuns and priests seized’, ‘bandit raids’, ‘executions’, the spread of Communism and ‘famine’ appeared regularly.²⁷⁷ However, in spite of the violence and backlash against missionaries the *Far East* remained relatively positive about China’s future. One overview from 1928 declared

let us not give way to pessimism; the shrewdest students of movements in the East seem to be quite hopeful, even now, about the outcome of the Nationalist Revolution and China’s ultimate status. Militarism, party corruption, the avarice and deceit of individuals, impossible social and economic theories-these are the evils that beset her at the moment; but her children have not the shortcomings of more primitive peoples; they possess in themselves sufficient mental and moral prowess to overcome those evils and solve their own problems-in their own way, slowly.²⁷⁸

Accounts of the ‘murder’ of Fr Timothy Leonard who, killed by ‘bandits’ in July 1929, became the first Columaban to suffer a violent death, brought home the dangerous reality of the Chinese mission field.²⁷⁹ However, with the ‘fight for souls’ as the utmost priority, there was little shift in the *Far East*’s rhetoric. Leonard’s death was easily absorbed into the well-established narratives of Christian persecution and Catholic martyrdom. Reported to have been ‘seized on the altar’ when he was ‘about to begin

²⁷⁵ *Far East*, ii, no. 12 (Nov. 1919).

²⁷⁶ See, for example, *Far East*, iv, no. 4 (Apr. 1923).

²⁷⁷ *Far East*, xi, no. 5 (Apr. 1928); *Far East*, xi, no. 3 (Mar. 1928).

²⁷⁸ *Far East*, xi, no. 5 (Apr. 1928).

²⁷⁹ *Far East*, xii, no. 9 (Sept. 1929).

mass', Leonard's 'glorious example...in yielding up his life for the great cause' was held up as a positive encouragement for Catholics to remain steadfast in the 'noble fight for the faith'.²⁸⁰ A letter from the Bishop of Cork published in the *Far East* asserted that 'one would rejoice with your Society that God honoured it so soon with a representative on the roll of Martyrs'.²⁸¹ However, with the aim of securing donations and vocations, readers were assured that the 'these atrocities are not typical of the Chinese people' and to 'generalise in this matter is unfair' as 'similar horrors occur from time to time in every country'. Adding that 'it should be remembered that when atrocities do occur it is more often the Chinese country folk themselves, peace-loving and inoffensive, who are the victims'.²⁸² Just as the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* constantly reminded the reader of the potential of the African, the *Far East* had to perform its own careful balancing act. Printed in the same publication and often on the same pages as appeals for public support, the editors had to ensure that reports of violence in China did not taint the overarching message driving missionary endeavour. Instead, the plight of 'poor China' was used to further the appeal for urgent missionary intervention. Clearly successful in their efforts, the Columbans continued to thrive. Circulation of the *Far East* grew year on year, donations continued to flow in and recruitment figures, perhaps the best indication of missionary zeal, also steadily increased.

II.

Whilst the portrayal of the pathetic African and sympathetic Chinese was a fundamental component of Irish missionary discourse, it was of course just one side of the 'Us' and 'Them' dichotomy. The projection of the Irish was of equal importance in the quest to rouse public support for the missions. Built on a host of pre-existing tropes and stereotypes, the construction of 'Them' offered little in the way of originality. In contrast, the creation of 'Us' called for a bit more ingenuity. In keeping with the widely acknowledged self-affirming function of popular missionary propaganda, Irish missionary propagandists crafted a vision of the world that assured the intended reader of their superior position within it. Reflecting the multi-layered nature of missionary discourses, the 'superiority' of Irish Catholics rested on numerous factors with two

²⁸⁰ *Far East*, xii, no. 10 (Oct. 1929); *Far East*, xii, no. 9 (Sept. 1929).

²⁸¹ *Far East*, xii, no. 10 (Oct. 1929).

²⁸² *Far East*, xiii, no. 2 (Feb. 1930).

main lines of reasoning. Firstly, according to *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals*, the Irish, having ‘all the advantages that are the inheritance of the white man’, were aligned with their white European brethren.²⁸³ Ireland existed within ‘the pale of civilization’ and was therefore called upon to participate in the global expansion of Catholicism. As part of this wider phenomenon, Irish Catholics were urged to contribute to the conversion of ‘the millions of souls waiting in the outer darkness of paganism.’²⁸⁴ Secondly, Irish missionary publications constantly asserted Ireland’s ‘specialness’. Irish Catholics were implored to support ‘pagan’ missionary endeavour not only because they were Catholic and white and European, but especially because they were Irish. Missionary expansion was presented as ‘Ireland’s spiritual destiny’, and Irish Catholics were ‘a race of apostles’, ‘a chosen people’.²⁸⁵ The Irish were the ‘children of a motherland full of faith’ and Ireland a metropole of virtue ‘marked out by God for high missionary purposes’.²⁸⁶ Although the *Far East* was far less inclined to employ explicitly racialised rhetoric, it nevertheless asserted a similar account of Irish superiority. Readers were likewise informed of the ‘countless blessings’ they enjoyed by the simple fact of living in a ‘Christian land’ as well as the greatness of ‘the little Green Isle of Saints and Scholars’ with its ‘fervent’ Catholic faith.²⁸⁷

Typical of the genre, the projection of this superiority was both an implicit and explicit constant of the Irish missionary magazine. With religion at the heart of the missionary worldview, this discourse of the superior self was rooted in the foundational belief that Catholicism was the ‘one True faith’. In line with the contemporary dominant and popular interpretations of Catholic teachings on the afterlife, this Catholic missionary master narrative maintained that Catholic Us could ultimately reach heaven whilst ‘pagan’ Them could not. Although the exact fate of the unbaptised quite often actually went unsaid, the understanding that they would suffer eternal damnation was inherent. In contrast to the damned ‘pagan’, the Catholic was ‘fortunate’ enough to realise that ‘the life of man on earth’ should be spent preparing for heaven.²⁸⁸ Readers were

²⁸³ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 2 (Nov. 1921).

²⁸⁴ *African Missionary*, no. 22 (Nov.-Dec. 1917).

²⁸⁵ *Missionary Annals*, v, no. 6 (Jun. 1923); *Far East*, i, no. 4 (Apr. 1918); *African Missionary*, no. 13 (Mar.-Apr. 1916).

²⁸⁶ *African Missionary*, no. 18 (Mar.-Apr. 1917).

²⁸⁷ *Far East*, vi, no. 1 (Jan. 1923); *Far East*, xxi, no. 2 (Feb. 1928); *Far East*, xi, no. 1 (Jan. 1923).

²⁸⁸ *African Missionary*, no. 30 (Mar.-Apr. 1919).

regularly implored to ‘compare our lot’ with the ‘the abandonment of those outside the warmth of God’s love, the cheerless lot to which they awaken every day, the death towards which they travel’.²⁸⁹ In detailing the ‘wretchedness’ of the ‘pagan lot’, readers were confidently assured that they were not only ‘blessed’ to be Catholic but were particularly fortunate to be Irish Catholics as ‘Here in Ireland, thank God, we have a true living faith’.²⁹⁰ Ireland was presented as ‘the land of Catholic traditions, of deeply flowing faith, where the religion of Christ is accepted without a murmur’.²⁹¹ Unabashedly sentimental depictions of this Irish Catholicity that was proclaimed, for example, ‘to keep the Irish heart as tender and as fresh as the green grass of his dear Erin’ were a standard.²⁹²

Although the construction of this superior Irish self was very much anchored in triumphalist Tridentine Catholicism, it could also routinely play off the whole spectrum of ‘pagan’ otherness. As with wider missionary and imperial discourses, the very assertion of the peculiarity, depravity or exoticness of the other served to assert the supremacy of the Irish. The stereotypical image of the savage African offered a particularly useful counterpoint against which all the purported positive attributes and good fortune of Irish Catholics could be demonstrated. Held up against the constructions of ‘the less favoured portions of humanity’, pronouncements of Irish Catholic superiority were not a difficult sell.²⁹³ Descriptions and tales of the Dark Continent with its primitive inhabitants, lax morals, degraded women and disordered families offered tacit valorisation of the Irish Catholic existence. Filtered through the missionary lens, this flattering reflection of Ireland and the Irish was idealised in the extreme. Beyond chastising Irish Catholics for their failure to fulfil their ‘obligations’ to the missionary cause, criticisms of Irish society were rare. Depicted as a haven of Catholicity – populated by devout adherents to the faith, ‘traditional’ Catholic families and devoted priests and religious – this missionary vision of Ireland was not merely in line with the wider contemporary self-generated projection of the country as an oasis of

²⁸⁹ *Far East*, iii, no. 9 (Sept. 1920).

²⁹⁰ *African Missionary*, no. 17 (Jan.-Feb. 1917).

²⁹¹ *Far East*, vi, no. 1 (Jan. 1923). 3

²⁹² *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 7 (Jul. 1924).

²⁹³ *African Missionary*, no. 19 (May-Jun. 1917). 9

Catholic purity, but it also played a constituent role in moulding and propagating this self-aggrandising formula.²⁹⁴

The missionary magazine not only offered a reassuringly rose-tinted reflection of Irish society as it was but also simultaneously asserted a vision of what it should be. With mass readerships these periodicals propagated an aspirational vision of Ireland that chimed with a much broader Catholic vision of the ideal life and society. Criticisms of the African family unit provided a particularly useful means to affirm the Catholic line on issues such as divorce and sex outside of marriage whilst making no explicit mention of any shortcomings of the Irish. Jarring with the idealised image of holy Ireland, such less palatable realities of Irish life had no place in this discourse. In keeping with the Vatican's official teachings, Irish missionary magazines similarly reinforced 'traditional' gender roles. In 1891 Pope Leo XIII published *Rerum Novarum* on capital and labour. Building on his 1880 *Arcanum* on Christian marriage, this latest encyclical confirmed the role of man as breadwinner and woman, who 'is by nature fitted for home-work', as homemaker.²⁹⁵ By proclaiming the rightful position of African women to be the 'guardian angels of their homes', the missionary periodical could at once assert the good fortune of 'our Catholic women' and reinforce the image of idealised domesticity.²⁹⁶ Disregarding the presence of women in the Irish workforce, the magazines simply ignored the class divisions that would have marred this romanticised projection.

Assertions of a unique Irish missionary lineage were essential to this projection of Irish 'specialness'. Using a highly selective and simplistic account of Irish history, Irish missionary propagandists fashioned an extremely flattering historical narrative that, as with all other constructions of superior Us, served at once to affirm Irish greatness at the same time as inducing support for the missions. With constant reference to St Patrick and a host of other Irish missionary saints of early Christian Ireland, the Irish missionary magazine sought to forge a connection between the 'golden Age of our

²⁹⁴ For further discussion of this projection of Irish Catholicity see Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: the undoing of a culture* (Dublin, 2002).

²⁹⁵ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 15 May 1891; These 'traditional' gender roles were reaffirmed forty years later in Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* of 1931, for further discussion see Caitríona Beaumont, *Housewives and citizens: domesticity and the women's movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester, 2013), p. 73 and Offen, *Debating the woman question*, pp 166, 218-19.

²⁹⁶ *African Missionary*, no. 14 (Jul.- Aug. 1916).

faith' and present-day missionary efforts.²⁹⁷ Although British, French and other missionary discourses asserted similar links with their own version of a 'glorious' pre-modern missionary heritage, this imagined link appears to have been particularly prominent in the Irish Catholic missionary periodical.²⁹⁸ With contemporary missions declared to be 'the rebirth in the supernatural order of Ireland of the past', missionary endeavour was presented as absolutely integral to the Catholicism that was 'the natural inheritance and inherent possession' of the Irish 'race'.²⁹⁹ Readers were regularly informed that they were the 'sons and daughters of St Patrick' and therefore had a 'Divine destiny' to propagate the faith.³⁰⁰ Furthering this vision of the 'special' and 'chosen' Irish, this missionary version of history quite often declared that these early missionaries had actually been the saviours of all of Europe. They had apparently 'stemmed the tide of irreligion that had threatened to engulf' the continent and consequently could be proclaimed as 'the benefactors of almost every nation in Europe'.³⁰¹

Demonstrating the considerable influence of the Gaelic revival in the formulation of this narrative, the very first edition of the *African Missionary* published in 1914 cited a tract on the influence of Irish Christian monks in Europe from nationalist historian Alice Stopford Green's *Irish Nationality* which had been published three years earlier.³⁰² In 1922, the *Missionary Annals* similarly explicitly referenced the same 'charming work'. Arguably indicative of the growing exclusivity of the Irish *Catholic* identity associated with the emerging Free State, this time a caveat was included. It stated that although a 'gifted authoress, Mrs Green, because she does not know the true Church [as she was a Protestant], just misses the real sublimity of Irish history'.³⁰³

²⁹⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1914.)

²⁹⁸ Owen White and J.P. Daughton 'Placing French Missionaries in the Modern World' in Owen White and J.P. Daughton (eds), *In God's empire* (Oxford, 2012) p. 7; for discussion of the link between pre-modern and modern missionaries in British protestant literature for children in the nineteenth century see Jonathon Brooke, 'Providentialist Nationalism and Juvenile Missionary Literature, 1840-1870', Henry Martin Seminar, Westminster College, Cambridge University (<https://www.cccw.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Brooke-Jonathan-2-Feb-2006.pdf>) (10 Apr. 2018); in his 1919 encyclical *Maximum illud*, Benedict XV set out a history of Christian missions and listed twelve pre modern 'Great Apostles of Gospel'.

²⁹⁹ *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 9 (Sept. 1920); *Far East*, vi, no. 1 (Jan. 1923).

³⁰⁰ *Far East*, i, no. 4 (Apr. 1918).

³⁰¹ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

³⁰² Alice Stopford Green, *Irish nationality* (London, 1911).

³⁰³ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 10 (Oct.1922).

This missionary telling of Irish history was often stretched even further to accommodate a soothing account of mass emigration from Ireland in nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Tapping into the concept of a ‘Greater Ireland’ that encompassed the Irish diaspora, this extended narrative asserted that the propagation of ‘our faith’ was not the sole preserve of the priest and religious.³⁰⁴ Given that the Irish were proclaimed as the providentially appointed inheritors of a missionary spirit passed down from St Patrick *et al*, all Irish emigrants could apparently be considered ‘unconscious apostles’.³⁰⁵ With frequent reference to the Catholic Churches in North America and Australia, it was declared that the Irish had ‘evangelized half the world’.³⁰⁶ Efforts to convert China and Africa were presented as the mere continuance of the ‘ancient mission’ of the Irish race.³⁰⁷ Viewed through the missionary lens, mass emigration when merged with intentional efforts to evangelize overseas could be presented in an incredibly flattering light and even proclaimed to be the ‘brightest gem in Ireland’s crown’.³⁰⁸ One particularly self-aggrandising version of this narrative declared that owing to an inherent ‘restless genius’ and ‘wander-impulse’, the ‘Irish missionary, lay or priestly’ had made notable contributions ‘to humanity’. Some the gifts that these ‘Irish exiles’ had supposedly ‘diffused to the ends of the earth’ included ‘a vivid imagination, a gleam of mysticism, an enthusiastic nature’ and an ‘unfailing humour’.³⁰⁹ Religious persecution featured regularly in this history. The survival and expansion of Irish Catholicism was often declared all the more glorious and divine for having survived centuries of oppression at the hands of the English.³¹⁰

Exemplifying the manner in which missionary discourse adapted to suit shifting popular tastes, this wider projection of the superior Irish ‘Us’ was often fused with the language of warfare. Whilst Christian missionaries had a centuries old tradition of adopting military rhetoric to conceptualise and promote their endeavours, the growth of popular militarism in the lead up and aftermath of the Great War significantly intensified the

³⁰⁴ For further discussion of ‘Greater Ireland’ see Colin Barr and Hillary M. Carey (eds) *Religion and Greater Ireland: Christianity and Irish global networks, 1750 -1969* (Montreal, 2015).

³⁰⁵ *African Missionary*, no 6 (Mar.-Apr. 1915).

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Far East*, i, no. 5 (May 1918).

³⁰⁸ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

³⁰⁹ *Far East*, i, no. 5 (May 1918).

³¹⁰ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 3 (Mar. 1920); *Far East*, ii, no. 9 (Sept. 1918).

level of this discursive co-optation.³¹¹ Irish missionary propagandists, like many of their Protestant and Catholic counterparts elsewhere, sought to maximize support by framing missionary activity in the terms of war. The missionary was presented as a self-sacrificing heroic ‘soldier of the Gospel’ who had left the comforts of ‘Ireland with its homes of faith and purity’ to fight on the ‘front-line trenches’.³¹² Once there, they would bravely battle in ‘Christ’s army’ against the eternal enemy of Satan.³¹³

Lay supporters could share in the ‘glory’ of missionary ‘warfare’ as this ‘war’ was declared to be ‘like all others’ in that it ‘depends as much on the people at home as on the soldiers in the field’.³¹⁴ Implored to do their part, those on the ‘home-front’ were urged to consider the ‘Altar-rails’ as their “‘munition’” factories and ‘the beads of the Rosary the “Shells” by which God’s grace may be poured into the strongholds of Satan’.³¹⁵ Typical of the composition of missionary discourses, heroic missionary militarism did not always stand as a discrete line of persuasion within the magazine. It could be blended with the full panoply of arguments that formed the missionary construction of the superior Us. For example, with reference to ideas of Ireland’s ancient missionary lineage, in 1920 the *Far East* characteristically remarked that ‘For centuries Irish missionaries in Europe held the line for Christ’.³¹⁶

The discourse of Irish nationalism added a further layer to this multifaceted missionary projection of self. Again, this link between mission and nation was not unique to Irish missionary discourse. Despite the concurrent commitment to the idea of Christian universalism, the concept of nation permeated the entire Christian missionary revival in both its structure on the mission field and in its conceptualisation ‘at home’. As noted by the late Adrian Hastings ‘While theoretically the Catholic missionary army was a highly international one, this was seldom the case on the ground. Even totally internationally orders such as the Jesuits or Dominicans, were firmly divided at home into national provinces, and it was a province, rather than a society as whole, which had

³¹¹ Bernard Taithe, ‘Missionary Militarism? The Armed Brothers of the Sahara and Léopold Joubert in the Congo’ in White and Daughton (eds), *In God’s Empire*, p. 132.

³¹² *African Missionary*, no. 53 (Jan.-Feb. 1923); *Far East*, i, no. 8 (Aug. 1918); *Far East*, vi, no. 8 (Aug. 1923).

³¹³ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 4 (Apr. 1921).

³¹⁴ *African Missionary*, no. 21 (Sept.-Oct. 1917).

³¹⁵ *African Missionary*, no. 31 (May-Jun. 1919).

³¹⁶ *Far East*, iii, no. 1 (Jan. 1920).

responsibility for, and manned, a particular mission'.³¹⁷ Articulations of missionary nationalism differed across place, time and religious divides. Not surprisingly, the outbreak of the Great War intensified this rhetoric. Responding to the growth of popular nationalist sentiment in Ireland in the aftermath of the 1916 rising and the later War of Independence (1919-21), the Irish missionary periodical began to feature its own customised version of missionary nationalism.

Although Edmund Hogan's pioneering survey pays scant attention to the construction of 'Them', his short chapter on missionary propaganda offers astute analysis on this assimilation of the ideals and language of the Irish nationalist struggle into Irish missionary discourse. Hogan observes that the 'imaginative link between Irish freedom and Irish Catholicism had already been forged by nationalists such as Pearse and Plunkett'.³¹⁸ The advocates of the missionary movement gave it a new dimension by extending it to include those "'fighting the battle for Christ in Africa and Asia'".³¹⁹ According to the missionary propaganda itself, there was, however, no cause on earth that could possibly trump that of the missionary. Whilst missionary propagandists were willing to valorise Irish nationalism and rhetorically align their efforts with nationalist ideals, it was always done with their own ends in sight. Hogan notes that the missionary periodical 'set out to show that political and cultural idealism, although worthy and commendable, can never satisfy the human spirit; while the pursuit of religious aspirations, representing the highest form of idealism alone provides true fulfilment'.³²⁰ The missionary and the nationalist were presented as having one 'common objective' and motivation – that of 'Freedom'.³²¹ However, all three titles always concluded, albeit delicately, that the missionary goal of spiritual freedom ultimately superseded any terrestrial cause.

Whilst proclamations of Ireland's ancient missionary heritage and Catholic specialness were unlikely to provoke controversy, the addition of the contemporary nationalist

³¹⁷ Adrian Hastings, 'The Clash of Nationalism and Universalism within the Twentieth-Century Missionary Christianity' in Brian Stanley and Elaine M. Low (eds), *Missions, Nationalism and the End of Empire* (Cambridge, 2003) p. 18.

³¹⁸ Hogan, *Irish missionary movement*, p. 147.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

struggle into the mix was somewhat less straightforward. Perhaps apprehensive about censorship, the outcome of the political upheaval and how best to appeal to popular sentiment, both the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* were initially quite cautious in explicitly engaging with the rhetoric of Irish nationalism. As mentioned above, it was the *Far East* who led this charge. Clearly influenced by the Irish-Ireland movement, the self-styled ‘National Irish Mission to China’ quickly aligned itself to the nationalist struggle at the same time as presenting itself as an extension of that same cause. Blending tales and accounts of the missionary ‘Destiny of the Irish race’ with regular references to Patrick Pearse, ‘songs of the Gael’, Gaelic games, and periodic assertions on the importance of the Irish language, the *Far East* presented both the growth of Irish nationalism and the birth of their organisation as an interconnected act of providence.³²² One edition of 1919 proclaimed it to be ‘a secret of God that this movement should spring up at a time when our people began to have a conscience of what they were meant for as a nation’.³²³ Perhaps the most emphatic assertion of this association with the nationalist struggle came in July 1921 when the *Far East* published a letter from a detainee of the Ballykinlar internment camp. As set out by the unnamed author, ‘some of the Irish internees’ intended to fund a Bursary that would provide a studentship for the education of Columban priests. Forwarding £30 as an initial payment on the required £600, the rest was to follow ‘as soon as the Camp is dispersed’ when ‘the subscribers will apply themselves to realise the difference’. In keeping with the exclusivity of the Irish-Ireland nationalist ideology, the writer asserted that only ‘Students of Irish birth and parentage’ who can ‘speak, read and write Irish’ and have ‘a reasonable knowledge of Irish History and Literature’ would be eligible to avail of the bursary.³²⁴

Likely influenced by the pending resolution of the War of Independence as well as the massive success of the *Far East*, in October 1921 the *Missionary Annals* made its first plain foray into the rhetoric of militant nationalism. Drawing parallels between ‘The men that fought the battles of Ireland’ and those ‘who are fighting the battles of Christ’, it concluded that the missions were ‘a call to arms: For God and for man-kind, for the

³²² See, for examples, *Far East*, iv, no. 7 (Jul. 1921); *Far East*, iv, no. 3 (Apr. 1923).

³²³ *Far East*, ii, no. 8 (Aug. 1919).

³²⁴ *Far East*, iv, no. 6 (June 1921).

glory of Ireland and for the freedom of Africa'.³²⁵ The *African Missionary* similarly inspired by the likelihood of settlement in favour of Irish nationalists also began to incorporate the same discourse. In keeping with the pattern identified by Hogan, both magazines' commendations of the nationalist 'saviours of our land' were always followed by the qualification that although it was certainly 'glorious to die for country', it was actually 'far more glorious to die for God'.³²⁶

The outbreak of the Irish Civil War had little impact on the missionary message. The magazines did not take sides. In the midst of the conflict the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* quickly lost their recently found appetite for the rhetoric of militant nationalism. However, the assertion of an inextricable and providential link between the Irish nation, Irish Catholicism and missionary endeavour remained a constant. Commentaries on the hostilities simply lamented the 'depths of sorrow' into which the 'country is plunged' and implored all to pray for the peace that comes from 'Him' alone'.³²⁷ In an early example of what was to become an increasingly familiar feature of the Irish missionary landscape, upon the cessation of Civil War violence the *Missionary Annals* was quick to proclaim a link between the newly-founded Free State and Catholic missionary endeavour.³²⁸ Detailing the importance of 'Christian ideals' in the formation of 'Our State', the periodical vigorously argued the need to include the 'pagan' missions in the process. It declared that 'Ireland's supernatural destiny, will be embodied in her foreign policy, which is the natural outcome and expansion of her Catholic life ... We know that the conversion of the pagan world is one of the greatest obligations of a Catholic nation. It is in the fulfilment of that duty that we shall find Ireland's foreign policy, Ireland's great mission to the world'.³²⁹

Whether with reference to the Irish race, nation or state, the fate of Catholic Ireland was routinely declared to be linked to its missionary output. If the country could muster enough zeal to sacrifice sufficient sons, daughters, money and prayer to the cause then 'Mother Erin' as a whole would supposedly benefit. By supporting 'our war' on the mission field, the laity was proclaimed to be 'making Ireland dear to Him'. In addition

³²⁵ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 10 (Oct. 1921).

³²⁶ *African Missionary*, no. 48 (Mar.-Apr. 1922).

³²⁷ *Far East*, vi, no. 3, (Mar. 1923).

³²⁸ See chapter 4 for further discussion of this association between the Irish State and Catholic missions.

³²⁹ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 6 (Jun. 1923).

to winning the favour of God for the nation, the missions were also presented as a means to protect ‘our’ Catholic haven. It was declared ‘a truism that the surest way to secure the faith at home, is to spread it abroad. In the same way that ‘the missionary spirit’ had ‘sured the faith of France in spite of her Freemason rulers and atheists’, Irish Catholicity would apparently reap rewards of missionary endeavour.³³⁰ As ‘long as she sends her sons to man the outposts of God’, Ireland would be guarded by providence and especially prepared to withstand the perceived threat ‘from the dry rot of modern decadence.’³³¹

Building on the foundational Christian belief in Jesus’ suffering and redemptive death by crucifixion, suffering and sacrifice were fundamental in the conceptualisation of the Catholic missionary movement. Whilst all contributions made to Catholic missions could be framed as sacrifices made for the greater good, it was actual missionaries who were, quite naturally, understood to sacrifice the most. Deemed Christ-like in their willingness to deny themselves home-comforts and Irish surroundings to toil in far-off hostile lands, they were presented as the epitome of Catholic virtue, love and selflessness. As set out by the periodicals, the individual missionary, much like the nation, would be rewarded for their efforts.³³² In addition to the earthly adulation of men, it was routinely asserted and implied that God reserved special spiritual favour for the missionary who worked amongst ‘pagans’. Owing to the combination of their self-sacrifice, the prayers of those they converted and the celestial pleadings of the dead who they baptised *in articulo mortis*, the missionary life was deemed one of the surest ways to ensure one’s place in heaven.

Those like Fr Timothy Leonard who actually died on the mission field were believed to be deserving of special exaltation. Understood as the ‘supreme sacrifice’, death in the line of missionary duty was considered something to be relished. Encapsulating this sentiment, the *African Missionary* declared: ‘There are few missionaries who do not look up to martyrdom, as the most blissful ending of life. Many pray for the grace, that they may give this greatest proof of their love to the King of Martyrs. We associate

³³⁰ *Far East*, ii, no. 7 (Jul. 1919).

³³¹ *Far East*, ii, no. 8 (Aug. 1918).

³³² See, for examples, *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 7 (Jul. 1920); *African Missionary*, no. 44 (Jul.-Aug. 1921).

martyrdom with the Early Church, but it may be looked for in modern times. There has been over 200 missionary martyrs within the last century.’ Whilst a decree of official martyrdom could only be issued by the pope, those who died on the field through ill-health, disease, accident or violence were often presented as such. Their sacrifice was proclaimed to be ‘a source of inspiration to many generous souls to step into the thinned ranks and devote their lives to His service in the noblest of causes’.³³³

Although the concept of missionary martyrdom, be it official or not, clearly chimed with Pearse’s idea of ‘blood sacrifice’, all three titles avoided making the explicit connection. Irish Catholic missionaries were ultimately soldiers of Christ not of Éire. Whilst missionaries could be proclaimed to be working for the ‘honour of God and country’, they only died for ‘Him’. The theologically controversial theory of ‘blood sacrifice’ which merged the concept of Christ’s ‘supreme sacrifice’ with that of the patriot was a bridge too far for the missionary magazine.³³⁴ Accounts of deaths on the mission-field remained firmly rooted in the well-established tradition of Christian suffering, persecution and martyrdom. Unsurprisingly, it was the *Far East* who came closest to directly identifying with the notion of patriotic ‘blood sacrifice’.

Characteristic of the especially nationalistic tone of the early editions of the publication, in July 1919 it declared that the ‘dare devilry’ of their movement attracts ‘especially the young fellows who have assimilated the ideals of the men of Easter week, enthusiasts for whom Pearse’s wonderful poem, “The fool”, is a second gospel’.³³⁵ Printed in the midst of the War of Independence with the aim of tapping the popular appeal of self-sacrifice whilst also circumventing any overt link between missionary and patriotic martyrdom, such statements demonstrated just how carefully Irish missionary propagandists of this period calculated and recalculated their public association with nationalism.

The concept of sacrifice was, of course, integral to the idealised image of the heroic missionary. Very much in keeping with the broader stereotypical constructions of this celebrated figure, the Irish magazines constantly asserted the bravery, conviction and

³³³ *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 1 (Jan. 1920).

³³⁴ For further discussion of Patrick Pearse’s and the concept of blood sacrifice see James Heaney, ‘Chesterton, Pearse, and the Blood Sacrifice Theory of the 1916 Rising in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* ciii, no. 411 (2014), pp 307-17.

³³⁵ *Far East*, ii, no. 7 (Jul. 1919).

intrepid nature of those ready to devote and potentially give their lives to the cause. Whilst female missionaries, often by virtue of a lack of specification, could certainly be included in these acclamations, a distinct and gender-specific line of laudation was reserved to valorise the self-sacrificing and ‘caring’ missionary sister. As propaganda organs for male societies, the missionary priest was the star of the show. Although all three organisations also recruited religious brothers for the missions, this rather less illustrious figure played only a marginal role in Irish missionary propaganda. Combining the prestige of the priesthood with contemporary notions of idealised masculinity, the distinguished missionary priest was presented as someone that Irish boys should and could aspire to be. With the aim of appealing to the youthful male ego, the magazines declared that their societies had ‘no use for jelly-legged, chicken hearted fellows’.³³⁶ Only those who were sufficiently manly, brave and self-sacrificing would apparently make the grade.

Wary of frightening off those of a slightly more nervous or maybe prudent disposition, the magazines were, however, careful not to only emphasise the dangers of the mission-field. They were sure to note that violent deaths like Fr Leonard’s were the exception. Whilst missionary martyrdom was portrayed as undoubtedly glorious, it was not presented as the likely end to the missionary life. Exciting tales of danger, death and persecution sat alongside far more mundane accounts of everyday missionary life. Here, tenacity, quick wit and stamina in the face of the commonplace obstacles of the mission-field were portrayed as much as a requirement as unbridled bravery. Seeking to counteract the stereotypical image of Africa as the ‘white man’s grave’, both African orientated titles periodically featured assurances about the missionary’s life expectancy. In 1921 the *African Missionary*, for example, concluded a piece on mortality rates on the west coast of Africa by stating ‘Conditions have considerably improved since then, and there are now over a dozen men in the society who have spent more than 30 years in Africa.’³³⁷

Depictions of the almost mythical image of the heroic missionary priest appeared alongside assurances of his humanity. Anxious to ensure recruits to their cause, the magazines had nothing to gain by only painting an image of unrelatable perfection.

³³⁶ *African Missionary*, no. 42 (Mar.-Apr. 1921).

³³⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 45 (Sept.-Oct. 1921).

Direct appeals made to young male readers were designed to encourage the ‘ordinary’ boy to apply. Casting the net relatively wide in the search for soldiers for the ‘Army of God’, such appeals emphasised the desire for candidates of good health and good faith as opposed to seeking out those who were ‘special’. The cost of paying a priestly vocation went unmentioned. For the right candidate it would seem that the society would find a way to pay. As evidenced by the St Joseph’s Young Priest Society discussed in section one, fundraising specifically for the education of missionary priests was a standard practice. In 1926 the *Far East*, for example, featured an appeal that stated, ‘You can become a priest if you wish’. Any interested boy of ‘sound health, average intelligence and a good intention’ was encouraged to write in for further information.³³⁸ Perhaps reflective of the slightly slower emergence of popular interest in the African missions, a call for recruits in a 1920 edition of the *Missionary Annals* contained something of an air of desperation. After setting out the need for the ‘correct intention’ and good health it went as far to assert that ‘A true vocation’ may exist ‘in spite of the fact that the candidate has something of a repugnance for the religious state and shrinks from its difficulties’.³³⁹

Irish parents were proclaimed to have their own special self-sacrificing role to play in the success of the Catholic missions. The prospect of seeing one’s own child setting off for the ‘pagan’ mission field possibly never to return was unsurprisingly not always welcome. Parents of potential missionaries were deemed in need of specific persuasion to convince them of the merits of the cause. Irish parents and particularly Irish mothers were urged to resist the temptation of discouraging their children from following a missionary vocation. Instead, they were implored to be ‘strong’ like Mary, who, as the paragon of perfect womanhood ‘gave her child for the life of the world’.³⁴⁰ Even those who had no other living relatives and feared ‘utter loneliness’ were told that they ‘must be ready to pay the price God asks’.³⁴¹ Mawkish short stories addressing the subject were a standard feature of all three publications. Typifying the repetitious nature of the missionary periodical, practically all of these tales followed the same formula. A child would reveal their desire to become a missionary, the parent or parents would reject the

³³⁸ *Far East*, ix, no. 6 (Jun. 1926).

³³⁹ *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 5 (May 1920).

³⁴⁰ *Far East*, v, no. 6 (Jun. 1922).

³⁴¹ *Far East*, iv, no. 3 (Mar. 1921).

idea but eventually, after seeing the error of their ways, would relent and give their blessing.³⁴² Demonstrating the importance of parental authority in the Catholic vision of the world, this blessing was considered a must. The world's pagans would simply have to wait as the will of parents reigned supreme.

Much in the same way that the nation and missionary would benefit from sacrifices to the cause, Irish parents were assured of the spiritual benefits they would personally accrue by allowing their child to join the cause. As set out in the *Far East*, 'some poor sinner in far-off China with dying lips bless the Irish parents who made the sacrifice of their boy for the sake of the Lord Jesus. They have become sharers in His Passion. He will reward them in a thousand ways; prayers of little baptized children will plead for them before God's throne'.³⁴³ Exploiting the sense of prestige associated with the priesthood, upon the ordination of her son as a missionary one fictional Irish mother proudly declared 'Already He deigns to reward me, for the peace that flooded my soul this morning as I knelt at my boy's First Mass was like a foretaste of Heaven'.³⁴⁴

In addition to contending with the fears of parents, Irish missionary propagandists also sought to overcome a longstanding prejudice against the missionary vocation. The belief that missionary recruits were of socially inferior standing and so lacked the means and/or intellect to succeed as clergy or religious at home appears to have remained a relatively widespread undercurrent in popular thinking on 'pagan' missionary endeavour.³⁴⁵ As with much of the Irish missionary landscape generally, this train of thought was not a uniquely Irish phenomenon. Jeffrey Cox has observed that similar prejudices in Britain in the nineteenth century in relation to Protestant missionaries.³⁴⁶ Typical of the *Far East*'s somewhat more strident approach, it addressed this preconception head on. In 1923 it proclaimed that 'There was a time in Ireland when the Foreign Missions were held in dishonour, when it was considered that

³⁴² See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 7-8 (Jul.-Aug. 1926).

³⁴³ *Far East*, i, no. 10 (Oct. 1918).

³⁴⁴ *Far East*, iv, no. 3 (Mar. 1921).

³⁴⁵ For an example of a rare explicit discussion of this understanding of the missionary as inferior see *Far East*, iii, no. 2 (Feb. 1920).

³⁴⁶ Cox, *British missionary enterprise*, p. 104.

anyone at all was good enough, that second-rate men would do for the work.’ It confidently added that ‘That day is gone’.³⁴⁷

Challenging naysayers of the missionary cause, whether real or imagined, was a staple of Irish missionary periodical during this period. The magazines routinely set forth the reasons why all those who opposed them were unquestionably in the wrong. One particularly common charge answered was that missionaries should first concentrate on the ‘heathens at Home’. The response was always the same – ‘People at home have had their chances over and over again. Everything is in their own hands. Graces are superabundant, and they only have themselves to blame if they neglect to avail of the opportunity’.³⁴⁸ When compared with the ‘millions of benighted creatures’ who were often alleged to be actively ‘begging’ and ‘calling out’ for the faith, no sympathy could be reserved for the lapsed Catholics, Protestants or atheists of the ‘civilised or so-called civilised world’.³⁴⁹

Whilst the concept of Irishness was integral to the missionary construction of Us, it co-existed alongside the idea of Christian universalism. In the aftermath of the Great War Benedict XV issued the *Maximum Illud*. Anticipating a post-colonial world, this landmark missionary encyclical vigorously (re) asserted the universality of the Church.³⁵⁰ Criticising missionary nationalism, the pontiff condemned the way in which missions had been used to further imperialist ambitions.³⁵¹ Clearly cognisant of the eurocentric and racist ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ binary that suffused the missionary movement, Benedict went on to stress the importance of developing the indigenous clergy.³⁵² He declared that this local clergy were to be ‘equals’ and must ‘not be trained merely to preform humbler duties of the ministry’.³⁵³ Although the ideals of the *Maximum Illud*

³⁴⁷ *Far East*, vi, no. 8 (Aug. 1923).

³⁴⁸ *African Missionary*, no. 12 (Mar.-Apr. 1916).

³⁴⁹ *African Missionary*, no. 12 (Mar.-Apr. 1916); *Missionary Annals*, v, no. 4 (Apr. 1923).

³⁵⁰ John Pollard, *The Papacy in the age of totalitarianism, 1914-1958* (Oxford, 2014), pp 114-15.

³⁵¹ Hastings, ‘The clash of nationalism and universalism’, pp 15-20

³⁵² Pollard, *The Papacy*, pp 115-16; Prudhomme, ‘La mission du XXe siècle: triomphe, crise et mutations du côté Catholique en particulier à travers l’exemple des Spiritains’ in *Histoires et missions Chrétiennes*, ii, no. 10 (2009), pp 10-12.

³⁵³ Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, 30 Nov. 1919.

arguably never actually fully penetrated the western missionary mindset, they were by no means ignored.³⁵⁴

Unperturbed by any possible contradiction, the Irish missionary periodical proclaimed the specialness of the Irish 'Us' alongside assertions of the importance of Christian universality. Readers were reminded that, as the missionary call is Catholic, 'We must not be too parochial, too national, too racial in our zeal'.³⁵⁵ According to this Universalist narrative, the missionary worked only to 'further the banner of Christ' and extend 'His Kingdom' on earth.³⁵⁶ Acutely aware of the message emanating from Rome, even the so-called 'Irish National Mission to China' was careful to balance the discourses of missionary nationalism and universalism. Perhaps the most conspicuous acknowledgement of the Vatican line was demonstrated in the composition of the society's emblem. Despite the centrality of Irishness in the Columban promotional campaign 'at home', their 'badge' or 'monogram' consisted of a hand symbolic of God, an eagle symbolic of the gospel and a dragon symbolic of China.³⁵⁷ Ireland did not feature in any way.

Testament to the popular appeal of the discourse of nationalism, however, even this universalist narrative was sometimes presented with a nationalist twist. In what seems, at least to the modern reader, as a perversion of Benedict's message, the concept of Christ's 'celestial' empire' was periodically declared to be something connected especially with the Irish. Although French missionaries who were working *Pour Dieu, et pour France* were likely one of the major targets of *Maximum Illud*, the Irish missionary periodicals similarly declared missions to be 'for the glory of His name and the honour of Erin, too'.³⁵⁸ Ireland, understood to be a providentially blessed nation, could be portrayed as either having a special role to play in the extension of the 'Empire of Christ' or occasionally proclaimed to actually possess its very own 'spiritual empire'.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁴ Pollard, *The Papacy*, pp 114-16.

³⁵⁵ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 8 (Aug. 1924).

³⁵⁶ *Missionary Annals*, v, no. 3 (Mar. 1922).

³⁵⁷ *Far East*, ii, no. 6 (Jun. 1919); reflections of E.L. McCarthy, business manager of the *Far East*, 11 Nov. 1949 (Columban Archive, USA, 1/11).

³⁵⁸ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 7 (Jul. 1924).

³⁵⁹ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 11 (Nov. 1922); see chapter 3 for further discussion of the concept of an Irish spiritual empire.

Whilst exploiting the language of imperialism, missionary propagandists were always sure to assert the supernatural and therefore superior nature of this type of empire. It was declared that ‘We do not want to establish a great empire on earth; we wish to subjugate no foreign people. We are strangers to that greed of money, that thirst for temporal power which inspire and characterise the rulers of other lands’.³⁶⁰ Motivated by ‘higher things’ than squalid materialism and uncorrupted by the irreligion, ‘Rationalism’ and ‘Scepticism’ of the modern age, the expansion of the ‘reign of Christ’ was proclaimed to be ‘the only justifiable imperialism in the world’.³⁶¹ With the ‘spirit of virile militant Catholicism’ that ‘burns in her blood’, Ireland was pronounced destined ‘to bring foreign lands beneath the yoke of Christ’.³⁶²

These nationalist yet universalist, imperialist but not imperialist discourses, sat alongside another seeming contradiction. Whilst assertions of Irish superiority certainly dominated projections of Us, Irish missionary endeavour was simultaneously situated into the wider narrative of the entire Catholic missionary movement. Here, the Irish were not special. Read within the context of the broader modern missionary phenomenon, Ireland’s record was rather lacklustre. Latecomers to the missionary revival, the periodicals asserted that owing to the centuries of religious persecution, the Irish had been forced to take a hiatus from their missionary destiny. Consumed with fanning the flames of faith both at home and in the emigrant churches, pioneer mission work had not been a priority.³⁶³ However, having successfully ‘built up the Church in the great progressive countries of the New World’ it was proclaimed that now was the time to ‘devote more zeal’ to the ‘pagan’ missions.³⁶⁴ Reflecting the extent to which the concept of nation permeated the missionary movement, Ireland’s present-day missionary output was routinely compared with that of other western nations. Ireland invariably came up short. In a quest to stir ‘national pride’ for the ‘cause of Christ’, Irish missionary efforts were declared deficient. Summarising this line of argument, a 1923 edition of the *Far East* stated ‘We Irish claim to be, and are, the best Catholics in

³⁶⁰ *Missionary Annals*, v, no. 6 (Jun. 1923).

³⁶¹ *Far East*, ii, no. 3 (Mar. 1919); *Far East*, vi, no. 6 (Jun. 1923).

³⁶² *Far East*, ii, no. 3 (Mar. 1919); *Missionary Annals*, v, no. 5 (Jun. 1923).

³⁶³ See, for example, *Far East*, ii, no. 9 (Sept. 1919).

³⁶⁴ *African Missionary*, no. 40 (Nov.-Dec. 1920).

Europe; we ought, then, to feel ourselves bound to do more than others for the propagation of the faith. Yet other nations immeasurably surpass us in apostolic ardour'.³⁶⁵ Irish missionary propagandists, however, maintained an optimistic tone. If Ireland paid heed to the example set by countries such as France, Germany and Belgium she could apparently reassume her rightful place in the 'contest' for souls.

Eager to emulate their success, all three magazines featured expositions on the methods of propaganda used to support missionary endeavour in other western countries. Detailing events, festivals, crusades, exhibitions, collections, congresses, processions, charities and committees organised to aid and promote the 'pagan' missions, it was always concluded that Ireland must do more to support the cause. Whilst France and Germany, and later the United States, were regularly lauded as the forerunners in the competition for souls, they were, by virtue of their size, deemed somewhat out of Ireland's league. Holland with a Catholic population of 'less than two million' and Belgium, 'a little country not bigger than the Province of Munster', offered more apt comparisons.³⁶⁶ Their superior missionary output was used to demonstrate 'What room still remains for further missionary development in Ireland'.³⁶⁷

On one level these national comparisons were used to simply encourage Irish support for 'the missions'. However, they also shaped, albeit implicitly, the missionary understanding of self. Whilst narratives proclaiming Irish specialness certainly dominated this construction, these comparisons quietly but constantly asserted a more elastic sense of Us. Catholic Ireland and its inhabitants were understood not as lone rangers in the battle for souls but as part of a much broader transnational phenomenon. Irish missionary propagandists envisioned their organisations and their readerships as members of a community of white, western civilized Catholics who either did or should engage with missionary expansion. Tacitly defined against all the alleged shortcomings of the non-white and 'pagan' other, the superiority of this Catholic collective was considered a given.

³⁶⁵ *Far East*, vi, no. 9 (Sept. 1923).

³⁶⁶ *African Missionary*, no. 48 (Mar.-Apr. 1922); *Far East*, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1918). 8

³⁶⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 48 (Mar.-Apr. 1922).

Absorbed by the construction of the ‘pagan’ Other, historical analyses of missionary discourses tend to overlook the transnational component of missionary identity formation. Sophie Heywood’s examination of the Holy Childhood Association is one of the few works to focus on this phenomenon.³⁶⁸ Situating the organisation within the context of “‘religious internationals’: the transnational voluntary religious organisations that came to the fore in the modern era’, Heywood asserts the centrality of the society’s periodical in forging this broader sense of community.³⁶⁹ Setting an example for the Irish home-produced periodicals, the *Annals of the Holy Childhood*, had, since the mid-nineteenth century, detailed the fundraising activities of different western nations. Like its parent organisation the APF, the Holy Childhood fostered competitive but ultimately friendly nation-based rivalries. By recounting all manner of events and initiatives used to support the missions in its propaganda organ, the society skilfully managed ‘to use national identities as the basis for its construction of a transnational community’.³⁷⁰

Irish conceptualisations of a transnational ‘Us’ were however, not wholly confined to this national rivalry formula. Both the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* frequently made reference to the French origins of their organisations.³⁷¹ Readers of the *Far East* were also regularly updated on the Columbans’ endeavours in both American and Australia that explicitly sought to harness the support of the Irish diaspora.³⁷² This wider sense of community was reinforced through simple regular updates from across the Catholic world. Although not exclusively devoted to mission-related news, such items tended to dominate. Often appearing in a designated news or notes section, these features kept Irish supporters abreast of developments that did not directly pertain to the respective missionary society.³⁷³ In addition to reporting major updates on other Irish missionary societies, these segments provided frequent insights and snapshots into the global missionary phenomenon. The mix of topics addressed was often rather eclectic. A small sample of items featured includes an update on how German missionaries were

³⁶⁸ Heywood, ‘Missionary Children’; for further discussion of this concept of ‘religious internationals’ see Vincent Viaene, ‘International History, Religious History, Catholic History: Perspectives for Cross-Fertilization (1830-1914)’ in *European History Quarterly*, xxxviii, no. 4 (2008) pp 578-607.

³⁶⁹ Heywood, ‘Missionary Children’, p. 447.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 457.

³⁷¹ See, for example, the story of Francis Liberman, one of the founding members of the Holy Ghost Fathers in *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 2 (Feb. 1920).

³⁷² See, for example, *Far East*, v, no. 5 (May, 1922).

³⁷³ See, for examples, *African Missionary*, no. 83 (Jan.-Feb. 1928); *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1925); *Far East*, ii, no. 12 (Dec. 1919).

faring in the aftermath of the Great War, an account of the ‘Catholic Student’s Mission Crusade of America’, a report on the revival of Spanish interest in the Catholic missions, a list of all the male religious orders and congregations engaged in foreign missionary work and reports of deaths of missionaries belonging to other religious societies.³⁷⁴

Further adding to this sense of a collective western Catholic identity, Irish missionary magazines periodically cited and promoted mission-themed literature produced outside of Ireland.³⁷⁵ The extensive body of printed matter produced under the auspices of the APF provided a particularly rich source of information. Irish missionary periodicals regularly referenced the association’s published tabulations of income and expenditure. In addition to providing the data on which the nation-based league table of donors was configured, statistics provided by the APF allowed for a panoramic overview of the Catholic missionary effort.³⁷⁶

Reflecting the late arrival of English-speaking Catholics to the modern missionary movement, in 1914 the *African Missionary* observed the ‘sad deficiency’ of material on the Catholic missions available in English when compared with the volume available in French, German and Italian.³⁷⁷ However, the surge in American Catholic Missionary enthusiasm of the 1910s helped to narrow this gap. Early editions of the *African Missionary* devoted particular attention to examining this expanding genre. In addition to alerting readers to the small number of Catholic missionary periodicals produced in England, it also encouraged subscriptions to the growing number of recently launched American titles. The *Field Afar*, the propaganda organ of the Maryknoll society that had been officially established in 1911 for the evangelisation of China, could, for example, be obtained by an Irish reader for fifty cents a year.³⁷⁸ Numerous missionary books were also recommended. Publications produced by the American branch of the Society

³⁷⁴ *African Missionary*, no. 32 (Sept.-Oct. 1920); *Far East*, vi, no. 6 (Jun. 1923); *African Missionary*, no. 49 (May-Jun. 1922); *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1925); *Far East*, ii, no. 10 (Dec. 1919); in general, the *Missionary Annals* was more insular than the other two titles; global updates tended to focus on their own congregation, this included reports on the endeavours of Irish, French and American members.

³⁷⁵ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1925).

³⁷⁶ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 4 (Apr. 1925).

³⁷⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 2 (Apr.-Jun. 1914).

³⁷⁸ *African Missionary*, no. 13 (May-Jun. 1916).

for the Divine Word (SVD), a missionary order that specialised in the printed works, featured regularly. Irish readers could obtain titles such as *Arnold Janssen, Founder and First Superior of the Divine Word* for twenty cents, *The World Missions of the Catholic Church* by the aforementioned German missiologist Fr Schwager for forty cents, or *The Little Missionary* – the SVD’s missionary periodical for children.³⁷⁹ Declared apt in this ‘age of children’s papers’, the yearly subscription cost twenty-five cents which the *African Missionary* estimated for the Irish reader to be one shilling.³⁸⁰

The centralising role of the Vatican on the modern Catholic missionary movement featured heavily in this transnational narrative. Seeking to assert its authority over all Catholic missionary activity in the aftermath of the Great War, the papacy took a number of steps to consolidate its position. These efforts can be read, in part, as another example of the ‘Romanization’ of the Catholic Church. However, they were also very much a manifestation of the Universalist versus Nationalist tensions within the Catholic missionary movement. Through the pages of the home-produced missionary periodicals, a growing Irish readership was informed of the supreme influence of Rome. In addition to lauding and citing *Maximum Illud* and its follow up *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926), deferential and enthusiastic accounts of papal missionary initiatives became a standard. The pope himself was also routinely celebrated. Readers were, for example, provided with detailed accounts of the Vatican’s first missionary exhibition that took place in 1925.³⁸¹ Proclaimed to have been ‘originally conceived’ by the pontiff, the grand exposition marked the celebration of the Holy Year of the Jubilee which was dedicated to the Missions.³⁸² Held in the ‘private grounds of the pope himself’, it was declared ‘Splendid in its conception and admirable in the perfection and magnitude of its execution’.³⁸³ The subsequent establishment of a Missionary Library in the Vatican was deemed ‘further proof’ of the Holy Father’s devotion to the missionary cause.³⁸⁴ Periodical accounts and updates on the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the

³⁷⁹ *African Missionary*, no. 9 (Sept.-Oct. 1915); *African Missionary*, no. 10 (Nov. -Dec. 1915).

³⁸⁰ *African Missionary*, no. 14 (Jul.- Aug. 1915).

³⁸¹ See chapter 3 for further discussion of missionary exhibitions.

³⁸² *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 5 (May 1926).

³⁸³ *African Missionary*, no. 68 (Jul.-Aug. 1925).

³⁸⁴ *African Missionary*, no. 69 (Sept.-Oct. 1925).

Faith (*Propaganda Fide*) also featured.³⁸⁵ Founded in 1622 as the central oversight body of all Catholic missions, it was a key agent of Rome's Universalist approach.³⁸⁶

Recognition of the Vatican's jurisdiction over Catholic missions was also apparent in discussions surrounding international missionary aid organisations. As noted in the *Far East*, *Propaganda Fide* was 'almost entirely dependent for funding from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith' (APF). With such success, French dominance over the APF became a major source of contention. In 1921, Benedict XV decreed that the headquarters of the society would be transferred from France to Rome.³⁸⁷ Reporting on this reorganisation, the *African Missionary* asserted that it 'will diminish the consequences of national prejudices, will inspire more confidence and allow Rome (more impartially acquainted with the Mission difficulties) to distribute the alms of the catholic countries to the most necessitous fields'.³⁸⁸

Seeking to court the attention of the same supporters, Irish missionary periodicals may be regarded as competitors of the Irish version of the *Annals for the Propagation of the Faith*. However, as benefactors or potential benefactors of the APF's vast fundraising enterprise, Irish missionary societies did not position themselves as such. Instead, their home-produced periodicals actually encouraged readers to support this 'most worthy of God's causes'.³⁸⁹ Other missionary aid societies endorsed by Rome including the Holy Childhood Association were also given mention.³⁹⁰ The Pius Missionary Union of the Clergy (*Pia Unio*) received particular attention.³⁹¹ Established by an Italian Priest in 1916 to stir enthusiasm for the 'pagan' missions amongst the clergy, the society was recommended in both *Maximum Illud* and *Rerum Ecclesiae*. In 1921 Rome charged the Columbans with establishing a branch of *Pia Unio* in Ireland. In a rare public display of rivalry amongst Irish missionary institutions, the SMA denounced this decision. The

³⁸⁵ The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Propaganda Fide*) should not be confused with the Association for the Propagation of the Faith (APF); *Propaganda Fide* is a department of pontifical administration that oversees the propagation of Catholicism, the APF was originally founded in France by lay volunteers for the purpose of raising funds for Catholic missionaries.

³⁸⁶ See, for example, *Far East*, v, no. 6 (Jun. 1922).

³⁸⁷ Both the Holy Childhood Association and the lesser-known Society of St Peter the Apostle were simultaneously brought under papal control.

³⁸⁸ *African Missionary*, no. 47 (Jan.-Feb. 1922).

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ See, for example, *Far East*, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1918).

³⁹¹ See, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 25 (Jan.-Feb. 1920).

African Missionary declared that the Columbans ‘aren’t in need’ of the ‘benefits’ that this ‘secretaryship’ would apparently provide. Unlike the ‘voiceless’ SMAs who had ‘escaped the notice of Ireland as a whole’, with the ‘patronage of the Irish bishops and priests’ the Columbans were alleged to already have an unfair advantage.³⁹²

This complaint was, however, careful to note that there ‘have been beautiful exceptions’ within the Irish clergy whose support had afforded the SMAs a ‘relative prosperity’. Proof of episcopal approbation was regularly flaunted in home-produced missionary magazines.³⁹³ Whilst it was the Columbans who enjoyed the official endorsement of the Irish Hierarchy, episcopal patronage was deemed vital to all Catholic missionary societies.³⁹⁴ By forging associations with bishops, missionary organisations sought to tap into the well-established prestige of the ‘home’ Hierarchy. Formal celebrations were often exploited as a means of displaying episcopal support. As Irish missionary zeal gathered momentum, events such as ordinations and jubilees were celebrated with growing extravagance.³⁹⁵ A glittering guest list featuring figures of influence within the Church –and increasingly included prominent political figures of the new Irish state – significantly added to the pomp and circumstance.³⁹⁶ These events provided ample promotional opportunities and were covered in-depth in the relevant home-produced periodical.

Letters of commendation penned by bishops provided a more convenient means of asserting such connections. Largely adhering to the same basic formula, these letters asserted not only the importance of Catholic missions as a whole but also declared support for the particular society in question. The first edition of the *African Missionary* included expressions of support sent by six Irish bishops. The debut number of the *Far East* similarly featured a lengthy ‘introductory article’ written by the Bishop of Cork. Solemnly posed photographs of these figures dressed in their opulent ecclesiastical regalia were routinely included and added to the sense of prestige. Periodical

³⁹² *African Missionary*, no. 45 (Sept.- Oct. 1921).

³⁹³ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 8 (Aug. 1924).

³⁹⁴ See chapters 2 and 3 for further discussion of the relationship between the episcopate and missionary societies.

³⁹⁵ See, for example, the consecration of James Leen Cssp as a missionary Bishop for Africa in *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 11 (Nov. 1923).

³⁹⁶ See chapter 4 for further discussion of the association between the Catholic missionary movement and the Irish state.

endorsements from bishops outside of Ireland also featured. Reinforcing the concept of a distinctly Catholic ‘Greater Ireland’, these figures were often Irish born or of Irish descent. Simultaneously trumpeting the influence of the Irish in the Catholic hierarchies of the Anglophone world whilst also aggrandising the ‘pagan’ missions as well as the society’s own specific work, these endorsements served to further the narrative that the Irish race had successfully propagated the Irish faith in the New World and must now move on to save ‘heathendom’.³⁹⁷ Reflective of the Columbans’ energetic campaigns to engage Irish Catholic communities in America and Australia in their cause, the *Far East* was the most active promotor of such connections. Early editions of the magazine detailed the support expressed by figures such as ‘His Eminence’ Cardinal O’Connell of Boston, Archbishop Mundelein of Chicago, Cardinal Farley of New York and Archbishop Prendergast of Philadelphia. Both African orientated titles engaged the same tactic, albeit on a less intense scale. A 1921 edition of the *Missionary Annals*, for example, proudly proclaimed that well-known Irish nationalist sympathiser Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, had paid a life-subscription to the periodical.³⁹⁸

Papal blessings offered further ‘proof’ of the worthiness of a missionary organisation. Upon the request of the individual society, the Vatican would periodically send official confirmation that the ‘Holy Father’ bestows his favour on a particular periodical and all those that support it. In the context of the devotion-orientated Ultramontane Catholic culture, these blessings were a highly prized asset. Reprinted within the pages of the relevant publication they were considered extremely useful in inducing support for the individual missionary society.³⁹⁹

Whilst assertions of the prestige of missionary endeavour combined with the discourses of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, Irish specialness, Catholic transnationalism and Christian universalism to argue the case for Catholic missions generally, the home-produced missionary periodical was ultimately concerned with providing for its own specific congregation. Missionary propagandists sought to ensure that readers actively engaged

³⁹⁷ See, for example, *Far East*, i, no. 3 (Mar. 1918).

³⁹⁸ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 7 (Jul. 1921); for an example of Mannix’s patronage of the Columbans, see the *Far East*, iv, no. 1 (Jan. 1921); on Mannix’s links with Irish nationalism see John Molony, ‘Mannix, Daniel’ in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a5439>) (17 Oct. 2019).

³⁹⁹ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 4 (Apr. 1920).

with their society's work. The glorification of the individual missionary institution was therefore a fundamental and constant feature. Sentimental narratives telling of the society's origins and growth appeared regularly. Declarations of Providential influence on these undertakings added to the overall sense of melodrama. Hagiographical accounts detailing the founders' wisdom and daring were standard fare. Even the Columbans whose foundations could at best be dated back to 1911 provided frequent romanticised retrospectives of their beginnings.⁴⁰⁰ Current events in the life of the institution were typically dressed in the same sentimental language. Dramatic accounts of all manner of occasions including departure ceremonies, student exams, anniversaries and even deaths were similarly exploited to assert consequence. Imitating the French missionary tradition, hymns composed to honour the individual society were occasionally published.⁴⁰¹ Poems of the same vein also appeared. As noted by Edmund Hogan, just like the nationalist movement, missionary societies also celebrated their own stock of living and dead heroes.⁴⁰² Demonstrations of episcopal and papal support were especially useful in helping congregations to cultivate and project an air of divine distinction.

The promise of spiritual rewards was essential in transforming general enthusiasm for the missions into tangible gains for the particular institution. Much in the same way that the nation as a whole could apparently curry celestial favour by engaging with the missions, the individual supporter could also rack up similar benefits. Stern reminders of Catholic missionary obligation sat alongside assurances of heavenly gains. Readers were implored to 'Make your own soul more secure, by helping to save others'.⁴⁰³ This belief in spiritual returns was integral to the Catholic missionary mind-set. As set out by Fuller, the context of Tridentine Catholic understandings of heaven, hell and purgatory, concern for one's own soul was often to the fore.⁴⁰⁴ With God understood to be judging 'our actions from day to day', only those who lived pious Catholic lives could escape 'everlasting pain'. Engagement with the missions was presented as one of the surest

⁴⁰⁰ See, for example, *Far East*, vi, no. 12 (Dec. 1923).

⁴⁰¹ Typical of the Columbans' self-identification with the Irish-Ireland movement, the words of their official hymn were in Irish, see the *Far East*, i, no. 10 (Oct. 1918); the next edition of the periodical clarified that they had no intention of translating it into English.

⁴⁰² Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, p. 150.

⁴⁰³ *African Missionary*, no. 49 (May-Jun. 1922).

⁴⁰⁴ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950*, p. 23.

ways of reaching ‘eternal happiness’.⁴⁰⁵ This association between the missions and one’s own salvation was both an implicit and explicit constant of Catholic missionary discourse.

To fully capitalise on the appeal of heavenly gains, Irish missionary societies established various forms of clubs and leagues closely connected to their propaganda organs. Unlike the promises of generic spiritual gains offered to the ordinary reader, the benefits on offer to club members were enumerated in detail. The exactness of these advantages was not unusual. Missionary clubs were just one manifestation of the contemporary devotion-orientated Catholic culture. Promises of very specific spiritual rewards were a standard attraction of Catholic organisations of all kinds. The Columbans’ Irish Missionary League (IML) offered members six exact ‘privileges’. Examples of benefits offered included a ‘share’ in the 1,000 masses offered annually by the Maynooth Mission priests and in the ‘public prayers offered every day by the students of St Columbans’. Reflective of the concern for the soul in the afterlife, special masses were also said for deceased benefactors. Likely inspired by the *modus operandi* of the APF, alms giving was just one of the ‘essential conditions of membership’. Recruits were also required to join a Catholic guild of their choosing. Daily prayers for the conversion of China were also recommended.⁴⁰⁶ This fusion of spiritual and financial commitment was an essential component of missionary propaganda as whole. Money alone could not win the battle against Satan. Prayer as well as alms was presented as fundamental to missionary ‘warfare’.

The *African Missionary*’s club was a slightly more expensive affair. With five levels of membership, the minimum entry cost one pound a year. The highest level cost a massive five hundred pounds. All benefactors, however, received the same ‘Plenary indulgences and spiritual favours.’ The dead were similarly catered for. They could be ‘inscribed in any of these ranks and the advantages are applied as suffrages for the repose of their souls’. Examples of privileges offered included a ‘share in the labours and sacrifices of the Missionary priests’ as well as of ‘the prayers of the converted blacks.’ In addition to their financial contribution, members were required to attend

⁴⁰⁵ *African Missionary*, no. 64 (Nov.-Dec. 1924).

⁴⁰⁶ *Far East*, ii, no. 1 (Jan. 1919); see chapter 2 for further discussion of these clubs.

‘Confession, Holy Communion’ and to ‘visit a church, praying there for the intentions of the Holy Father’.⁴⁰⁷ Whilst each congregation formulated its own distinct version of the missionary club, the ultimate goal was always the same: to provide support for the individual society. Many of these organisations never actually physically gathered. The missionary magazine was often the sole point of contact.

With the aim of maximizing income, the home-produced periodical also featured a variety of other devices to encourage material support. The Columbans led the charge in this department. Although often drawing on tried and tested methods developed by missionary propagandists in Europe and America, the *Far East* was a trendsetter in the Irish market. A wide variety of revenue streams were introduced to further monetise the missionary publication. Forms allowing readers to easily bequeath money to the congregation in their will quickly became a standard. Echoing the tradition of the parish priest publicly announcing the names and amounts given by those who had contributed to Church collections, printed lists of benefactors were likewise adopted as a staple of the missionary magazine. Not all devices were as successful, or as permanent. The magazines experimented, adopting a trial and error approach. The Columbans’ ‘Annuity Plan’, for example, by which the reader made their contributions while alive and thereby circumvented the tax paid on bequests, was relatively short lived.⁴⁰⁸ Crucial to the successful monetization of the magazines, however, was the level of choice offered to the reader.

One could opt, for example, to make a contribution towards one of the many burses promoted. Usually intended to fund the education of missionary aspirants, a burse was declared complete when a figure of £600 had been reached.⁴⁰⁹ Exemplifying the manner in which missionary propaganda was often merged with elements of devotional Catholic culture, some of the choices on offer included the ‘Immaculate Heart Burse’, the ‘Divine Child Burse’, and ‘The Blessed Mother Burse’.⁴¹⁰ If none appealed, groups could follow the example of the detainees of the Ballykinlar internment camp and set up

⁴⁰⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 7 (May-Jun. 1915)

⁴⁰⁸ *Far East*, vi, no. 3 (Mar, 1923).

⁴⁰⁹ After reaching the figure of £600, the missionary society could use the interest accumulated to fund aspirants education; for a brief discussion on how a burse works see *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 10 (Oct. 1925).

⁴¹⁰ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 4 (Apr. 1921).

their own burse. Similarly, readers could choose to support very specific requests such as an appeal to wipe out a certain debt, or to pay for the construction of a particular building, or to ‘stand sponsor for a really good altar’.⁴¹¹ Donations in-kind were also occasionally requested. Items sought included books, candleholders and altar cloths that would be sent to the mission field.⁴¹²

This choice, which Claude Prudhomme identifies as integral to the success of French missionary propaganda, was also essential in the Irish case.⁴¹³ However, if this multiplicity of options, the promise of spiritual rewards and the plight of the ‘pagan’ were insufficient incentive, the home-produced periodical also lured the reader with a host of raffles, competitions, puzzles and prizes. Mirroring the growth of similar novelties such as the crossword puzzle in the British popular press, over the course of the 1920s these promotional tactics became an increasingly prominent element of the Irish missionary magazine.⁴¹⁴ Annual Christmas draws proved particularly popular. Throughout 1926 the *African Missionary*, for example, vigorously promoted their grand raffle. The names of the twenty-one winners were revealed in the final edition of the year. Open to all ‘Mission-helpers’ the most extravagant prizes included a ‘fine milch cow’, a seven-piece parlour suite, a bike and a wireless set.⁴¹⁵

The aforementioned ‘children’s corner’ was likewise an important ploy in the quest to ensure active reader engagement. What began as a two-page feature in the inaugural edition of the *Far East* in 1918 soon grew. Throughout the 1920s the ‘Little Missionaries’ section became an increasingly prominent staple. By 1928 it had developed into a far more elaborate five-page spread. The *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* followed a similar pattern. Typical of the Catholic and Protestant missionary movements, children played an integral role in the success of Irish missionary institutions. By courting the attention of young readers, the missionary propagandist sought to secure both immediate and future gains. Authored by various fictional characters, these sections offered a condensed version of missionary message

⁴¹¹ *Far East*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1924).

⁴¹² See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 6 (Jun. 1926.).

⁴¹³ Prudhomme, *De l’aide aux missions*, p. 17.

⁴¹⁴ Mick Temple, *The British press* (2nd edn., Maidenhead, 2008), p. 33.

⁴¹⁵ *African Missionary*, no. 72 (Mar.-Apr. 1926); *African Missionary*, no. 76 (Nov.-Dec. 1926).

crafted to appeal to a young audience. In addition to featuring letters and photographs sent in by juvenile supporters, all the elements of the broader content appeared in a 'child-friendly' format. The discourses of 'Us' and 'Them', missionary nationalism and Christian universalism appeared regularly.

Clearly demonstrating the way in which conceptualisations of childhood shift over time, the rhetoric found in these sections was arguably more extreme than that in the rest of the periodical. Young readers of the *African Missionary* were, for example, implored to 'Think of the plight of those dusky darlings of Pagan Africa thrown out on the waste-heaps to die! – unwanted, unloved! – who will never enjoy the Vision by God.'⁴¹⁶ There was seemingly no need, or desire, to sugar coat content aimed at children. A particularly explicit, and violent, example featured in a 1921 edition of the *Missionary Annals*. The children's corner authored by 'Mother Machree' was used to express 'our deepest sorrows and warmest sympathies' to 'little Sheila Conlon, of Ardee' whose brother had recently been killed. Machree explained how the unnamed brother had been 'taken from his home at the dead of the night during last November and cruelly done to death without cause shown or time for preparation.' With the ostensible aim of sparing 'little Sheila and her friends', no further details were given.⁴¹⁷ Likely attempting to avoid censorship laws or controversy, or maybe both, no references to revolutionary context of the killing were included.⁴¹⁸ Whatever the aim, it seems odd, at least to the modern reader, that such a harrowing incident would be recounted in the children's pages.

Following the example of the *Annals of the Holy Childhood* as well as Protestant children's missionary literature, the majority of this content was dominated by the concept of 'children helping children'.⁴¹⁹ The young reader was presented as having a particular affinity and obligation to the young pagan. Readers of 'Mother Machree's' page and the *African Missionary's* 'Aunty's playground' were constantly urged to

⁴¹⁶ *African Missionary*, no. 74 (Jul.-Aug. 1926).

⁴¹⁷ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 1 (Jan. 1921).

⁴¹⁸ Although seemingly not discussed in the Irish press, 'two young men ... taken out and killed by the forces of the Crown' in Ardee appeared in the parliamentary reports in the *Times*, 2 Dec. 1920 and in coverage of the British Catholics' Peace Memorial and advent pastoral of Cardinal Logue by the *Manchester Guardian*, 9 Nov. and 29 Nov. 1920; an incident involving 'two young men named Kareney or Tearney, and a man named John O'Carroll' was brought up at Westminster by T. P. O'Connor see *Hansard* (Commons), cxxxiv, col. 1329 (1 Dec. 1920).

⁴¹⁹ Heywood, 'Missionary Children', p. 460.

consider ‘the desolate children [who] in torture wait their eternal doom to the saddest fate.’⁴²⁰ The figure of the ‘Black baby’ loomed large in these sections. Often with the help of photographs, the African baby was presented as the epitome of cuteness who was desperately awaiting missionary intervention. With ‘no St Patrick or St Brigid’ to convert them, Irish children were charged with stepping into the breach.⁴²¹ Those who made donations and offered prayers were declared to be ‘Little Missionaries’ in their own right. Even today this stereotypical depiction of adorable ‘black babies’ remains the most commonly recalled aspect of the Irish missionary movement.

The *Far East* similarly sought to evoke the sympathies of the juvenile reader for the plight of the ‘countless Pagan baby souls’ in China.⁴²² Despite the massive readership of the Columbans’ periodical, the image of the Chinese baby never appears to have had the same popular appeal. Perhaps indicative of potency of the missionary construction of the ‘black baby’, in 1924 ‘Colum’s corner’ in the *Far East* felt compelled to clear up some baby-related confusion. It asserted that ‘Chinese babies are not “black”, they are yellow’. It further added that ‘We do not “buy” Chinese babies, hence we cannot accept money sent for such a purpose’.⁴²³

Whilst these children’s sections offered a myriad of schemes through which young readers could support the missionary society, no reference was ever made to actually ‘buying’ babies in these three titles. The misconception was, however, by no means baseless. In 1922, noted academic and public figure, Alfred O’Rahilly, published a biography of Fr Willie Doyle, an Irish Jesuit priest who had been killed serving as a chaplain in the Great War. Noting Doyle’s longstanding affinity for the missionary cause, O’Rahilly’s account contends that Doyle was the inventor of the ‘buy’ a ‘black baby’ scheme. ‘He had attractive cards printed each with a picture of a rescued babe and an invitation to buy a black baby for half-a-crown, the purchaser having the right to select the baptismal name!’⁴²⁴ A 1917 edition of the Irish version of the *Annals of the Holy Childhood* reported that Doyle “‘collected in a comparatively short time, before leaving Ireland as a C.F. at the Front, the large sum of nearly £200 to ‘buy black babies

⁴²⁰ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 10 (Oct. 1924).

⁴²¹ *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 2 (Feb. 1920).

⁴²² *Far East*, iv, no. 7 (Jul. 1921).

⁴²³ *Far East*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1924).

⁴²⁴ Alfred O’Rahilly, *Father William Doyle S.J.* (London, 1922), p 80.

for God””.⁴²⁵ Detailing the enormous success of the ‘ingenious’ fundraising methods in his diary, Doyle recorded that ‘two priests, one in Scotland, the other in Australia, have taken up my card-scheme are working it well’.⁴²⁶ Children who had sent money to the *Far East* for this purpose were, however, informed that they could redirect their efforts to ‘L.M. [Little Missionaries] Burse III. about to be started’ or ‘to help defray the expenses of native catechists (teachers of Christian Doctrine)’ to the Fathers in the Hupeh district.⁴²⁷

Choices abound, in addition to selecting how best to spend their money, young readers were offered various ways in how to firstly raise that money. Although happy to receive small donations from personal funds, these sections constantly encouraged their readers to engage in more complex and profitable initiatives. Essentially acting as fundraising agents, children routinely made collections on behalf of the missionary institution. By filling mite-boxes or collecting cards, selling raffle tickets, acting as promoters of the publication and of clubs such as the IML, the juvenile missionary supporter played a key role in funding Ireland’s Catholic missions.⁴²⁸

Schools were essential in optimising the fundraising potential of children. Similar to the way in which British Protestant missionary organisations relied upon the Sunday school system to distribute their juvenile missionary literature, Ireland’s Catholic schools were considered a ready-made distribution network for the home-produced periodical.⁴²⁹ Through the pages of the children’s corners, Irish missionary propagandists worked incessantly to establish their cause as routine feature of the Irish Catholic classroom. Suggestions aimed at both schoolchildren and teachers on how to go about this appeared regularly. In a discussion surrounding a recently founded burse, ‘Mother Machree’, for example, declared that it would be ‘gorgeous’ if in ‘each class one boy or one girl’ would ‘act as treasurer for the month and then with the names of the contributors, send the lot’ on to her.⁴³⁰ Typical of the Columbans, this push to engage

⁴²⁵ As cited in *ibid.*

⁴²⁶ Alfred O’Rahilly, *Father William Doyle S.J.* (London, 1922), p 80.

⁴²⁷ *Far East*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1924).

⁴²⁸ See, for examples, *Far East*, ii, no. 1 (Jan. 1920); *Missionary Annals*, ii, no. 2 (Feb. 1920); *Far East*, ix, no. 11 (Nov. 1926).

⁴²⁹ Cox, *The British missionary enterprise*, p. 101.

⁴³⁰ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 8 (Aug. 1922).

schools featured first in the earliest editions of the *Far East*. In addition to loudly proclaiming their desire to harness the collective zeal of Ireland's many Children of Mary Sodalties, they made no secret of their vision for the Irish Catholic classroom.⁴³¹ In 1924 'Colum's corner' declared that the 'Irish National Teachers have proved themselves to be our staunchest friends'. And so, upon the suggestion of a named teacher who had observed the numerous 'Subscriptions from individual Teachers and Schools' that appear monthly in the *Far East*, a 'National Teachers Burse' was to be established.⁴³² Convents and Colleges were not ignored. They were also targeted by all three titles to collectively engage in the missionary cause.

The spiritual element of missionary engagement also featured in the children's pages. Young readers of the *Missionary Annals* were assured, for example, that their counterparts in Africa have all been taught when praying ... not to forget their little white brothers and sisters in Ireland who have been so good to them, whose pennies have brought them from slavery and whose prayers have saved them'.⁴³³ To fully assume the position of juvenile 'white saviour', prayer was, of course, also declared essential. All three titles periodically reminded children that 'no matter how many pennies you save and collect ... you will not bring one of them to Jesus unless you pray for them, too'.⁴³⁴ Children could also avail of the advantages of the missionary club. Some were formulated specifically to cater for the younger market. In 1923 the *African Missionary* launched the 'Black Babies Crusaders'. By joining 'this little army' members would apparently be drawing down 'the Special Blessing of God' on themselves and their loved ones. In addition to getting one's name 'on the Mass List', Crusaders were also promised the chance of winning 'a beautiful silver watch four times a year'.⁴³⁵

As the 1920s progressed such prizes became an increasingly prominent feature of the children's pages. As with adult readers, if the plight of the pagan, assertions of Catholic obligation and the promise of spiritual rewards failed to motivate active engagement,

⁴³¹ *Far East*, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1918).

⁴³² *Far East*, vii, no. 5 (May 1924).

⁴³³ *Missionary Annals*, iii, no. 10 (Oct. 1921).

⁴³⁴ *Far East*, ix, no. 6 (Jun. 1926).

⁴³⁵ *African Missionary*, no. 54 (Mar.-Apr. 1923); *African Missionary*, no. 56 (Jul.-Aug. 1923).

prizes added a further incentive. Each edition brought the young reader a brand new opportunity to win something. Small sums of money ranging from a few shillings to a pound were on offer for those who sent in answers to puzzles, riddles, crosswords and maths problems.⁴³⁶ Poetry and essay competitions also featured. Typifying the way in which Irish missionary institutions sought to forge connections with nationalist ideals, prizes were periodically offered for pieces composed in Irish.⁴³⁷ Reflecting the broader emphasis placed on the role of the child in reviving the Irish language, the missionary children's pages imagined themselves as contributing to the spread of the native tongue. In a somewhat haphazard fashion, lines and segments of Irish were routinely interspersed throughout these sections.⁴³⁸ Likely indicative of the relatively poor levels of fluency, the Irish language competitions were often announced in English.

Premium prizes were, however, usually reserved for a different type of competition. With the aim of maximizing revenue, only readers who actually contributed to the society were entitled to contend for these more high-end offerings. In 1926, boys who forwarded a postal order of one pound to 'Colum's corner' were, for example, entered into a draw for air guns, footballs, hurleys and tool chests. Girls who did the same could win necklaces, watches and 'Fancy Lacquered Boxes from Japan'.⁴³⁹ In 1927 the *African Missionary* announced a similar raffle for a bike. For 'every frock or pants' sent in for the First Communion children in Africa, the reader was given six chances to win.⁴⁴⁰ In exchange for their services juvenile fundraising agents were also given their own opportunities to obtain prizes.⁴⁴¹ Similar to the way in which national rivalries were used to encourage lay support generally, a sense of competition permeated the children's pages. Although ultimately friendly in tone, the lure of prizes added an element of urgency to these sections. Usually, the more money the individual or the school had raised, the more chances they had of getting their hands on a prize.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁶ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 8 (Aug. 1922).

⁴³⁷ See, for example, *Far East*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1924).

⁴³⁸ See, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 83 (Jan.-Feb. 1928).

⁴³⁹ *Far East*, ix, no. 6 (Jun. 1926).

⁴⁴⁰ *African Missionary*, no. 81 (Sept.-Oct 1927).

⁴⁴¹ See, for example, *Far East*, ix, no. 11 (Nov. 1926).

⁴⁴² See, for example, *Far East*, xiii, no. 12 (Dec. 1930).

Typifying the manner in which missionary discourse could seamlessly absorb all manner of contradictions, promotions for prizes often appeared alongside condemnations of worldly materialism. Such incongruities had no bearing when it came to the quest to save souls. Whilst competitions proved to have enormous popular appeal, the missionary message always remained to the fore. Readers could enjoy the thrill of the missionary puzzle pages, contests and raffles assured that they were not only doing their bit for the noblest of all causes but also helping to improve their own particular lot in the afterlife.⁴⁴³

In the same way that Irish missionary propagandists had no qualms about exploiting the lure of prizes, they could similarly skim over the awkward contradictions presented by the colonial context of missionary endeavour. The fact that in their primary capacity as educators, Irish missionaries were often propagating the English language was, for the most part, just ignored. Whilst tales of heroic Irish missionaries setting forth to simultaneously disseminate Catholicism and the Irish language would have certainly added to the image of the Gaelic warrior of Christ, reality prevailed. ‘Pagans’, unsurprisingly, appear to have had no interest in acquiring *Gaeilge*. Although the home-produced magazines periodically waxed lyrical about the importance of reviving the native tongue in Ireland, Irish missionary institutions were under no illusions of their marketability on the mission field.⁴⁴⁴ Whether in colonial Africa or the Republic of China, in an increasingly globalised world, the lure of an education and fluency in English was essential in attracting converts and central to the success of the modern Irish missionary movement.

Occasional references were, however, made to the propagation of other more easily transmittable aspects of Irish culture. Once again, the *Far East* led the pack in this regard. Gaelic games proved particularly useful in asserting the ‘Gaelic tinge’ of the society’s work. One early edition, for example, proudly proclaimed that the ‘game of the Gael is now being played in the Yang’. As if to add proof of the superiority of the Irish, it was declared that Chinese boys preferred these games than any other they had been shown.⁴⁴⁵ Although occasional nods were made to the idea that Irish missionaries

⁴⁴³ See, for example, *Far East*, vi, no. 5 (May 1923).

⁴⁴⁴ See, for example, *Far East*, vi, no. 5 (May 1923).

⁴⁴⁵ *Far East*, iv, no. 7 (Jul. 1921).

were agents of Irish culture, the religious message dominated. One particularly useful way of accommodating the nationalist-inspired vision of the distinctly Gaelic missionary and Christian universalism that also conveniently bypassed the linguistic reality of the mission field was to focus on the notion of the 'Irish faith'. Whilst marking out the Irish iteration of Catholicism as uniquely 'fervent' and special, the term was sufficiently vague to not actually mean much at all. How exactly Irish Catholicism differed from any other nations remained unsaid. As propagators of the 'Irish faith', Irish missionaries could be lauded as selfless patriots who at the same time as saving souls could be seen as Gaelicizing the world. As the 'Irish faith' could simply be interpreted as the Catholic faith, the phrase, however, did not expressly infringe on the Church's universalist message nor could it be accused of being an expression of squalid terrestrial imperialism.

In a world perceived to be under siege from materialism, avarice and hedonism, Catholic missionaries were presented not only as the saviour of souls, but also as the potential saviour of the entire world. Armed with the 'one True faith', they were charged with containing the forces of atheism and secularism deemed to be the root cause of much of humankind's supposed ills. Although Satan could be understood as the mastermind of Mammonism, the exact origins of the supposed growing irreligiosity of the world were often ambiguous. Simple human greed was also routinely denounced. The destruction and chaos wrought by the Great War was often cited as evidence of man's moral and spiritual decline.⁴⁴⁶ Enthusiasm for the 'pagan' missions was held up as the ultimate proof that 'the heart of Ireland is not too crusted over with Mammon to hear the whisperings of angels'.⁴⁴⁷ Whilst all were implored to be wary of the temptations of materialism, the 'pagan' was deemed particularly vulnerable to its lures. Reinforcing the belief in 'our' superiority and good fortune, Catholic missionaries and their supporters were portrayed as having a crucial role in protecting the unconverted from the negative influences of the secular west. The holy truths of Catholicism were believed to be the only antidote to the greed of imperialism as well as a means of preventing the 'pagan' from taking on the 'bad habits' of atheist 'European freethinkers' living amongst them.⁴⁴⁸ With mankind apparently teetering on the brink of

⁴⁴⁶ See, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 8 (Jul.-Aug. 1915).

⁴⁴⁷ *Far East*, i, no. 3 (Mar. 1918).

⁴⁴⁸ *African Missionary*, no. 5 (Jan.-Feb. 1915)

god-fearing decency and about to descend into unencumbered human selfishness, these discourses were imbued with a sense of urgency. In 1921, for example, the *Far East* warned that China ‘will, unless Christianised, become a difficult, modernised, pagan country like Japan’. It stressed that ‘If this generation passes by; if China steps into modern methods and materialism the great opportunity will be gone’.⁴⁴⁹

Whilst Hogan concludes that ‘At the heart of missionary propaganda was the message that to be a missionary was to be modern’, the conceptualisation of modernity in the Irish home-produced missionary periodical was in fact somewhat more complex.⁴⁵⁰ A more accurate assessment of this overriding message would perhaps focus on the idea of decency. Catholic missionaries, and by extension their supporters, were ultimately presented as the defenders of all things decent. Modernity was only embraced insofar as it served the cause. Innovations in communications, transport and medicines could even be trumpeted as proof that missionary expansion was part of a providential plan for the world. Simultaneously, however, Catholic missions were depicted as bulwarks of the faith, endeavouring to protect the world from the ‘objectionable’ aspects of the rapidly modernising secular world. With reference to the ‘biblical lore, ‘saintly legends’, ‘old narratives and even older spiritual concerns’ that filled the pages of French missionary publications of the nineteenth century, J.P. Daughton observes that ‘Like other forms of popular religious expression at the time, the missionary movement complicates the often-used dichotomy of “modern” and “traditional”. Missionaries drew on *and* stood at odds with what could be called the modern, secular world’.⁴⁵¹ The same can be said of the Irish missionaries of the twentieth century.

Setting themselves distinctly apart from the influence of ‘worldly power’, the Columbans proudly proclaimed that the ‘Irish Mission to China works under no flag’.⁴⁵² The *Far East* set out that China was now, after centuries of insularity, ‘stirring herself from her long sleep’ and looking to the west for education and guidance generally.⁴⁵³ This reported ‘turn westward’ was celebrated for the fact it opened up the vast country to missionary influence, however, secular western influences with all its ‘pomp and

⁴⁴⁹ *Far East*, iv, no. 6 (Jun. 1921); *Far East*, iv, no. 7 (Jul. 1921).

⁴⁵⁰ Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement*, p. 158.

⁴⁵¹ Daughton, *An empire divided*, pp 53-4.

⁴⁵² *Far East*, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1918); *Far East*, iv, no. 3 (Mar. 1921).

⁴⁵³ *Far East*, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1918).

vanities' were portrayed as a major potential threat to the world's best pagans.⁴⁵⁴ Much in the same way that the Chinese were declared in need of protection from 'the doctrines of Kant, of Darwin, and other western pagans', they also were deemed at risk from colonialists and foreign merchants.⁴⁵⁵ Alleged to be consumed by temporal desires and greed, these westerners were understood to have nothing positive to offer the Chinese and therefore had no good reason to live amongst them.

The case of Africa and the African proved less straightforward. As noted above, the boundaries between the aims of western colonialism and that of Christian missionaries often overlapped and blurred. The indefinite nature of these relations was clearly echoed in both the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals*. Although both publications warned of the immediate threat posed by the 'on-rush of modern commercialism' on the 'impressionable' 'poor blacks', secular colonial conquest in Africa was not wholly condemned.⁴⁵⁶ The magazines instead made reference to 'The good and bad influences of civilised government'.⁴⁵⁷ Condemnations of 'corrupt colonial officials' sat alongside acknowledgements that 'Britain has clearly opened the way for the missionary to many a new field'.⁴⁵⁸ Reflecting the contrasting perceptions of the Chinese as pagan but civilized and the African as pagan and uncivilized, the need for western colonial intervention was tacitly accepted in both African orientated titles.

Although willing to denounce aspects of the secular western or 'Pagan Christian' influences on Africans, both the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* projected their efforts as being at least in partial harmony with the broader effort to 'improve' the 'Dark Continent'. Often working in tandem with the apparatus of colonial government, criticisms of imperialism were not premised on the belief that Africa would be better off if all other white men would pack up and leave. The Irish missionary magazine could intermittently absorb, or at least abide, a slightly more flexible understanding of 'Us' that could accommodate secular white westerners. Although rarely explicitly asserted, this narrative implied that the African, understood to be so desperately in need of 'fixing', would, on the whole, benefit from colonial governance. Tapping into much

⁴⁵⁴ *Far East*, i, no. 3 (Mar. 1918).

⁴⁵⁵ *Far East*, i, no. 6 (Jun. 1918).

⁴⁵⁶ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 10 (Oct. 1924).

⁴⁵⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 5 (Jan.-Feb. 1915).

⁴⁵⁸ *African Missionary*, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1914); *African Missionary*, no. 3 (Jul.-Sept. 1914).

broader notions of white superiority and ‘the white man’s burden’, the Catholic missionary in Africa was often envisioned as having a crucial and urgent role in tempering or countering but not necessarily negating other western influences in Africa.

Similar accommodations were never made for the Muslim. There was never a hint of common ground between the Catholic and the ‘Mohammedan’. Condemned as the imaginings of a ‘False Prophet’, Islam was constantly and virulently denounced as a ‘sordid’ and ‘fanatical’ religion.⁴⁵⁹ Without as much as ‘schools of their own’, the Muslim was declared to have ‘nothing to do with the progress and betterment of this world.’⁴⁶⁰ Accounts of the rapid advance of the ‘crescent’ in Africa added to the plea for urgent action. Readers were informed that missionaries were ‘fiercely fighting’ to secure Africa for the cross.⁴⁶¹ With black Africans alleged to be ‘throwing away their idols’ in search of something ‘more’, now was proclaimed the time to act.⁴⁶² Typical of the biblical language routinely used to conceptualise Christian missions, ‘the harvest’ was declared to be ‘over-ripe’.⁴⁶³ ‘Our generation’ was proclaimed to have the ‘great spiritual honour and great spiritual responsibility’ of ensuring the fate of Africa and Islam was deemed a major threat to the advance of Christianity there.⁴⁶⁴

Seeking to explain the growth of Islam in Africa, readers were informed that Muslims carry out ‘persistent propaganda’ amongst the ‘native tribes’.⁴⁶⁵ As ‘neither black nor white’ these Arab propagandists were deemed to have the ‘further advantage of living nearer to the level of the native – socially and morally’.⁴⁶⁶ Always focusing on the male perspective, the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* asserted that the ‘undiscerning’ native African was lured by the boost to his social status afforded by conversion to Islam. Adherents were believed to ‘join together to help one another just like the Freemasons’.⁴⁶⁷ ‘The issue of marriage was also central in this narrative. In keeping with the construction of the stereotypical morally lax black African, Islam, declared to be so ‘tolerant of human weakness’, afforded the ‘pagan’ the opportunity to

⁴⁵⁹ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

⁴⁶⁰ *African Missionary*, no. 58 (Nov.-Dec. 1923)

⁴⁶¹ See, for example, *ibid.*

⁴⁶² *African Missionary*, no. 54 (Mar.-Jun. 1923).

⁴⁶³ *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 10 (Oct. 1925).

⁴⁶⁴ *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 1 (Jan. 1926).

⁴⁶⁵ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

⁴⁶⁶ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 6 (Jun. 1922); *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

⁴⁶⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 58 (Nov.-Dec. 1923).

have multiple wives whilst Christianity struggled to compete, restricting their converts to just one.⁴⁶⁸ Typifying the intensity of anti-Muslim feeling, in 1914 readers of the *African Missionary* were informed that ‘One decent pagan is worth ten Mohammedans ... He is infinitely less of a thief and hypocrite’.⁴⁶⁹ Once the African converted to ‘Mahammodonism’, he or she was deemed fixed in their ‘fanaticism’ and lost to the ‘true’ God forever.⁴⁷⁰ And so, the threat of Islam was a central element of the missionary exhortation to Catholics to get to the African ‘pagan’ first.

The advances of Protestant missionaries added significantly to this sense of urgency. The successes of these ‘false sects’ were deemed a threat to Catholic missions the world over. All three Irish periodicals routinely included critical accounts of Protestant missionary efforts. Reflecting the complexities of the relationships between Catholics and Protestants in western or ‘home’ countries, these commentaries were far more varied when compared to the monotonous stream of vitriol targeted at Muslims. Depictions of Protestant missionaries could range from images of well-intentioned happy-clappy but ultimately misguided do-gooders to irritatingly puritanical ‘long-faced Bible readers’ to disgraceful propagators of heresy.⁴⁷¹ The magazines periodically took aim at the ‘cosy’ lifestyle of the Protestant missionary. Joined by their wives on the mission field they could be portrayed as neither as hardy nor committed as the self-sacrificing Catholic soldier of Christ.⁴⁷²

In keeping with popular understandings of Catholic teaching in the pre-ecumenical era, the ‘Protestant interpretation of Christianity’ was believed to be impotent when it came to saving souls. Protestant missions were declared to be an example of ‘the blind leading the blind’.⁴⁷³ Contending with missionaries representing the ‘old forms of Protestantism’ as well as those from “‘fancy religions” such as the Seventh Day Adventist, the multiplicity of ‘doomed Protestant sects’ were criticised for further confusing the ‘pagan’.⁴⁷⁴ With the days of paganism declared to be numbered, both

⁴⁶⁸*African Missionary*, no. 70 (Nov.-Dec. 1925); *African Missionary*, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1914).

⁴⁶⁹*African Missionary*, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1914).

⁴⁷⁰*Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

⁴⁷¹*Far East*, i, no. 3 (Mar. 1918).

⁴⁷²See, for examples, *African Missionary*, no. 5 (Jan.-Feb. 1915) and *African Missionary*, no. 22 (Nov.-Dec. 1917).

⁴⁷³*African Missionary*, no. 7 (May-Jun. 1915).

⁴⁷⁴*Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

Africans and the Chinese were imagined to be ‘groping out of the darkness’ in search of God’s light. Readers were informed of ‘How sad’ it was that the Protestant missionaries should get to them first and lead them astray.⁴⁷⁵

Much in the same way that success of Islam in Africa could allegedly be explained by the cunning exploitation of the native’s moral laxity and vanity, the superior financial backing of Protestant missionaries was held up as the source of their success. This argument implied that pagans had not actively chosen to convert to these ‘heretical’ religions but were lured by the ‘seductive temporal advantages’ that Catholics struggled to compete with.⁴⁷⁶ Making constant reference to the ‘inexhaustible resources’ available to Protestant missionaries, the Irish magazines routinely detailed how their Christian ‘rivals’ provided ‘up-to-date primary schools, colleges, universities’ as well as ‘Free education and free medical and surgical treatment’.⁴⁷⁷ American Protestants were understood to be especially wealthy benefactors of ‘pagan’ missionary endeavour.⁴⁷⁸

Beyond simply rationalizing the ‘pagan’ appetite for the ‘heretical’ doctrines of ‘our separated brethren’, constant reference to Protestant monetary support of missions was also used to incentivize Catholic support for missions. In 1918 the *Far East*, asserted that ‘Protestants contribute £6,000,000 annually towards the Foreign Missions. Catholics only £1,000,000. Why is this? How much, if any, of this little million do you contribute?’.⁴⁷⁹ Jeering aside, Catholics were proclaimed to have much to learn from their Protestant counterparts and even ‘to look to them in some degree as models’.⁴⁸⁰ The vastly superior fundraising prowess of the ‘other sects’ was deemed a cause for both envy and alarm. To successfully engage in ‘war against Protestant influence’ readers were routinely told that Catholics must do more to support those on the front.⁴⁸¹ Typifying the deferential treatment of the APF, the *Far East* was careful to note that these financial shortcomings were ‘not the fault of the splendid and efficient organisation for the Propagation of the Faith’ but were ‘due to the want of faith among

⁴⁷⁵ *Far East*, i, no. 3 (Mar. 1918)

⁴⁷⁶ *Missionary Annals*, i (Aug. 1919).

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; *Far East*, xi, no. 2 (Feb. 1928).

⁴⁷⁸ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

⁴⁷⁹ *Far East*, i, no. 3 (Mar. 1918).

⁴⁸⁰ *African Missionary*, no. 22 (Nov.-Dec. 1917).

⁴⁸¹ *Far East*, ii, no. 9 (Sept. 1919).

our wealthy classes at home'.⁴⁸² The *Missionary Annals* similarly concluded that 'The well-to-Protestants contribute far more generously to their foreign Missions than our well-to-do Catholics'.⁴⁸³

Whilst Protestant success in funding their missions garnered the most attention, other elements of the Protestant missionary model were also praised. Their success in the field of pioneering medical missionary work, for example, was held up as something that Catholics must endeavour to emulate.⁴⁸⁴ The Protestant method of employing female doctors to allow them greater access to potential female converts was especially coveted. In keeping with a broader campaign for Catholics to catch up with this innovation, early editions of both the *African Missionary* and *Far East* were particularly vocal about the need for Sister doctors on the mission field.⁴⁸⁵ Rome did not heed this call until 1936 when restrictions on religious working in surgery and midwifery were eventually lifted.⁴⁸⁶

Although accounts of rivalries with Protestants on the 'pagan' mission-field were a standard of Catholic missionary discourses, direct mention of sectarianism in Ireland was rare. Whilst reference to the historical oppression of Irish Catholics was deemed acceptable, contemporary tensions were clearly considered a far more delicate matter. Much in the same way that the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War were often alluded to but not explicitly discussed, forthright discussion of contemporary sectarian agitations were, for the most part, avoided.

The occasional purchase of a 'big house' by an Irish Catholic missionary institution, however, proved too tempting of an opportunity to pass over. In keeping with the self-generated narrative of Irish missionary endeavour as a natural component of Irish nationalism, such acquisitions could be framed as a blow to old Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. Perhaps owing to the intensity of sectarian tensions in Northern Ireland, the most extreme example of such rhetoric featured in discussions surrounding the opening

⁴⁸² *Far East*, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1918).

⁴⁸³ *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 3 (Mar. 1925).

⁴⁸⁴ See, for example, *African Missionary*, no. 7 (May-Jun. 1915).

⁴⁸⁵ See, for examples, *African Missionary*, no. 15 (Sept.-Oct. 1916); *Far East*, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1918).

⁴⁸⁶ For further discussion of this papal decree, see, Ailish Ellen Veale, 'It's all a matter of balanced tensions': Irish medical missionaries in Nigeria, 1937-1967 (Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2015), pp 42-3.

of the SMA's new theological college in Dromantine House, county Down in 1926. A four-page spread detailing the 'formal institution' of the new seminary intended to cater for the society's growing number of aspirants featured in the *African Missionary*. In addition to reporting the pomp and pageantry surrounding the opening, the periodical also documented the somewhat inflammatory toast made by the local Bishop of Dromore, Edward Mulhern. After making comments about the historic tensions between the two communities in Ireland, as well as some direct references to more recent agitations, 'His Lordship' moved on to congratulate the 'Fathers of the African Missions on their acquisition of Dromantine House'. He triumphantly declared that here the society was 'to engage in work the very antithesis of what that place and others like it had stood for during the past three hundred years'.⁴⁸⁷

Bar making jibes, the magazines had very little interest in the Protestant at home. Concern for the mission-field dominated. This was where the spiritual battle for souls and mankind was most urgent. To what extent could Catholics actually 'win' this 'war' remained unclear. Was there a genuine belief that the world or even the 'pagan' world could be converted into a Catholic utopia? In-depth readings of the three Irish periodicals would suggest that there was not. And yet, in the face of such a seemingly impossible task the overriding missionary message remained optimistic. Constant references to the billions of souls 'trapped in the darkness of paganism' were framed to motivate not dishearten the reader. This optimism, however, was arguably not predicated on the belief that Catholic missionaries would ultimately win the world for Catholic Christ but that they should and could at least make a decent showing. With the non-Western world routinely depicted as a place where Catholicism was vying with Protestantism, Islam, atheism and materialism in an epic scramble for souls, Catholic missionaries had to grab what they could. A total victory was never really part of the equation.

Progress as opposed to victory was the measure of success. Characteristic of the genre, all three Irish titles sought to borrow from the legitimacy of scientific rigour by providing statistical evidence of Catholic advances. Tables charting increases such as the numbers of mission stations established, churches built, school enrolment figures,

⁴⁸⁷ *African Missionary*, no. 76 (Nov.-Dec. 1926).

converts, baptisms and communions were a standard.⁴⁸⁸ Progress on the ‘home front’ could similarly be measured with figures. Readers were informed of the growth in the number of aspirants, donations received and even prayers and masses said for the cause.⁴⁸⁹ This progress was often celebrated as proof of growing Irish missionary zeal; however, it always came with a caveat. The missionary war had no endpoint. There was always more to be done. Whilst Rome’s Panglossian vision of the future imagined that western Catholic missionaries would manage to endow all pagan nations with a self-sustaining Catholic infrastructure of their own, this plan only really featured as a pipe dream in the Irish missionary magazine. Although China’s potential to develop its own Hierarchy was considered far greater than that of Africa, it was still considered only likely in the very far-off future.

In the never-ending battle to advance the Catholic position, sustained support of the missions was presented as a must. As set out by the *African Missionary*, ‘shy fairies who give once and disappear for ever’ were of little use.⁴⁹⁰ Working to establish donations to the missions as an integral element of the Irish Catholic existence, all those who considered themselves ‘true’ followers of the faith were compelled to commit to the cause. Building upon the concept of Catholic obligation to propagate the faith, the *Far East* went as far to assert that those who did not give ‘active sympathy’ actually ‘murder Christianity’.⁴⁹¹ There were no exceptions.

In addition to setting out directly how exactly children, ‘priests, directors of confraternities, nuns, teachers’ and all manner of Catholic organisations could provide ongoing help to their society, the *Far East* also led the charge in engaging the poor in the Irish Catholic missions.⁴⁹² With the aim of creating a ‘National organisation’, the support of the poor was deemed an essential element of the Columbans’ “little streams make great rivers” approach. It was routinely declared that ‘The poor’ and especially the ‘very poor’ had a special affinity with missionary work as they ‘have a truer

⁴⁸⁸ See, for examples, *African Missionary*, no. 2 (Apr.-Jun. 1914) and *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1925).

⁴⁸⁹ See, for examples, *African Missionary*, no. 57 (Sept.- Oct. 1923) and *Far East*, xi, no. 3 (Mar. 1928).

⁴⁹⁰ *African Missionary*, no. 21 (Sept.-Oct. 1917).

⁴⁹¹ *Far East*, vi, no. 6 (Jun. 1923).

⁴⁹² *Far East*, i, no. 6 (Jun. 1918).

instinct: they understand'. Asserting a populist image of the society it was proudly proclaimed that the poor 'speak of the "China Mission" as if it were their own'.⁴⁹³

Instructional letters alleged to have been sent in by the poor were routinely used to show that *all* could and should find ways to 'Economise for souls'.⁴⁹⁴ One such letter stated 'Pray, be good enough to accept the small offering of 5/- from a very poor, feeble, old labouring man towards that noble project' in the hope that he and his family 'will participate in the great favours promised to subscribers'.⁴⁹⁵ Another written by a nun who was forwarding on donations explained that 'The enclosed is for the Chinese Irish Mission. A Mrs. McCarthy, a poor woman with a large young family, contributed 13s 6d. She promised our good God that if her husband got an increase in wages she would apply the first increase to the Mission'.⁴⁹⁶ Another woman similarly explained that although she was 'very poor' with 'eight children who were 'solely dependent' on her, she took 'great pleasure indeed' in sending anything spare to the Chinese Mission.⁴⁹⁷

Whilst the *Far East* remained the most insistent on enlisting the financial support of the poor, both other titles also made explicit efforts to engage this demographic. For example, in 1924 the *Missionary Annals* suggested that those readers who 'have a burning desire to help the foreign missions' but were hampered by their 'limited means' could find 'a splendid outlet for their zeal' by collecting and forwarding old postage stamps to the society.⁴⁹⁸ Similarly, in 1926 the African Missionary began to advertise 'Our Missionaries Shilling' club. Imitating the Columbans' IML, this 'club' requested that every family commit an annual subscription of just one shilling. For those unwilling or unable to pay annual one-pound subscription for the basic membership of the society's other club, this scheme offered an attractive alternative. Remarking on the success of the shilling club the Provincial of the Irish SMAs wrote 'I see more clearly that these small sums which everybody can afford will help our Missionaries fully and give the Faith of Ireland to the Dark Continent'.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹³ *Far East*, i, no. 6 (Jun. 1918).

⁴⁹⁴ *Far East*, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1918).

⁴⁹⁵ *Far East*, iv, no. 12 (Dec. 1921).

⁴⁹⁶ *Far East*, iv, no. 4 (Apr. 1921).

⁴⁹⁷ *Far East*, xi, no. 3 (Mar. 1928).

⁴⁹⁸ *Missionary Annals*, vi, no. 2 (Feb. 1924).

⁴⁹⁹ *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1926).

The acknowledgement of poverty in Ireland was not deemed to mar the idealised image of Catholic Ireland. Born of ‘homes of faith and purity’, the Irish, regardless of material circumstances, were presented as unquestionably better off than all the world’s non-believers and most especially pagans.⁵⁰⁰ As summarised by the *African Missionary*, ‘poverty of the soul (the black’s) is far worse than mere bodily poverty’.⁵⁰¹ In the economically struggling Irish Free State, such a reading of the world was perhaps highly comforting. Whilst independence may have failed to deliver economic success, the Irish missionary magazine maintained an unshakeable confidence in the spiritual superiority of the newly founded nation. Uncorrupted by the evils of irreligion and materialism, poverty could even add to the image of the idealised pious Irish peasant. Whilst ‘pagan’ poverty was presented as miserable, dirty and pitiful, ‘Christian poverty’, irrespective of change in material fortune was deemed righteous, clean and stoical.⁵⁰²

Epitomising the manner in which missionary propagandists could manipulate wider discourses to reinforce their own worldview, in 1924 the *Far East* featured a short item addressing poverty in the west of Ireland. Detailing the ‘hard lot’ of those living in isolated coastal Galway, the magazine recalled how ‘When Roger Casement was waiting in prison for his last hour he wrote to a friend that he was haunted by the thought of the poverty-stricken lives of those tender soft-hearted people that live around Carrowroe.’ Entitled ‘For Justice and For Honour’, at the centre of the article was the morality tale of a poor labourer determined to repay his dead brother’s debt and the female shop owner who, unable to deter him, donated the money to the Church. Concluding ‘And some people say there is no sense of justice in Ireland!!!’, the *Far East* declared ‘Little wonder was it that Pearse and Casement loved you, oh poor rich people of the Gael!’.⁵⁰³ This was a shameless appropriation of the revolutionaries’ ideals. Whilst Casement had worked for change, the *Far East*, although lamenting rural poverty, was not actually seeking amelioration.⁵⁰⁴ Asking ‘Which is the better thing –

⁵⁰⁰ *Far East*, i, no. 9 (Apr. 1918).

⁵⁰¹ *African Missionary*, no. 2 (Apr.-Jun. 1914).

⁵⁰² See, for example, *Far East*, iv, no. 11 (Nov. 1921).

⁵⁰³ *Far East*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1924).

⁵⁰⁴ For an example of Casement’s efforts to alleviate poverty in the west of Ireland see his letter to the editor in *Irish Independent*, 26 Jun. 1913.

the civilisation that can produce a Rolls-Royce or the civilisation that can produce such proud upstanding souls?', the magazine instead continued to glorify the blessed meek, and with it the Irish nation.⁵⁰⁵ It twisted the message of the ghosts of the proclamation of 1916 to suit its own conservative, even counter-revolutionary, ideology.

Rooted in the well-established dogmas of the Roman Catholic faith, the conservatism of the popular missionary periodical was essential to its success. Although missionary endeavour was often framed in the language of epic warfare, no fundamental change, upheaval or revolt was required. The missionary call to arms implored action not change. Adapting the already proven 'Us' and 'Them' formula, Irish missionary propagandists crafted a vision of the world that managed to be both exotic, exciting and dangerous but also digestible and safe. Launched less than two years after the Easter Rising, the *Far East*'s once explicit association with militant Irish nationalism which had imbued the early years of both the society and periodical with a hint of radicalism had, with the establishment of the Free State, quickly dissipated. As the formative decade of Irish independence progressed and the alliance of church and state solidified, the missionary message was easily absorbed into the new conservative status quo. Missionary narratives asserting Catholic moral authority, Irish specialness and white racial superiority bolstered both the individual and national sense of self. Mediated through the missionary prism, the reader could envision a global system in which the supremacy of Catholics and Irish Catholics was certain. Adding further to its appeal, this telling of the world also asserted a sense of agency. By supporting Ireland's missionary societies, the reader and the Irish nation was assured that they were contributing both to the betterment of the world as well as the betterment of their soul.

By the close of the 1920s the circulation of the *Far East* alone was over 80,000.⁵⁰⁶ Both the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* had each likely achieved a circulation of approximately 30,000.⁵⁰⁷ Ireland's most widely read daily newspaper of the period, the *Irish Independent*, had a circulation of approximately 90,000 and by 1931 the

⁵⁰⁵ *Far East*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1924).

⁵⁰⁶ In 1928 the circulation of the *Far East* was reported to be 82,000, see *Far East*, v, no. 10 (Oct. 1922).

⁵⁰⁷ Although figures for these two titles at the close of the 1920s are unavailable by 1937 the circulation of the *African Missionary* stood at 37,000, see report 'The Eight General Chapter of the Missions Society held in Lyon (France) from 5 July to 10 July', (SMA archive, Cork, SMA General Assemblies File 1937 to 1989); the *Missionary Annals* in 1930 was recorded as having a circulation of 34,000, see 'Report on *Missionary Annals* for potential advertiser' c. 1949 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 7).

increasingly popular English daily tabloids, the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*, had a combined circulation of 60,707.⁵⁰⁸ Whilst certainly useful for contextualising the enormous success of Ireland's home-produced missionary periodicals, these figures only allow for blunt comparison. In addition to noting the obvious disparity in publication frequency, Ireland's 'humble' home-produced missionary magazines were, by their own admission, never intended to compete on the open market. With neither the 'pretensions' nor the 'promise' of the 'multitude of magazines' and 'cheap picture paper' which 'cater in the most part to amusement alone', the success of these 'modest' publications was hugely dependent on appealing to the reader's sense of Catholic moral superiority.⁵⁰⁹ In contrast to secular periodicals which were alleged to be simply 'sold for gain', the missionary magazine was 'sold for love'.⁵¹⁰ As set out in the *African Missionary* 'it is not easy to be absorbed in the work of unknown men in unknown places — but there are people who prefer to read of the doings of noble men in strange lands for a great cause than the gruesome details of a murderer who “recalls Crippen and Hamlet”'.⁵¹¹

As with popular devotional reading material, this moral imperative was fundamental to the success of the missionary magazine. The religious aspect of these publications did not, however, negate their impact. Whilst many were likely compelled by the schoolteacher, parish priest, or perhaps a particularly pious neighbour to lay out the few shillings required for an annual subscription, ever-growing donation lists, rising numbers of aspirants and, over the course of the 1920s, the huge upsurge in attention devoted to Catholic Ireland's missionary prowess in both national and regional newspapers reveal a genuine mass enthusiasm for the cause. Regardless of the exact reason as to how or why the magazine ended up in the readers' hands, the home-produced missionary periodical was the ideological conservative and thoroughly Catholic but by no means insular lens through which vast swathes of the Irish public interpreted the world.

⁵⁰⁸ Christopher Morash *A history of the media in Ireland* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 139 as cited in Kevin Rafter, 'Evil Literature: Banning the News of the World in Ireland' in *Media History*, xix, no. 4 (2013), p. 441 ; Morash takes these figures from L. M. Cullen, *Eason & Sons: a history* (Dublin, 1989), pp 347, 355.

⁵⁰⁹ *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 1 (Jan. 1925); *African Missionary*, no. 26 (Sept.-Oct. 1918).

⁵¹⁰ *Far East*, vii, no. 5 (May 1924).

⁵¹¹ *African Missionary*, no. 26 (Sept.-Oct. 1918).

Chapter two

The missionary magazine: boom and decline

Notably late to the Christian missionary revival, if the Irish Catholic missionary movement of the 1920s may be broadly defined as period of catch up, the 1930s may be designated as the decade in which the Irish arrived. As Catholic enthusiasm for ‘pagan’ missions continued to gather momentum and thus lessening the substantial lead won by Protestants in the nineteenth century, Ireland’s contribution to the effort became far more fitting of the young nation so concerned with proving its Catholic credentials.¹ By no means pushed out of the market by the individual missionary congregations and their home-produced periodicals, the Association for the Propagation of the Faith (APF) and its propaganda organ *Catholic Missions* (formerly titled *Annals for the Propagation of the Faith*) reaped the benefits and also contributed to Ireland’s surging missionary fervour. The detailed records and statistics compiled by the organisation help to both enumerate and contextualize this growth. Remaining solely dependent on donations from the public, throughout the Irish missionary boom the APF continued to gather monies through a number of streams including the weekly half-penny subscription required of members, church collections, alms boxes and legacies. As recorded in the Irish version of *Catholic Missions*, in 1926 £10,000 was collected amongst Irish Catholics and forwarded to the central committee which was now under direct papal authority in Rome. Within a decade this figure had doubled.² With the Great Depression identified as the cause of a downward trend in donations in the early 1930s, 1935 marked a turning point.³ Despite the Free State’s own ongoing economic woes, the Irish laity began to support the APF with an unprecedented gusto. In 1934 the Irish branch of the society forwarded £16,500 to Rome.⁴ The following year this figure had risen substantially to £20,000.⁵ In 1938 an impressive £28,000 was sent. Although notably less than France’s £62,104, Italy’s £55,913 or Italy’s £41,634, when broken down per capita, as was done in *Catholic Missions*, Ireland’s position in the missionary league table of nations looked more than respectable. Ranked fifth in a list of thirty-four

¹ For discussion on this upsurge in Catholic missionary activity see Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford, 1996), p. 559.

² *Catholic Missions*, xcvi, no. 2 (Apr. 1935).

³ *Catholic Missions*, xcvi, no. 4 (Oct. 1935).

⁴ *Catholic Missions*, xcvi, no. 2 (Apr 1935).

⁵ *Catholic Missions*, xcvi, no. 3 (Jul. 1935).

nations, Irish Catholics were, as individuals, donating more generously to the APF than their counterparts in a number of the traditional powerhouses of Catholic missionary endeavour. Reflecting the growth of missionary zeal amongst English-speaking Catholics after the Great War, New Zealand actually topped this table. Holland's Catholics, widely known as especially enthusiastic supporters of all things missionary, came second, Scotland third and Luxembourg fourth.⁶ By 1940 '5.8% of Ireland's adult Catholic population' were reported to be members of the APF.⁷

Whilst the society's long-established propaganda technique of publishing all income and expenditure certainly proves useful in examining trends within the modern missionary movement, donations made to the APF continued to represent just a fraction of Catholic Ireland's support for the 'pagan' missions. As popular enthusiasm for the cause intensified and the number of missionary organisations grew, securing donations and/or vocations became an increasingly competitive affair. Reflecting the centrality of the printed propaganda in the ongoing battle to capture the attention of the laity, in 1934 the APF relaunched their recently retitled periodical in a larger and glossier format. Constantly trumpeting its papally endorsed status as the 'Church's official mission-aid society', readers were routinely informed that the highly centralised international organisation offered the fairest and most efficient way to contribute to the Catholic missions.⁸

Unperturbed, the missionary magazines produced by the individual missionary congregations continued to flourish with ever-rising circulation figures helping to sustain and expand their own society's particular endeavours. Illustrating what appears to have been an especially Irish penchant for the home-produced periodical, during the 1937 Society for African Missions (SMA) General Chapter held in France, the circulation figures of all the society's periodicals were recorded. It was noted that their monthly *Echo* published in Lyon sold 18,000 copies, their two Dutch periodicals reached 8,000 and 2,000 respectively, their Alsatian periodicals had a circulation of 30,000 and 7,000 'to their credit'. The *African Missionary*, produced by the Irish branch

⁶ *Catholic Missions*, cii, no. 3 (Jul. 1939).

⁷ *Catholic Missions*, ciii, no. 2 (Apr. 1940).

⁸ See, for example, *Catholic Missions*, cii, no. 3 (Jul. 1939).

of the society, however, far outsold them all. It was now circulating almost 50,000 copies.⁹

In addition to the rapidly rising circulations of the first wave of Ireland's home-produced missionary magazines, the propaganda organs of mission-aid organisations such as *Catholic Missions* and missionary publications imported from abroad, missionary pages also became a staple feature in a wide variety of more general Catholic reading material.¹⁰ Helping to further establish the missionary cause as a standard feature of the western Catholic experience, the 1930s also saw a surge in the number of 'old orders' taking on 'pagan' missionary work.¹¹ Sections devoted to promoting these efforts became a standard in the growing number of periodicals produced by these organisations. From its debut edition in 1930, the *Capuchin Annual*, for example, allocated a number of pages to the Irish Capuchin's newly established missionary endeavours in Africa. The Augustinians' *Good Counsel*, launched in 1935, similarly included a regular mission focused segment. As discussed further below, in the period that followed the Second World War, the Jesuits also began to include mission-themed content in their hugely popular periodicals the *Messenger* and *Madonna*.

In step with global patterns of increasing consumption of popular Catholic literature, and more specifically missionary literature, these mixed periodicals were part of the wider mushrooming of the missionary genre in Ireland. Both responding and further fuelling what appears to have been an almost insatiable public appetite for mission-themed literature, a growing array of pamphlets, novels, almanacs and annuals helped to engage the masses in the missionary boom. The home-produced missionary periodical, however, continued to reign supreme. Reflecting the enormous success of this particular form in Ireland, at least ten more Irish congregations sought to emulate, or at least partially emulate, the success of the *African Missionary*, the *Far East* and the *Missionary Annals* by establishing their own propaganda organ. Emerging in two

⁹ Report of the eight General Chapter of the Mission Society held in Lyon from 5-10 Jul. 1937 (Society for African Missions Archive (SMAA), Cork, SMA General Assemblies file, 1937-89).

¹⁰ For an overview of the extensive body mission-themed content that was available in Ireland in 1932, see Stephen J. Brown SJ, *Catholic mission literature: a handlist* (Dublin, 1932).

¹¹ Hastings, *The Church in Africa*, p. 560.

further waves, three of these titles were launched between 1931 and 1940. The third and final flurry of titles emerged between 1946 and 1952.

Anchored in the chronological development of these two further waves of home-produced titles, this chapter explores both the boom of the Catholic missionary movement in Ireland and the suddenness of its end. Although certainly not devoid of content analysis, there is an emphasis on what could be described as the more technical aspects of these publications. Firstly focusing on the magazines launched in the 1930s, this chapter examines the smallness or perhaps the interconnectedness of the Irish Catholic missionary landscape. Acknowledging the fundamental influence of Bishop Joseph Shanahan, it scrutinises his role in focusing so much of Ireland's missionary output on the mission-fields of Nigeria. The emergence of the female-produced titles is also considered. The way in which gender both shaped these discourses and influenced its consumption is probed. This chapter then moves on to explore the impact of the Second World War on these publications and the titles that were launched following the conclusion of the conflict. Charting the post-war peak in circulation figures, it seeks to highlight the hitherto unrecognised magnitude of the popularity of the missionary magazine in Ireland. The dissemination of these titles beyond Irish shores is also addressed. Finally, this chapter uses the missionary magazine as a lens through which the decline of the Irish Catholic missionary movement can be charted.

Launched in 1931, *St Patrick's Missionary Bulletin* was the first in the second generation of home-produced periodicals to emerge. It was set up to support the recently established Society of St Patrick for Foreign Missions, who, owing to the place name of their headquarters in county Wicklow, were commonly known as the Kiltegans. The magazine was established a year before the formal canonical erection of the society which had been fittingly delayed until the 17 March 1932 and, as with the Eucharistic Congress held in Ireland that same year, was declared to mark the 1500th anniversary of the beginning of St Patrick's own mission to Ireland.¹² The origin of the society dated back to 1920 when giant of the Irish missionary movement, Joseph Shanahan, a member of the Holy Ghost society was ordained Bishop of Southern Nigeria in Maynooth College. On leave from the mission-field, Shanahan exploited his

¹² Edmund Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement: a historical survey, 1830-1980* (Dublin, 1990), p. 105.

presence in Ireland to firstly make an impassioned plea to the Irish Hierarchy and then to the college's seminarians with the hope of securing support and volunteers to further aid his missionary ambitions in Nigeria.¹³ Owing to the endorsement of the Irish episcopate and the national seminary, the similarities with the Maynooth Mission to China were openly acknowledged and even celebrated.¹⁴ Although not an official title, the society was also referred to as the Maynooth Mission to Africa.¹⁵ Taking further inspiration from the Columban's highly successful organisational structure, the Kiltigans also intended to devote themselves exclusively to mission work. With no schools in Ireland to supplement their income, provide a stream of recruits or public exposure, a popular periodical was fundamental to the success of the fledgling venture.¹⁶

Keenly aware of the urgent need to engage the laity, publication of *Saint Patrick's Missionary Bulletin* began whilst the society was still very much at a nascent stage. With only a handful of members and likely restricted funds, the periodical that emerged was rather less polished than its more established competitors. Compared with the increasing sophistication, at least in terms of appearance, of titles such as the *Missionary Annals*, the simple format of the Kiltigans' offering with its basic and at times uneven print was relatively crude.¹⁷ Despite this disadvantage the periodical enjoyed significant success. Merging the Irish Catholic take on the superior Irish 'Us' and inferior African 'Them' missionary narratives as developed in the *African Missionary* and *Missionary Annals* with an unashamed replication of practically all of the *Far East's* monetisation strategies, the bulletin quickly became a firm household favourite. Although launched into an increasingly competitive environment, the case for missionary engagement was, by 1931, well established amongst Irish Catholics. With growing public interest in the cause, this newest home-produced missionary title went from strength to strength. Initially launched as a quarterly, by 1935 it had evolved into a

¹³ Brendan O'Brien, 'Vocations' in Enda Watters (ed.), *Go teach all nations: a history of the Irish province of the Congregation of the Holy spirit* (Dublin, 2000), p. 339.

¹⁴ For the origins of the Kiltigans see Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement*, pp 99-100; for an example of the celebrated similarities with the Maynooth Mission to China see the lecture delivered by Fr Whitney, the society's first Superior General, as printed in *Anglo-Celt*, 11 Apr. 1931.

¹⁵ For further discussion on the early years of the society see Thomas Kiggins, *The Maynooth Mission to Africa: the Story of St Patrick's Missionary Society* (Dublin, 1991).

¹⁶ Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement*, pp 99-100; for an example of the celebrated similarities with the Maynooth Mission to China see the lecture delivered by Fr Whitney, the society's first Superior General as printed in *Anglo-Celt*, 11 Apr. 1931.

¹⁷ See, for example, *Saint Patricks Missionary Bulletin*, i, no. 3 (Sept. 1931).

monthly. That same year and selling for just two pence, it was recorded, according to Elizabeth Russell's examination of *Eason's Monthly Bulletin of Trade News*, as the bestselling monthly periodical.¹⁸ As with the Columbans, both the prestige and publicity value which it derived from its association with the Irish Hierarchy and Maynooth undoubtedly helped to drive up sales.¹⁹

Although evidently popular, Russell's findings should not of course be interpreted as proof that *St Patrick Missionary Bulletin* had overtaken its far more established competitors. Reliant on a myriad of distribution networks to reach the widest possible audience, newsagent sales constituted just one stream through which missionary magazines ended up in the hands of the reader. As discussed in chapter one, Ireland's Catholic school system was exploited by missionary societies as a convenient and cheap means of mass circulation that not only engaged generations of Irish children in the cause but also facilitated the presence of these periodicals, via the child, into countless Catholic households across the country.²⁰ With the aim of keeping costs to a minimum in order to secure the widest possible audience, 'Promoters' also played a significant role in disseminating the missionary magazine. Bulk orders were sent to these willing individuals who would then sell on single copies and annual subscriptions in their locality and workplace.²¹ Anecdotal evidence suggests that promoters often also took up position at the gates of the parish church making sales to those filing out of Mass. In December 1929 the *Far East* explained that henceforth, owing to costs of 'production, freight and commission charges', the price of individual copies bought from the newsagents or ordered directly from the society would increase from two-and-a-half pence to three pence. Those who went through a local promoter could, however, still obtain the magazine at the old rate.²² Taking an 'every copy counts' approach, readers of the home-produced missionary magazine were routinely implored not only to support the society by procuring subscribers amongst friends but to also officially take up the work of promoter.²³ However, bypassing all third parties, postal subscriptions sent

¹⁸ Elizabeth Russell, 'Holy crosses, guns and roses: themes in popular reading material' in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *Ireland in the 1930s* (Dublin, 1999), p. 21.

¹⁹ For discussion of these links see Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement*, p. 100.

²⁰ See chapter one for further discussion.

²¹ Survey on religious magazines conducted by Market Research Bureau of Ireland in 1969, July 1969 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 2).

²² *Far East*, xii, no. 12 (Dec. 1929).

²³ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, vii, no. 6 (Jun. 1925).

directly to the individual remained a vital means of distribution. In an attempt to lighten the considerable workload of maintaining an up-to-date database of the thousands who had prepaid subscriptions, readers were urged to keep track of when their renewal fee was due and to pay it promptly.²⁴

Despite making numerous changes to improve the physical qualities of the *St Patrick's Missionary Bulletin*, at the end of 1938 the Kiltegans relaunched their propaganda organ under the tile of *Africa*. Raising the price from two pence to three pence, by no means an insignificant increase in the context of the competitive missionary periodical market, the revamped publication was clearly an upgrade. Breaking away from the basic bulletin format that had helped to sustain the Kiltegans in their earliest years, the now flourishing society was emboldened to produce a larger glossier magazine that was easily comparable if not superior to its rivals. Whilst comprehensive circulation figures for *Africa* remain elusive, one estimate from 1969 put the figure at a massive 175,000.²⁵ It is most probable that circulation was even higher at the peak of Irish missionary zeal in the early 1960s. Despite its relatively late arrival to the market, it would appear that *Africa* quickly established itself as Ireland's second most popular home-produced missionary magazine, beaten only by the prodigious *Far East*.

The arrival of the *African Rosary* in 1936 marked a new departure in the Irish missionary print landscape. Launched by the Holy Rosary Sisters, this was Ireland's first home-produced missionary magazine published by a female congregation. From 1921 a mission-themed annual had been produced by the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny.²⁶ At the invitation of the Irish Holy Ghost Fathers, the French-founded congregation arrived in Ireland in 1860 to work as educators.²⁷ 'Pagan' missions had long been a key aspect of the Sisters of St Joseph's work. With the surge of Catholic missionary zeal, the Irish Sisters began to focus more intensely on forming female missionaries. Not widely known for this missionary work, it appears that their annual was primarily circulated amongst those with a connection to their schools. Another

²⁴ See, for example, *African Missionary*, xxxi, no. 4 (Apr. 1953).

²⁵ Survey on religious magazines conducted by Market Research Bureau of Ireland in 1969, July 1969 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 2).

²⁶ See, for example, *In the Mission Field*, i, (1921).

²⁷ Mary Therese Barber and Mary Delany, *A History of Gallen Priory, Ferbane, from the time of Saint Cynoc to the present day* (Ferbane, 2006), pp 8-11 available in the archives of the Srs of St Joseph of Cluny, Dublin.

congregation with an even lower public profile in Ireland, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary also launched an annual in 1934.²⁸ Founded by a French religious sister in India in the nineteenth century, the congregation established a novitiate in county Roscommon in 1903.²⁹ By virtue of the small scale and sometimes sporadic nature, such publications prove extremely difficult to fully trace. These two titles are, however, representative of the flurry of lesser known missionary publications that existed beyond the mainstream but nonetheless contributed to Ireland's Catholic missionary print culture.

The bi-monthly *African Rosary* was the first regular female addition to this expanding genre. Typical of a broader pattern within the modern missionary movement, it was Protestants who pioneered the use of female-produced and female-focused missionary magazines with titles such as the *Female Missionary Intelligencer*, *News of the Female Mission of the Church of Scotland* and the *Heathen Woman's Friend* appearing from the mid-nineteenth century.³⁰ Whilst the importance of Sisters to Catholic 'pagan' missions had long been highlighted in propaganda produced by mission-aid organisations such as the APF and individual societies of priests and Brothers, a subgenre of female specific Catholic missionary periodicals was relatively slow to emerge.³¹ According to Bernard Arens' 1925 *Manuel des Missions Catholiques*, in France, for example, thirty-seven home-produced mission-themed periodicals were published by male congregations with only three produced by Sisters. Holland's missionary sisters fared slightly better with four titles by women versus twenty-five titles produced by men. This disparity was not a reflection of the gender makeup of the missionary workforce. Arens estimated that in 1923 the number of European missionary priests stood at 9,196, the number European missionary brothers to be approximately 3,600 and the number European missionary sisters to be around 13,000.³² As Catholic missionary zeal continued to gather momentum this gulf lessened as increasing numbers of female congregations launched their own propaganda organs.

²⁸ *Franciscan Missionaries of Mary: at work in many lands* (1934), available in the Catholic Central Library.

²⁹ For discussion on the society's beginnings see, *Franciscan Missionaries of Mary: at work in many lands* (1935), available in the Catholic Central Library.

³⁰ Terry Barringer, 'What Mrs Jellyby might have read missionary periodicals: a neglected source' in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, xxxvii, no. 4 (winter, 2004), p. 48.

³¹ See for example, *Far East*, iii, no. 3 (Mar. 1920).

³² Bernard Arens, SJ, *Manuel des missions Catholiques* (Paris, 1925), p. 30, p.114, p.121; as per Arens's calculations, this figure includes those working in 'pagan' countries as well as countries of 'the Orient'.

Like the Kiltigans, the Holy Rosaries had been established in the 1920s under the impetus of the illustrious Joseph Shanahan, who, by then in his capacity as Bishop, sought Irish Religious Sisters to aid his missions in Nigeria.³³ Unlike the Kiltigans, as Ireland's first indigenous female congregation, the Holy Rosaries had no exact propaganda blueprint to follow. Although similarly able to boast of their Irish pedigree, as Sisters, the society was obviously unable to fully exploit the prestige associated with the priesthood. How the Irish laity would respond to a periodical produced by a female missionary congregation was not easy to predict. With the format so dependent on achieving mass circulation, the young congregation was seemingly hesitant to commit the substantial resources required to produce a regular periodical with no guarantee of return, hence the twelve year lag between the formal foundation of the society in 1924 and the appearance of the *African Rosary*.

Equally dependent on the laity for donations and vocations, during this interim twelve years the Holy Rosary Sisters instead engaged the public through a more circumspect promotional campaign. Pamphlets, letters of appeal, raffles and ephemera targeted at individuals and schools were just some of the ways that young society sustained itself.³⁴ Articles urging support were constantly placed in Irish Catholic and regional newspapers.³⁵ Despite having no regular propaganda organ, in the early 1930s the Holy Rosaries also established their own missionary club named the 'Missionary Union' with separate branches for adults and school children.³⁶ Owing to the Shanahan connection the young congregation benefitted from its links with the Holy Ghost Fathers who periodically included features on the sisters in their *Missionary Annals*.³⁷

Typical of the influence afforded to male clerics in female congregations, particularly in their formative years, future founding members of the Kiltigans Frs Whitney and Ronayne were appointed by Shanahan to oversee the Holy Rosaries' early promotional

³³ For a brief history of the Holy Rosary congregation see Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, pp 100-1.

³⁴ See, for examples, newsletters, circular letters and appeals (Holy Rosary Archive (HRA), MSHR 2/2/5/2-2/2/5/4).

³⁵ See, for examples, 'newspaper ads', 1928-1931 (HRA, MSHR 2/2/5/1).

³⁶ Missionary Union brochures, c. 1930 (HRA, MSHR/2/2/5/5).

³⁷ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, xiii, no. 4 (Apr. 1931).

endeavours.³⁸ Directing operations from the society's purpose built convent in Killeshandra, County Cavan, and featuring regularly in appeals, Whitney's name perhaps reassured donors that their alms were to be managed by a priest.³⁹ These campaigns yielded impressive results. Between 1924 and 1934 the society increased its personnel from seven to eighty-seven (48 professed and 39 in their Novitiate).⁴⁰ By the time the society mustered the confidence to launch the *African Rosary*, the basis of a mass sympathetic readership had already been cultivated.

With more than sufficient time to work out the plans and details for their propaganda organ, the magazine that eventually emerged was, from the outset, a relatively sophisticated production. Selling at a cost of threepence, this latest addition to Ireland's missionary periodical market was easily comparable to its already established competitors. Presented in a neat and regular format with plentiful illustrations and photographs, the *African Rosary* was very much typical of the genre in that it continued in the tradition of closely imitating other missionary magazines. Filled with tales from the mission field, denunciations of 'paganism', travel narratives, sentimentalised accounts of events within the society, appeals, promises of spiritual rewards, an Irish language feature and a children's section complete with puzzles and prizes, the magazine was in many respects nothing new.⁴¹

There was, however, a notable shift in emphasis. Whilst perpetuating the same racialised Us and Them narratives found in literature produced by male missionary societies, the *African Rosary* was very much centred around the concept of pagan female victimhood. What was a recurrent but minor theme in the titles such as the SMA's *African Missionary* was the major theme of the Holy Rosary's offering. This was, of course, hardly surprising. Reflective of the highly gendered division of missionary labour as discussed in chapter one, the primary function of missionary sisters was to work with women and children with the ultimate aim of forming 'ideal' Catholic wives who would become 'ideal' Catholic mothers who would then raise

³⁸ Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, p. 101.

³⁹ See, for example, circular letter, 14 Mar. 1929 (HRA, MSHR/2/2/A); in 1926, this role was taken over by a Holy Ghost priest, Fr Mellett, whose name was then used in promotional material see, for example, newsletter, dated 1926 (HRA, MSHR/2/2/5/2).

⁴⁰ 'History of the Congregation in periods', 1924-34', c. 1988 (HRA, 12/1/7).

⁴¹ See, for example, *African Rosary*, i, no. 1 (Aug.-Oct. 1936).

‘ideal’ Catholic families. The *African Rosary*, quite naturally, mirrored the work of its society. Typical of the wider Catholic and Protestant missionary genre, this ‘feminised’ version of the missionary message was intended to resonate especially with a female readership. Much in the same way Christian children were imagined to have a particular affinity for their ‘pagan’ counterparts, Christian women were portrayed as having a special sympathy for their ‘pagan sisters’ and, in what was deemed a natural extension of this, for their children too.⁴²

With a whole magazine to fill as opposed to a short pamphlet or the occasional inclusion of an article on female missionaries in male produced titles, the Holy Rosaries had the opportunity to further explain and stimulate interest in their work. Much of the content revolved around the society’s educational work and, in response to the Vatican removal of restrictions on religious involvement in medical work in 1936, growing endeavours in healthcare. As with the missionary priest, propagating Catholicism remained the utmost priority. Reminders that Sisters’ primary goal was to convert and aid conversion were a constant. One account of the society’s Catholic hospital, for example, detailed the case of a ‘pagan’ woman who was so ill and thin that she ‘seemed a living corpse’. With nothing to be done for the ‘poor creature’ she was told of the ‘Loving Father who would give her happiness in Heaven’. Reported to be so filled with ‘joy’ on hearing about the ‘mercy of God’ she was baptised and renamed Mary before dying.⁴³

Exemplifying the Eurocentric paternalism that seemingly characterised the Sisters interaction with their Nigerian pupils, the ‘repulsiveness’ of the ‘mass of ulcers’ that covered this dying woman was proclaimed to be especially edifying for the ‘little nurses’ they were training. Whilst the Irish Sisters, portrayed as paragons of female Catholic virtue, were deemed adept in dealing with ‘these very bad cases’, it allegedly had ‘a great effect’ on the Nigerian ‘girls’ who took from it a lesson on ‘why Our Lord said that Heaven was for those who when He was sick visited Him’. Further detailing the work of the ‘native nurse’, the author asserted that it was ‘not easy to get the necessity for sterilising instruments into their black, curly heads’. However, as was the case in discussions of the male African student the reader was always reminded of their

⁴² See, for example, *African Rosary*, iii, no. 1 (Nov.-Jan. 1938/9).

⁴³ *African Rosary*, i, no. 2 (Nov.-Jan. 1936/7).

potential. It was concluded that although requiring ‘constant supervision’, ‘the girls’ were in fact ‘really good’ at their work.⁴⁴

Characteristic of the ‘feminised’ versions of the missionary message, when read alongside its male-produced counterparts the overall tone of the *African Rosary* was notably ‘softer’. Reflecting the stereotypical ‘nurturing’ role associated with women and especially the Catholic sister, the magazine tended to emphasize the ‘silliness’ and ‘simplicity’ of the African ‘other’ as opposed to the ‘ferocity’ or ‘wickedness’. Whilst stories of necromancy and ‘savagery’ were by no means absent they not presented as something that the Sisters would challenge directly. If they did, it was usually within the somewhat protected confines of their hospital and to a lesser extent their schools. Far less inclined to tap into the intrepid adventurer tropes associated with the male missionary, the Sisters’ work with women and children was not presented as dangerous.⁴⁵ Missionary martyrdom was, for example, rarely mentioned. The criticisms of colonial government that had featured in the male-produced titles of the 1920s were also absent. This, however, was not a solely gendered phenomenon. As the 1930s progressed Irish missionary endeavours increasingly benefited from funding provided by colonial government. With missionary schools and hospitals in Africa increasingly dependent on these grants, voices of dissent largely disappeared.

The image of the ‘black baby’ was a central feature of this ‘feminine’ caring rhetoric. Photographs, drawings and descriptions of the ‘sweetest, most irresistible mites one could wish to see’ were a standard throughout. Seemingly mirroring the subject matter, accounts of the ‘Holy Innocent’s Hospice’, the society’s orphanage, were framed in an especially childlike tone.⁴⁶ Amusing anecdotes of the antics of the ‘big’ and ‘small’ ‘darkie babies’ who were declared to be ‘even more captivating’ than their white counterparts sat alongside pathetic reports of sick ‘tiny tots’ who reached the Sisters on the brink of death.⁴⁷ Whilst some made heart-warming recoveries, the Sisters had the ‘happiness’ of sending many ‘straight to heaven where they are now praying for all those generous Benefactors’.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ See, for example, *African Rosary*, ii, no. 1 (Aug.-Oct. 1937).

⁴⁶ See, for example, *African Rosary*, ii, no. 4 (Aug.-Oct. 1938).

⁴⁷ *African Rosary*, iii, no. 4 (Aug.-Oct. 1939).

⁴⁸ *African Rosary*, iii, no. 1 (Nov.-Jan. 1938/9).

As with their male-produced counterparts, the ‘black baby’ was an especially prominent feature of the *African Rosary*’s ‘Missioners Junior’ (MJ) section. Here, however, the discourse surrounding this already caricatured figure was subjected to what could perhaps be best described as glib commodification. Seemingly unaware or unconcerned with the religious and/or ethical constraints that had informed the notice placed in the 1924 edition of the *Far East* stating that the society could not accept money that had been sent expressly for the purpose of ‘buying’ a baby on the missions, the *African Rosary* sought to capitalize on the concept. Clearly inspired by the aforementioned scheme pioneered by the Irish Jesuit Fr Willie Doyle in the 1910s, the author of the children’s section declared ‘Do all M.J.’s know that you can *buy* [sic] a Black Baby for 2/6 and have it baptised and called whatever name you wish?’.⁴⁹ Just like the response to Doyle’s original venture, the offer proved enormously popular. Letters from individuals or school groups seeking to acquire a ‘black baby’ were a standard. One such request from a girl in Waterford, for example, stated: ‘Will you please buy four black babies for my class. We had not time to collect for one each, so some of us are sharing babies’. Further instruction declared that the infants were to be named Angela, Marie Therese, Magdalene and Mary Ursula.⁵⁰

With no inference that any supporter would ever actually physically ‘own’ the child, the act of choosing the name (or at least, a belief one was choosing the name) was the expression of ownership. Whilst the fundraising scheme itself appears to have been of Irish invention, the bestowal of Europeanised Christian names upon converted ‘pagans’ was not a novel idea. As demonstrated in the above discussion of the ill woman, it was a standard missionary practice. An articulation of the inherent power imbalance between conqueror and conquered – westerner and non-westerner – the act of naming or renaming, linguistic imperialism, has been long identified as a common tool of domination.⁵¹ It exemplifies just one of the many ways in which the goals and methods of colonial and missionary projects overlapped and blurred.

⁴⁹ *African Rosary*, iv, no. 10 (Feb.-Apr. 1942).

⁵⁰ *African Rosary*, i, no. 1 (Aug.-Oct. 1936).

⁵¹ For further discussion, see, for example, Durba Ghosh, ‘Decoding the nameless: gender, subjectivity, and historical methodologies in reading the archives of colonial India’ in Kathleen Wilson (ed.), *A new imperial history: culture, identity modernity, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004).

Although anecdotal recollections of Irish Catholic childhoods from the 1930s to 1960s often recall ‘buying’ and naming ‘black babies’, the *African Rosary* appears to have been somewhat of an outlier in this regard. With no reference to the practice in the Irish male home-produced titles, the extent to which it is remembered is not mirrored in the extent to which it featured in the wider Irish missionary periodical landscape. An acknowledgement of the especially blatant racist nature of the thought patterns underpinning the concept of a white western child, paying to name a black African child has likely influenced this high incidence of recollection.

With the ‘black baby’ deemed to hold a particular appeal for young girls who were often imagined to be experiencing their first pangs of maternal longing, a modified version of the scheme did, however, also feature in the *Medical Missionary of Mary* (MMM). Launched in 1940 as the bi-monthly propaganda organ of the similarly named Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMMs), it was the final title to emerge in this second wave of home-produced missionary magazines. As a congregation of missionary sisters, their publication very much conformed to the established gender-specific norms of missionary discourse.⁵² Whilst their children’s section made no mention of a scheme by which a reader could ‘buy’ as well as name an infant, it did, for example, declare that ‘black babies’ were ‘still going for 2/6 each’.⁵³ Although the price had remained the same since Doyle had launched his venture almost twenty years earlier, 2/6 or a half-crown remained a relatively significant sum. For the same price a child could instead opt to see a film, buy a paper back or choose from any number of dinky toys.⁵⁴ Perhaps owing to the lack of naming privileges, it would appear that the MMM’s take on the scheme was not particularly popular, referenced only occasionally in the magazine.

As signalled by their name, the MMMs had been set up specifically for the purpose of supplying missionary sisters who would engage potential ‘pagan’ converts through healthcare. It was the only Irish Catholic missionary congregation to focus exclusively on this type of work. Founded by wealthy Dublin woman, Marie (Mary) Martin, the society also had a strong Shanahan connection with Martin having volunteered as lay

⁵² See for example, *Medical Missionary of Mary*, i, no. 2 (Mar.-Apr. 1940).

⁵³ *Medical Missionary of Mary*, iv, no. 4 (Jul.-Aug. 1943).

⁵⁴ In 1940, a bar of dairy milk cost 4 ½ pence see, for example, *Irish Times*, 14 Dec. 1940; a child could therefore buy 6 chocolate bars and still have 3 pence change for the cost of ‘buying’ a black baby.

missionary in Nigeria under his tutelage in the early 1920s. With experience as a VAD during the Great War, Martin was determined to work in the pioneering field of Catholic missionary medicine. Although once positioned to become the Mother Superior of the Sisters of the Holy Rosary, Martin had left in 1925 when it appeared that they were destined to become a teaching as well as medical congregation.⁵⁵ Adding her voice to the growing chorus of Catholics calling for a change to the Vatican's restrictions on religious engaging in medical work, when Canon law was changed in 1936 Martin was poised to launch her own society. It was officially erected one year later. With *Propaganda Fide* now actively encouraging missionary sisters to train as nurses, midwives and doctors with an emphasis on engagement of mother and child, Martin could set about funding and manning her fledgling venture. The MMM formed a key part of a much broader and innovative propaganda strategy.⁵⁶

Although containing all the rudiments of a successful home-produced missionary magazine, the *MMM* was less attractive than many of its competitors. Priced at just two pence it was, however, one of the cheapest missionary titles on the Irish market. Content centred around the society's rapidly expanding medical endeavours both in Nigeria and at Our Lady of Lourdes hospital attached to the society's motherhouse in Drogheda, co. Louth for the purpose of training Sisters for the mission-field. Typical of the use of relevant biblical imagery in missionary propaganda, a picture of the pregnant Virgin Mary tending to her also pregnant cousin St Elizabeth adorned the cover of the *MMM* for the first fifteen years of publication.⁵⁷ In her recently completed doctoral thesis examining the MMMs, Ailish Veale has noted the centrality of this event known as the 'Visitation' in influencing 'the spiritual ethos, name, iconography and work' of the congregation. Exploring the wider context into which the MMMs was born, this thesis also highlights the relevance of the contemporary and growing popularity of Catholic Marian devotion in shaping this identity.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ailish Ellen Veale, 'It's all a matter of balanced tensions: Irish medical missionaries in Nigeria, 1937-1967' (Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2015), p. 67.

⁵⁶ For discussion of the wider development of the Catholic missionary medicine see, Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, pp 120-6.

⁵⁷ See for example, *Medical Missionary of Mary*, v, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 1944).

⁵⁸ Veale, 'It's all a matter of balanced tensions', pp 74-5.

It should of course be noted that this was certainly not unique to the MMMs. As briefly mentioned in chapter one, the Virgin Mary had long been identified as the paragon of Catholic womanhood. As virgin, mother, mother of God, queen and wife, Mary could be deemed to hold special significance for all manner of peoples and causes. With the boom in the cult of Mary, beginning in the nineteenth century and reaching its peak in the early 1960s, broadly coinciding with the boom of the modern Catholic missionary movement, Mary was readily adopted as a foundational icon for many of the newly established missionary societies the world over, particularly missionary sisters.⁵⁹ With the hugely popular prayer of the Holy Rosary considered an act of Marian veneration, the name of the Sisters of the Holy Rosary proudly proclaimed the society's affinity with the saint. As with the MMMs, the icon of Mary suffused the Holy Rosary's perception and projection of self and routinely featured in their propaganda. References, images, articles and prayers related to the 'Queen of the Most Holy Rosary' were a standard.⁶⁰

As with the glorification of the missionary priest in male-produced titles, both the *African Rosary* and the *MMM* may be read as one sustained ode to the missionary sister. Facilitating the preservation of the oft celebrated humility attributed to female religious, the most profuse articulations of admiration were the commendations offered by supportive bishops. Arguably even more keen than their male counterparts to flaunt their episcopal patrons in order to assert legitimacy, both female periodicals constantly featured relevant letters of approval as well as in-depth reports of celebrations which had been presided over by members of the Hierarchy. Taking just one of numerous examples, an early edition of the *African Rosary* featured a report on their recent 'Ceremonies of Profession and Reception' conducted by the 'Most Reverend Dr Kinane, Bishop of Waterford', the uncle of one of the newly professed. The local bishop of Kilmore, Dr Lyons, was also present but, outranked on this occasion, played only a minor role in the celebrations. The attendance of the society's founder, Bishop Shanahan and the Superior General of the Columbans, added further to the sense of

⁵⁹ In 1876, for example, The Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (Sœurs missionnaires de Notre-Dame) was founded in France with the aim of assisting the SMAs' endeavours; for further discussion on Marianism see James S. Donnelly, 'The peak of Marianism in Ireland, 1930-60' in Stewart Jay Brown and David William Miller (eds), *Piety and power in Ireland 1760-1960: essays in honour of Emmet Larkin* (Indiana, 2000), pp 252-83.

⁶⁰ See, for example, *African Rosary*, v, no. 16 (Oct.-Dec. 1943).

occasion. Typical of the addresses made at such events, Kinane devoted his sermon to detailing the ‘holiness and grandeur’ of the religious state, the virtues of the missionary sister and of the society itself. He asserted that by observing the three Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, the Sisters would enter a ‘state of perfection’.⁶¹

Tapping into many of the well-established tropes of the Irish missionary movement such episcopal commendations typically referenced Ireland’s ‘glorious’ missionary heritage with missionary sisters proclaimed to be ‘linked up in office and in full tradition with the great Irish Catholic Missionary Saints’.⁶² However, whilst such references to Irish exceptionalism were commonplace, the valorisation of the missionary sister was primarily centred around the idea of sacrifice. Just like the missionary priest, the rewards of this way of life were always emphasised. As declared in the *MMM*, ‘Their life is a life of self-sacrifice, one long act of charity, an active life, a hard but happy life’.⁶³ Expressing the same sentiment, Kinane concluded that ‘Many sacrifices have to be made – friends and home and country left, but the good Religious is amply compensated for all the sacrifices she is called upon to make. Even in this life, intimate union with her Spouse [Christ] is the cause of that true interior peace that is the envy of worldlings’.⁶⁴ Merging the idealised construction of the ‘unsullied’, pious and compliant female religious with all the ‘nobility’ of ‘pagan’ missionary endeavour, clerical supporters often presented missionary sister as ‘the cream of present-day womanhood’.⁶⁵

The act of tending to the physical needs of the sick added to the image of the saintly Sister. Esme Cleall, in her discussion of British female Protestant Missionaries of the nineteenth century, has noted how ‘Tales of white Christian women, associated with bodily as well as spiritual cleanliness, rushing to patients, kneeling beside them in poor, ‘dirty’ homes, and touching their wounds, were used to exemplify a ‘feminine compassion’.⁶⁶ Typical of the discursive crossover not only between missionary and imperialist discourses but also between Christian denominations, these same tropes

⁶¹ *African Rosary*, iii, no. 1 (Nov.-Jan. 1938/9).

⁶² *African Rosary*, vi, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1945).

⁶³ *Medical Missionary of Mary*, i, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb.1940).

⁶⁴ *African Rosary*, iii, no. 1 (Nov.-Jan. 1938/9).

⁶⁵ *African Rosary*, vi, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1945).

⁶⁶ Esme Cleall, *Missionary discourses of difference* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 90.

were absorbed into Catholic discourse on medical missions. They were a fundamental component of the rhetoric that featured in both the *African Rosary* and the *Medical Missionary of Mary*. With ‘devotion’, ‘generosity’, ‘gentleness’ and ‘patience’ Catholic Sisters tended not only to the ‘health of the of the body but the health of the soul’ too. Accounts of medical cases, such as the one of the dying woman discussed above, were simultaneously used to invoke pity for the ‘pagan’ and highlight the ‘great charity’ of the Sister who transforms the ‘unpleasant task’ of treating ‘tropical ulcers, sores and wounds’ into ‘one of love’.⁶⁷ Going beyond the confines of their hospitals and clinics, visits to ‘the hovels of the poor and the contaminated haunts of pestilence and plague’ further emphasised the Christ-like and/or Mary-like nature of their lives.⁶⁸

Reports of the Sisters’ work amongst ‘lepers’ reinforced the biblical framework of their endeavours. A relatively well developed subcategory in the field of missionary and colonial medicine, studies on the history of leprosy routinely note the prominence of the disease in western imaginings of the non-western world during the colonial era. As summarised by historian David Hardiman, ‘Missionaries saw leprosy in strongly biblical terms, as a malady of the cursed with its disfigured and crippled sufferers living in squalor and rags, crying out for Christ’s healing touch’. A longstanding cause of the Christian missionary revival, the disease gained significant publicity after a Belgian priest working in Hawaii contracted leprosy and subsequently died in 1889.⁶⁹ Although featuring in the first wave of Ireland’s home-produced missionary periodicals, the figure of the ‘leper’ received greater attention in both female-produced titles. Deemed the ‘ultimate test’ of a vocation, care of the stigmatised sufferers offered further proof of the ‘womanly endurance’ of the self-sacrificing missionary sister.⁷⁰ With the MMMs’ involvement in leprosy treatment intensifying after the Second World War, photographs of those disfigured by the disease became an increasingly prominent feature in their magazine.⁷¹

⁶⁷ *Medical Missionary of Mary*, i, no. 2 (Mar.-Apr. 1940).

⁶⁸ *Medical Missionary of Mary*, ii, no. 3 (May-Jun. 1941).

⁶⁹ David Hardiman, ‘Introduction’ in Hardiman (ed.), *Healing bodies, saving souls: medical missions in Asia and Africa* (New York, 2006), p. 33-4.

⁷⁰ *African Missionary*, iv, no. 4 (Aug.-Oct. 1940).

⁷¹ See, for example, *Medical Missionary of Mary*, vii, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1946).

For those sufficiently moved by the depictions of the angelic Sister tending to ‘the poorest, neediest and least of His brethren’ to consider devoting their life to the cause, both magazines periodically included direct discussions on vocations.⁷² Much like the calls for aspirants to the missionary priesthood, such features primarily emphasised the basic requirements of good intention and good health. Those who felt that they may have received ‘God’s call’ but remained uncertain were similarly assured that ‘a definite dread of the possibility’ was not abnormal.⁷³ However, in a notable divergence from the male-focused rhetoric, the vocation of missionary sister was also framed in terms of professional opportunity. Scholars of Irish women religious have warned of overemphasising socio-economic and cultural constraints to the detriment of less tangible concepts such as spiritual motivation in explaining one’s decision to join a religious institution.⁷⁴ However, both the Holy Rosary sisters and the MMM explicitly sought to exploit the concept of the missionary ‘career’ in a way that the male counterparts did not. Although always stressing ‘supernatural’ inspiration as a basic requirement, projections of the missionary vocation were also styled to appeal to those interested in an alternative to the ‘traditional’ role of woman as homemaker, wife and mother. A 1938 edition of the *African Rosary*, for example, loudly proclaimed: ‘Where There Are Vacancies! On the Missions! ... There is work waiting for all in hospital, clinic, dispensary, maternity and child welfare centres, in school and college, in creches and homes where the women are trained for marriage’.⁷⁵ Expressing the same sentiments, albeit more subtly, the *MMM* included constant descriptions and photographs of their Sisters engaged in ‘skilled professional work’ as well as references to a ‘missionary career’.⁷⁶

The construction of the missionary sister contained what seem to be, at least to the modern reader, a fundamental contradiction. Whilst working for organisations who had as their ultimate aim the formation of ‘ideal’ Catholic wives and mothers in Africa, the Sisters themselves had committed to the rejection of this life. Working as doctors, teachers, midwives etc., the missionary sister was celebrated as having at least some

⁷² *Medical Missionary of Mary*, i, no. 2 (Mar.-Apr. 1940).

⁷³ *African Rosary*, vi, no. 3 (Jul.-Sept. 1944).

⁷⁴ See, for example, Mary Peckham Magray, *The transforming power of nuns: women, religion and cultural change in Ireland 1750-1900* (Oxford, 1998), p. 33.

⁷⁵ *African Rosary*, ii, no. 4 (Aug.-Oct. 1938).

⁷⁶ See, for example, *Medical Missionary of Mary*, i, no 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1940).

degree of agency and independence that could be deemed at odds with the simultaneously trumpeted understanding of subservient womanhood. These observations are, of course, not revelatory. The same and similar tensions are commonly commented upon and explored in studies of all manner of Catholic women religious. Historians of the British Protestant missionary movement also routinely observe the contradiction posed by the growing number of single ‘lady missionaries’ who in their work advocated the ‘ideals’ of Victorian femininity which, by their very existence, they also challenged.⁷⁷

True to form, Irish Catholic missionary magazines paid no heed to any potential gender-based incongruities. It is in fact most likely however that no such incongruity was even perceived by those who produced or consumed these discourses. Wholly accepted as a natural component of Catholic life, communities of women religious much like the celibate priest were certainly not deemed a threat to prevailing gender ideals. As noted by Veale, motherhood and a female vocation were deemed kindred undertakings, both ‘seen as requiring similar virtues and sacrifices’.⁷⁸ Although working beyond the domestic sphere, by engaging in the ‘feminine’ tasks of tending to mother and baby, the sick and education of girls, Sisters were presented as champions of the foundational unit of Catholicism – the nuclear family. Very much in keeping with both the established gender hierarchy and patriarchal power structure of the Church, women religious, much like married woman, although proclaimed ‘exalted’ within their own ‘feminine’ domain were always depicted as the dutiful helpmate of the priest.

Further demonstrating the central role afforded to women religious in the Catholic vision for society, the *African Rosary* often detailed their Sisters’ efforts to train women for a ‘Native Sisterhood’. African women were, however, accepted by neither the MMM nor the Holy Rosary congregation proper until the 1950s.⁷⁹ Despite Rome’s commitment, or at least rhetorical commitment, to universality, sanction was still routinely granted for the establishment of distinct institutions for non-white Sisters. This practice was not a solely African phenomenon with examples of similar congregations

⁷⁷ See, for example, Jane Haggis, ‘Ironies of emancipation: changing configurations of ‘women’s work’ in the ‘mission of sisterhood to Indian women’ in *Feminist Review*, no. 65 (2000), pp 108-26.

⁷⁸ Veale, ‘It’s all a matter of balanced tensions’, p. 180.

⁷⁹ Barbra Mann Wall, *Into Africa: a transnational history of Catholic medical missions and social change* (London, 2015), pp 27-8.

founded across the ‘pagan’ world as well as in America.⁸⁰ At the behest of Bishop Charles Heerey, confrère and successor of Shanahan, in the late 1930s the Holy Rosary Sisters took up the responsibility of forming the aspirants of Nigeria’s second community of ‘native’ female religious – the Sisters of the Most Pure Heart of Mary. Declared to be going against ‘the whole traditions of their people, their customs of their race, to follow this attraction of virginity’, African Sisters were celebrated as ‘models’ for their fellow countrywomen. With African minds proclaimed ‘incapable of abstract thought’, ‘of their own race’ and ‘of their own country’, these Sisters provided a ‘concrete’ example of ‘living the virtues Christianity’. Reinforcing the western hierarchical division of races, it was presented as a given that African Sisters were in need of guidance and supervision from their white counterparts.⁸¹

Anchored in the constructions of the black baby, the pathetic sickly African, the saint-like Irish Sister and the goodly but impetuous pagan, the ‘feminised’ take on the home-produced missionary periodical proved popular. Whilst comprehensive circulation figures for these titles are particularly difficult to pin down, one year after its launch, the editor of the *African Rosary* made reference to the magazine’s ‘ten thousand readers’.⁸² Broadly in line with this claim, less than a year after its debut the *MMM* was recorded to have a circulation of 13,000.⁸³ In 1969, this *MMM* figure stood at approximately 40,000.⁸⁴ As with its rivals, circulation was most probably even higher during the peak of the Catholic missionary boom in the early 1960s. Although enjoying significant success, in the context of the Catholic missionary periodical market such figures were, however, by no means spectacular. As if mirroring the auxiliary role afforded to women and female religious in the Catholic vision of the world, male-produced titles dominated.⁸⁵ This was not a uniquely Irish nor missionary phenomenon. The same pattern occurred in other countries including France and Belgium and also reflected the dominance of the priest in the broader realm of Catholic publishing.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Brian Tittley, *Into silence and servitude: how American girls became nuns, 1945-1965* (Montreal, 2017), p. 21, p. 40.

⁸¹ *African Rosary*, viii, no. 3 (Jul.-Aug. 1946).

⁸² *African Rosary*, ii, no. 1 (Aug.-Oct. 1937).

⁸³ Letter from Mary Martin to Fr Kelly, 22 Oct. 1941 (MMM Archive, I/Cong/1(f)/ 20/21).

⁸⁴ Survey on religious magazines conducted by Market Research Bureau of Ireland in 1969, July 1969 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 2).

⁸⁵ To compare the figures of select female and male titles see *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Arens, *Manuel des missions Catholiques*, p. 363, p. 382; for further discussion on the circulation of French home-produced missionary periodicals see Claude Prudhomme, ‘De l’aide aux missions à l’action

The supremacy of the male-produced titles should of course not be interpreted as evidence of greater male interest in the missionary cause. The opposite was in fact true. As often noted in histories of periodicals, tracking exact consumption patterns proves an almost impossible task. Just because a person buys a magazine, it does not mean they read it. Just because a person does not buy a magazine, it does not mean that they did not read it. One missionary magazine may have had many readers in institutions such as convents. Conversely, it is plausible that many were purchased by those who felt obliged to do so and therefore ended up unread in the bin. However, examining donations lists printed within the magazine provides a useful indications of who was at least actively responding to the missionary appeals for financial support. A brief glance at practically any of these pages of acknowledgment reveal the disproportionality high levels of lay female support. One 1932 edition of *Saint Patrick Missionary Bulletin*, for example, acknowledges donations from 165 individuals. Of the 117 identifiable by either name or title, laywomen accounted for 58 of these entries. Laymen made up just 15, male clerics 24 and women religious 20.⁸⁷ A randomly chosen copy of the 1943 edition of the *Medical Missionary of Mary* shows a similar pattern. Of the 109 identifiable individuals 49 were laywomen compared to just 15 laymen. 22 contributions were sent in by male clerics, one by a Christian Brother and 22 by women religious.⁸⁸

As the Catholic missionary movement hurtled towards its apogee, female recruitment similarly began to significantly outstrip that of men. In 1951, for example, *Propaganda Fide* recorded that 1,589 Irish sisters, 807 Irish priests and 128 Irish Brothers were working in Africa as missionaries.⁸⁹ Again, this was not a peculiarly Irish or even Catholic trend with numerous scholars of the Protestant missionary movement exploring a similar surge in women serving the cause.⁹⁰

pour le tiers monde: quelle continuité?’ in *Le mouvement social: bulletin trimestriel de l’institut français d’histoire sociale*, iv, no. 6 (1996), pp 9-28, p. 13.

⁸⁷ *St Patrick’s Missionary Bulletin*, ii, no. 1 (Mar. 1932).

⁸⁸ *Medical Missionary of Mary*, iv, no. 2 (Jan.-Feb. 1943).

⁸⁹ Joseph McGlade, *The Missions: Africa and the Orient* (Dublin, 1967), p. 29.

⁹⁰ For further discussion see Deborah Gaitskell, ‘Rethinking gender roles: the field experience of women missionaries in South Africa’ in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The imperial horizons of British Protestant missions, 1880-1914* (Cambridge, 2003), pp 131-57.

Despite both the greater levels of female financial support and recruitment, male-produced titles remained the market leaders. Whilst the more sentimental ‘feminised’ rhetoric of the *African Rosary* and *Medical Missionary of Mary* was seemingly intended to tug at the heart strings of girls and women, the more ‘masculine’ discourse of the *Far East*, *African Missionary*, *Missionary Annals* and *Africa* also clearly resonated with a female readership. Eager to ensure the largest circulation possible, none of these magazines limited their potential appeal by explicitly gendering their imagined audience. All were welcome to read and all were more than welcome to donate. This trend very much fits with the ‘feminisation’ thesis. A widely applied concept, one of its core arguments contends that over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries females were far more active than males in their engagement with Christian Churches.⁹¹ However, as observed in a recently issued call for a more nuanced application of this thesis, the role of ‘masculinity’ must not be ignored. Greater female engagement with the ‘pagan’ missions, as in other forms of popular piety, did not translate into greater female power.⁹² The narratives produced by, about and for the missionary priest remained the most widely consumed version of Catholic missionary discourse in Ireland.

The outbreak of the Second World War had little impact on the overall missionary message. As with the Great War, the ‘unhappy conflict’ was seamlessly absorbed into the established missionary narratives, used to further warn of the perils of secularism and the need for Catholic missionaries. Typical of the way in which missionary propagandists refracted all through their own self-serving lens, a 1943 edition of the *Far East* declared

It is unquestionable that the extraordinary wave of missionary enthusiasm we in this country are now witnessing is the special work of Divine Providence, preparing Irish workers for the mission fields deprived by the war of their ordinary sources of supplies on the Continent ... It may well be, too, that it is for the prosecution of such all-important work our Country, in the designs of Providence, owes her preservation from embroilment in this almost universal war.⁹³

⁹¹ Patrick Pasture, ‘Beyond the feminisation thesis. Gendering the history of Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ in Patrick Pasture, Jan Art and Thomas Buerman et al (eds), *Beyond the feminization thesis: gender and Christianity in modern Europe* (Leuven, 2012), p. 9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹³ *Far East*, xxvi, no. 1 (Jan. 1943).

The physical form of the magazines was, however, notably affected by the war. Providence, it would seem, could not shelter even missionary propagandists from the Emergency resource shortages. As the conflict progressed and paper became increasingly scarce, missionary magazines, like other periodicals produced in Ireland, were forced to cut down on the number of pages per issue. The Kiltigans' *Africa*, for example, which was launched in late 1938 as a sixteen page production was by 1944 whittled down to half its original size. The quality of the paper used also declined. Dubbed the 'paper famine' by the *Far East*, the impact was felt most acutely from 1942 when shortages worsened.⁹⁴

In May of that year, the editor of the *Missionary Annals* sent a letter to a Mr Flanagan in the Department of Supplies outlining all the reasons his magazine should be granted the permit that was now seemingly required to continue publication. With reference to a previous interaction with Flanagan, it would appear that the Holy Ghost men had been directed as to what they should state in their application. In making his eleven point case the editor firstly pointed to the moral imperative. He asserted that 'Support of the Missions is a primary Christian duty. We feel that a Govt. [sic] so professedly Christian as our own will be anxious to do everything reasonable to facilitate this work'. Noting the unwillingness or inability of many other nations to send missionaries during the war, the editor asked 'Will we stint paper for this noble purpose when it is so often liberally used for the secular press etc.?' He further added that if the secular papers get 'preferential allowances before our magazine, we rightly protest'. Moving on to somewhat more practical matters, it was noted that 'Our Propaganda Work is organised on basis of sale of our "Annals". To reduce us is to injure us seriously'. He explained how the vast majority of their sales relied upon 'Prepaid Circulation' and the obligation the society had to fulfil these subscriptions. Detailing sacrifices already made, the editor pointed out that up until May 1940 they had been publishing a twenty-four page magazine. This was then reduced to '10 sheets'[twenty pages], then '8 sheets' and then to their current number of '6 sheets'. The 'correspondingly worsening of quality of paper' was also mentioned. Concluding his case for a permit to continue publishing as a six sheet periodical for 'an indefinite period', the editor argued that 'We have been in existence for 23 years, and can claim some priority on that score. Several journals have

⁹⁴ *Far East*, xxv, no. 6 (June 1942); Bryce Evans, *Ireland during the Second World War: farewell to Plato's Cave* (Manchester, 2014), p. 126

appeared merely within the last few years'. As a final note he added that 'We contribute very considerable quantities of waste paper to the accredited merchants'. The *Missionary Annals* remained in print for the remainder of the war and so it would seem that the editor's application had been a success.

Indicative of the importance of Bishop Shanahan, following his death on Christmas day 1943 the Holy Rosary sisters dedicated an entire edition of their *African Rosary* 'In memorium' of their founder. Filled with photographs, anecdotes and accounts of the 'peerless leader of men', this glowing eulogy venerated both the man himself and 'the immensity of his contribution to the real history of the world'. Summing up his missionary labours one article proclaimed that in his twenty-five years of working in Southern Nigeria Shanahan 'transformed what was a desert of paganism into what the late Pope Pius XI – his intimate friend – described as the "fairest flower of the missionary world"'. Whilst such relentless praise was standard fare when it came to memorializing the heroes of the missionary movement, the physical appearance of the magazine was striking. Although produced in the midst of the Emergency, this 'Special Edition' had all the trappings of a high-quality pre-wartime publication. A full eight pages longer than the by then standard sixteen-page *African Rosary*, printed on thick glossy paper and wrapped in an even more luxurious cover, the Holy Rosary Sisters somehow managed to pull out all the stops to pay fitting tribute to Shanahan.⁹⁵ How exactly they achieved this remains unclear. Printed by Cahill & Co, Ltd. in Dublin 8, the same company used by a number of missionary organisations including the Holy Ghost Fathers, the *African Rosary* was usually limited by the same Emergency paper rationing as its rivals. Whilst merely intended to honour the 'magnificent' Shanahan, another interpretation of this 'Special Edition' could also read it as a testament to both the Sisters' resourcefulness and perhaps a demonstration of their capacity or willingness to pull strings, be they within government, the Hierarchy or elsewhere.

As the shortages of the Emergency era began to abate, the third and final wave of Ireland's Catholic home-produced missionary periodicals appeared. This post-war flurry saw at least five more titles emerge. *Brief*, the first of these magazines, was launched in 1946 to support the Irish province of the Franciscans who had sent friars to

⁹⁵ *African Rosary*, vi no. 2 (Apr.-Jun. 1944).

China in 1935. In the early 1950s they, along with all other Christian missionaries, were expelled from China and so the Order instead began to concentrate its missionary efforts on Africa.⁹⁶ In 1949, the male Irish Augustinians upgraded from a feature in the society's general magazine *Good Counsel* to the focus of *Augustinian Mission News*. Like the Franciscans, the male Irish Augustinians were not an exclusively missionary organisation. They had also arrived relatively late to 'pagan' missionary endeavour. Setting off for Nigeria in 1939, they added further to the concentration of Irish missionaries already there.⁹⁷ Both *Brief* and *Augustinian Mission News* were typical of the genre.⁹⁸ However, as latecomers, by the time they were launched the market for missionary periodicals was considered by many to be saturated.⁹⁹ This, it would seem, affected circulation. Whilst exact figures again remain elusive, the circulation of *Brief* for 1971 was reported to be 31,000.¹⁰⁰ In the mid-1970s the figure for *Augustinian Mission News* stood at 22,000.¹⁰¹

The remaining three magazines were produced by female congregations. The first, the *Eastern Star*, was launched in 1947 by the Missionary Sisters of St Columban (SSC).¹⁰² Set up in 1922, the purpose of the society was to provide female missionaries who would aid the Columban Fathers through educational and healthcare endeavours.¹⁰³ Although benefitting from periodical promotion in the *Far East*, the Sisters also sought to maximize support by launching their own title. One early edition of their magazine explained that although working in 'cordial cooperation' with the Columban Fathers, the SSC were responsible for their own finances. Unlike the advantage afforded to their priestly counterparts who could 'plead from the pulpit', missionary sisters enjoyed no such luxury.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁶ 'Call to mission' (<https://www.franciscans.ie/call-to-mission/>) (4 Feb. 2019).

⁹⁷ Phillip E. McWilliams, 'Augustinian Friars/Hermits' in William M. Johnston (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Monasticism* (London, 2000), p. 105.

⁹⁸ See, for examples, *Augustinian Mission News*, i, no 2 (Jun. 1949); *Brief*, x, no. 1 (Jan. 1954).

⁹⁹ For discussion of the opinion that there were too many missionary magazines in circulation see *African Rosary*, iii, no. 1 (Nov.-Jan. 1938).

¹⁰⁰ 1972 *Institute of Public Administration Yearbook* (Dublin, 1971), p. 176.

¹⁰¹ Undated photocopy of circulation seemingly taken from *Institute of Public Administration Yearbook* c. 1974/5 (Spiritan Archive, Dublin, Missionary Annals Editors' papers, box 5).

¹⁰² The name *Eastern Star* was changed to *Star of the East* in 1950.

¹⁰³ *Eastern Star*, i, no. 1 (Aug.-Sept. 1947).

¹⁰⁴ *Eastern Star*, ii, no. 6 (Jun.-Jul. 1949).

In 1948 the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) followed suit and launched *Tidings*.¹⁰⁵ Like the SSC, the OLA had been founded with an affiliation to a male missionary congregation. Set up in 1876 by the first superior general of the SMA, the Sisters followed the priests to Cork in 1887.¹⁰⁶ *Oriflamme* was the final title to emerge.¹⁰⁷ Launched in 1952 by the Sisters of St Louis (SSL), another society of French origin, they had arrived in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century to work in education. As with male religious institutions who had not been founded specifically for missionary endeavour, the SSL were latecomers to the movement. Responding to growing zeal for the cause, from 1948 they began to dispatch Sisters to help ‘reap the harvest’ in Ireland’s principal missionary pasture – Nigeria and later also to Ghana.¹⁰⁸

Following the by now well-established ‘feminised’ missionary formula these additions to the periodical market were intended to appeal especially but not exclusively to a female readership. Replicating practically all of the same stereotypes, tropes and narratives found in the *African Rosary* and *MMM*, the very first edition of *Tidings*, for example, declared the vocation of a missionary sister as ‘A Career for You!’.¹⁰⁹ As with the *Far East*, the *Eastern Star*, was, however, focused on their mission-fields in Asia. Accordingly, the Columban Sisters’ periodical was bereft of the enormously popular figure of the ‘black baby’. Content instead revolved around their work with women and children in China and with the expansion of their endeavours also increasingly included their efforts in other countries including Burma and the Philippines.¹¹⁰ The *Daystar* must also be added to this list. The propaganda organ of the Franciscan Missionaries for Africa (FMSA), the magazine had been in print under a slightly different title since 1935. However, it was for many years published from the society’s headquarters in England.¹¹¹ It would seem that when the Irish branch of the Sisters broke away from the Motherhouse in mid-1952, they took up producing the magazine from their foundation in Dundalk, county Louth.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, *Tidings*, i, no. 2 (Xmas, 1948).

¹⁰⁶ Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, p. 49, p. 85.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, *Oriflamme* (Mar. 1956).

¹⁰⁸ Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement*, p. 121.

¹⁰⁹ *Tidings*, i, no. 1 (1948).

¹¹⁰ See, for example, *Eastern Star*, i, no. 1 (Aug.-Sept. 1947).

¹¹¹ See, for example, *Daystar in Uganda* (Jul. 1937).

¹¹² See, for example, *Daystar*, xvi, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1959).

Much like the publications produced by the Franciscans and Augustinians, despite containing all the requisite features of a successful home-produced missionary magazines, these periodicals never came close to reaching the huge circulation figures achieved by first and second wave titles. In addition to their late arrival to the market, they were undoubtedly further disadvantaged by the general preference for male-produced titles. At its peak in 1962 the OLA's *Tidings* had, for example, a circulation of just 18,000. Whilst this figure was less than a tenth of that achieved by the giants of the genre, it was certainly not insignificant. When placed in the context of the broader periodical market, 18,000 was not insubstantial.¹¹³ By way of comparison, the much more widely remembered *Capuchin Annual* which was published between 1930 and 1977 had a peak circulation of 25,000.¹¹⁴ In 1955 *Ireland's Own*, considered to be a widely popular publication, had a circulation of 37,958.¹¹⁵

It should be noted that in 1953 the Irish branch of the Society for the Divine Word also began publishing a periodical entitled *The Word*. Founded in the Netherlands in 1875 by a German priest, the main function of the society was to train men for the missions. As mentioned in chapter one and signalled by their name, the SVD considered themselves specialist in the printed works.¹¹⁶ Prolific producers of Catholic missionary literature, upon the establishment of an American branch at the end of the nineteenth century they began publishing texts in English. Although primarily intended to arouse the sympathies of an American readership, their English-language texts were also disseminated further afield and contributed to the tentative growth of Ireland's Catholic missionary zeal in the early twentieth century.¹¹⁷ Like many other Catholic congregations, the SVD was eager to gain a foothold in Ireland with the hope of tapping the country's abundance of vocations. After a drawn out effort, they finally succeeded and were granted permission by the Bishop of Elphin, Edward Doorley, to open a Novitiate in Donamon Castle in county Roscommon in 1938.¹¹⁸ Whilst the English branch of the SVD had been producing a magazine called *The Word* for a number of years, its Irish audience was

¹¹³ 'Report on *Tidings*', 1984 (OLAA, *Tidings* file).

¹¹⁴ Figure taken from Sonya Perkins, 'Where and what is Ireland?: Fr Senan and the *Capuchin Annual*, 1930-54' in Mark O'Brien and Felix Larkin (eds), *Periodicals and journalism in twentieth-century Ireland: writing against the grain* (Dublin, 2014), p. 143.

¹¹⁵ This figure has been taken from Caitriona Clear, *Women's voices in Ireland: women's magazines in the 1950s and 60s* (London, 2016), p. 137.

¹¹⁶ Dermot Walshe, *Divine Word Missionaries in Ireland* (Roscommon, 1995), p. 8.

¹¹⁷ For further discussion see chapter one.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 9-20.

considered too limited. And so, with the aim of improving its appeal amongst Catholic Ireland's mission-minded laity, control of the publication was transferred to staff in Roscommon. The relaunched title proved an enormous success.¹¹⁹ Whilst concrete figures remain elusive, one source asserts that in 1969 circulation stood at approximately 76,000.¹²⁰ Speaking on the passing of the magazine's long serving editor in 2012, Br Paul Hurley, the Acting Provincial Superior, Dr Vincent Twomey stated that circulation had peaked at approximately 250,000 with 170,000 of those copies being sold in Ireland and Britain.¹²¹

It would seem that the lifecycle of this periodical differed from that of Ireland's other home-produced missionary titles. Although published by a missionary society with the aim of supporting its work, and therefore quite naturally remembered as a missionary magazine, *The Word* was something of a special case. Elaborating on the history of the publication and with reference to Hurley's success in securing an interview with Seán Lemass in 1966, Twomey further asserted that 'At the time *The Word* was the most prestigious pictorial magazine in Ireland and Britain – either secular or religious'.¹²² Whilst the veracity of this claim remains unproven, with no children's section, donor acknowledgement lists, puzzles or even prizes, the *Word* certainly did not conform to the tried and tested missionary formula. Printed on high-quality glossy paper at society headquarters in Holland and filled with lavish illustrations and photographs, the appearance of the magazine was also appreciably more attractive than that of other missionary propaganda organs.¹²³

Although not devoid of mission-themed content, it was not the sole focus of the publication. The first edition, for example, included an article on astronomy in the Vatican, the life stories of Sir Walter Scott, Bing Crosby and Peig Sayers, a report on 'Famous Dwarfs', a review of Vienna's Cathedrals and a piece on violin making.¹²⁴ In contrast, as the Irish missionary boom progressed, the standard home-produced titles

¹¹⁹ Walshe, *Divine Word Missionaries*, pp 80-1.

¹²⁰ Survey on religious magazines conducted by Market Research Bureau of Ireland in 1969, July 1969 (Spiran Archive, Editors' papers, box 2). Information on the circulation of the *Word* proves difficult to pin down;

¹²¹ Information on these figures has proved difficult to trace; the source used here was found online: 'Tribute to Brother Paul Hurley' (<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/21320>) (3 Apr. 2019).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ See, for example, *The Word* (Jun. 1953).

¹²⁴ *The Word* (May, 1953).

became notably more insular. The updates and reports from across the missionary and Catholic world that had featured in the early years of the first wave titles became more and more infrequent. This was very much in line with the oft-noted self-congratulatory inward moral turn that increasingly came to characterise Irish Catholic culture in the first decades of independence. And yet, arguably a small example of a rejection of this introspection, *The Word* thrived. This was all the more significant given its higher cost. With an annual subscription costing seven shillings and sixpence it was significantly more expensive than many other missionary magazines.¹²⁵ The same year the yearly price for the *African Missionary* stood at three shillings.¹²⁶ The cheapest of all the missionary periodicals, the APF's *Catholic Missions*, cost just one shilling and fourpence per year.¹²⁷ Taken together, one is left with the impression that people actively chose and wanted to read *The Word*. Sales were not incentivised by subscriber lists or gimmicks. Late to the missionary periodical market, the sophisticated format and up-to-date, stimulating and innovative content of this more expensive, unusual publication nevertheless clearly appealed to consumers.

Although a dominant force in the realms of both popular and intellectual Catholic publishing, the Jesuits were not confident in their ability to break into the Irish missionary periodical market. The society had however continued to hold influence over the aforementioned *St Joseph's Sheaf* which remained under the editorship of a string of Jesuit priests.¹²⁸ Over the course of the Catholic missionary boom, the magazine enjoyed a significant growth in circulation. Breaking away from its earlier emphasis on attracting support from the upper echelons and likely influenced by the populist approach being taken by Ireland's other missionary bodies, in the 1920s St Joseph's Young Priest Society sought to expand its support base. Two cheaper levels of membership were added, one costing five shillings per annum, the other just one.¹²⁹ Although 'pagan' missions remained a mainstay, in the early 1930s the nature of the society began to respond to the rise of Catholic Action and vocationalism. Reflecting this shift from a solely missionary focus, in 1933 readers were informed of the decision to expand their acceptance criteria. In addition to considering applications from those

¹²⁵ *The Word* (Jul. 1953).

¹²⁶ *African Missionary*, xxxi, no. 4 (Apr. 1953).

¹²⁷ *Catholic Missions*, cxvii, no. 2 (Apr. 1953).

¹²⁸ For further discussion see chapter one.

¹²⁹ *St Joseph's Sheaf*, xvii, no. 131 (Sept. 1927).

seeking to fund their training as missionary priests, they would now also fund those destined to serve the Church at home and ‘indigenous’ candidates wishing to train for their ‘native Church’. Vocationalism also affected the structure of the society and therefore the means by which its magazine was sold. Branches were set up to harness the support of those in specific occupations. By 1944 fifteen of the society’s twenty-five branches were attached to particular professions including teachers, civil servants, the licensed trade and the Gardaí.¹³⁰

Relatively unaffected by the ravages of the Second World War, in the aftermath of the conflict the Irish Jesuits were called upon to commit further energies to ‘pagan’ missionary work. Tasked with the burden of funding these expanding endeavours T.J. Martin, the Procurator of the society’s foreign mission office, had to grapple with the ‘recurrent suggestion’ made from within the organisation that the Irish Jesuits should launch their own home-produced missionary magazine. Considering the merits and demerits of this idea, in 1949 Martin emphatically concluded that this market was already saturated. Echoing the same sentiment that had existed for a number of years not only in Ireland but across the Catholic world, he asserted that ‘People express annoyance when another Mission Magazine is mentioned for there are too many in circulation’.¹³¹ He also went to great pains to stress to his superiors the enormity of the workload involved in producing a regular missionary magazine. He declared that the task of building up a satisfactory circulation would in itself be a ‘difficult, wearisome and expensive business’.¹³² In order to attract support for their missionary work, Martin argued that it would far more effective to place relevant inserts into their already hugely popular magazines the *Sacred Heart Messenger* and the *Madonna*. With a combined estimated circulation of 320,000 it was deemed that this method would garner much more immediate results.¹³³ Heeding Martin’s advice, the Irish Jesuits never launched their own missionary title and instead relied upon a host of less taxing promotional methods that could exploit their already established distribution networks.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ As listed in *St Joseph’s Sheaf*, xxv, no. 194 (Sept.-Dec. 1944); between 1930 and 1938 membership of the SJYPS civil service branch rose reportedly rose from 2,500 to 7,500, see *Irish Times*, 5 Dec. 1938.

¹³¹ ‘Memo: points concerning leaflet’, c. 1949 (Irish Jesuit Archive (IJA), ADMN/44/4/9/5 23).

¹³² T. J. Martin to The Provincial, 20 Jun. 1929 (IJA, ADMN/44/4/9 3).

¹³³ ‘Memo: proposed scheme of propaganda for Irish Jesuit Mission to China’ (IJA, ADMN/44/4/9 3).

¹³⁴ See, for example, T. J. Martin to The Provincial, 16 Oct. 1950 (IJA/ADMN/44/4/9/3 28).

Whilst the Irish Jesuits may or may not have been able to make a success of their own missionary title, Martin was certainly correct in his estimation of the huge commitment it would entail. Relevant surviving editors' papers are testament to the relentless nature of the effort required to continuously produce these periodicals. In addition to creating the actual magazine, the editor, often with the help of just one or two others, was also charged with carrying out a plethora of other labour intensive tasks. Up-to-date lists of promoters and subscribers had to be maintained. Donations had to be recorded and acknowledged. Printers had to be paid. Advertisement space had to be sold. The reliance on a mass readership translated into vast levels of correspondence that had to be opened, sorted and sometimes replied to.¹³⁵ It was, however, the lack of source material that appears to have caused the most frustration. This was by no means a uniquely Irish or even Catholic problem. A common complaint in Christian missionary organisations of seemingly all denominations, once out on the field missionaries were quick to forget the plight of the propaganda team back home. Despite regular requests and reminders, those toiling on the missions often neglected to send written reports, updates or stories that could be used for promotion. A problem as old as the missionary periodical itself, in 1828 Joseph Rosati, a missionary bishop working in America, observed the dearth of information flowing from those in his own mission-field to the editors of the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* in France. Pondering the cause he astutely concluded that 'The reason of the silence of most of our priests is, I believe, the persuasion which they have of the little interest which an account of their labours, could excite the faithful in Europe, who generally expect to find something very extraordinary in the occupation of a missionary living at the extremity of the civilized world'.¹³⁶ More than a century later this very sentiment was routinely echoed by those writing home to explain their reluctance to put pen to paper for propaganda purposes.¹³⁷

Indicative of the universality of this issue one 1928 edition of *Saint Joseph's Sheaf* heralded the recent advent of *Propaganda Fide's* 'Press Agency' as a solution. It declared that 'Every Editor of every missionary review the whole world over must have

¹³⁵ See, for examples, the boxes containing editors' papers in the Spirtan Archive for an insight into the level of work required to produce these titles.

¹³⁶ Taken from letter composed by Bishop Rosati dated 3 Aug. 1828 and quoted in Edward Hickey, *The Society for the Propagation of the Faith: its foundation, organization and success* (Baltimore, 1922), p. 171.

¹³⁷ See, for example, the complaint made by Columban priest in Fr Daniel Conneley to Fr James Kielt, 23 Sept. 1959 (CFCA, IEI/10).

been blessing the *Fides Press Agency*. It has come like a ray of light and life and hope to many a worried and busy organiser'.¹³⁸ Relaying mission-related news from across the world using a simple bulletin format, the agency certainly proved useful. The problem was, however, not fully solved. Individual missionaries remained reluctant to submit pieces for publication. In 1959 the editor of the *Far East*, for example, exclaimed that he was at his 'wits end trying to get material'. T.J. Martin struggled even to secure sufficient information to fill his much shorter pamphlets. Making a complaint to his superior he declared that his colleagues had been 'deplorably neglectful in providing me with material for publication'. Until the situation improved he noted that he was forced to 'dig up some old tale from material published years ago'.¹³⁹

This ongoing battle to ensure a steady line of relevant information from the frontline undoubtedly contributed to the especially repetitive and imitative nature of the home-produced missionary magazine. Bereft of sufficient original material, editors routinely sought inspiration from other missionary and religious titles. Exceptionally preserved, the numerous boxes of editors' papers found in the Holy Ghosts' archive give an insight into the extensive catalogue of publications to which the team producing the *Missionary Annals* turned for ideas. A wide-range of works produced under the auspices of the APF, the bulletins of the Fides Press Agency and pamphlets generated by other Irish missionary bodies were amassed. Despite the French origins of the society, English-language publications dominate the collection. Material produced by American-based missionary organisations, including the SVD, the Maryknoll society who worked in China and the Josephites who sought to evangelize America's black population, was also routinely saved.¹⁴⁰

This was not a one-way system. Although primarily intended to appeal to Ireland's Catholic laity, propaganda produced by Irish mission-sending bodies commonly ended up abroad and thus contributed to the broader exchange of ideas. For more than a decade after the launch of its debut edition in 1914 the SMA's *African Missionary*, for example, listed subscription rates for those living in the United States and France¹⁴¹.

¹³⁸ *Saint Joseph's Sheaf*, xvii, no. 134 (Jun. 1928).

¹³⁹ Letter from T.J. Martin to the Provincial, 29 Sept. 1970 (IJA, ADMN/44/4/9/3 110).

¹⁴⁰ See, for examples, 'editors papers, 1930s-1950s' (Spiritan Archive, editors papers, 1930s-1950s).

¹⁴¹ See, for examples, *African Missionary*, no. 5 (Jan.-Feb. 1915); *African Missionary*, no. 72 (Mar.-Apr. 1926).

The regular acknowledgment of contributions made by those with Irish sounding names living in places such as Liverpool, London and Glasgow also indicate the circulation of Irish-produced missionary titles amongst Irish emigrant communities in Britain.¹⁴² Missionary bodies, just like countless other organisations looking to fund their respective endeavours, made special efforts to tap American wealth. As observed by one German Jesuit missionary who took up promotional work with the American branch of the APF in the 1920s, ‘America looms on the horizon of every Missionary’s vision as the newly discovered gold-field, the New El Dorado, which must bring them salvation in the stress of their present critical financial situation and secure the needful for the future’.¹⁴³ Seeking to optimize their success in this market, in 1922 the Holy Ghosts applied to have their *Missionary Annals* qualify under recently passed legislation for ‘mailing at special rate of posting’. With this status quickly granted, the society could henceforth circulate its propaganda organ to a State-side readership at the lowest possible cost.¹⁴⁴

True to form, the Columbans proved particularly adept in exploiting the American laity. Typical of the approach taken by Irish organisations fundraising in the ‘New El Dorado’, their appeals primarily targeted the Irish-American diaspora. With the aim of maximizing income, just a few months after the debut of the Irish-produced *Far East* in 1918 the society launched a separate American-produced *Far East* intended to appeal specifically to that audience. In 1920 an Australian edition of the *Far East* followed.¹⁴⁵ Similarly hoping to reach the pockets of those with Irish roots, the Columbans’ success in Australia owed much to their connection with the Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, who had previously served as president of Maynooth College – the birthplace of their organisation. In 1919 the society had launched a Spanish version of the *Far East* in Argentina with the same purpose of harnessing support amongst the country’s Irish diaspora. Unable to rouse sufficient interest, the venture failed and was quickly terminated.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² See, for examples, *Far East*, x, no. 10 (Oct.1922); *African*, i, no. 3 (Mar. 1939); *Medical Missionary of Mary*, iii, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1942); *African Missionary*, xxxii, no. 9 (Nov. 1954).

¹⁴³ Fr T. Vander Schueren, *The Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith: thoughts and observations* (c. 1928) p. 14, available in the Central Catholic Library bound in Foreign Missions 10.

¹⁴⁴ The application of this ‘special rate’ is referenced in *Missionary Annals*, xlv, no. 2 (Feb. 1962).

¹⁴⁵ R.G. Tiedemann, *Reference guide to Christian missionary societies in China from the sixteenth to the twentieth century* (New York, 2009), p. 25.

¹⁴⁶ Angelyn Dries, *Be centred in Christ and not in self, the missionary society of Saint Columban: the North American Story (1918-2018)* (Bloomington, 2017), p. 199.

Spin-off publications had long been a feature of both the modern Catholic and Protestant missionary movements. As mentioned in chapter one, forty-five years after establishing the French version of the *Annales* the APF also launched the illustrated weekly *Missions Catholiques*. Similarly seeking to maximize lay engagement, in 1956 the Holy Rosary Sisters set up a magazine intended to further cultivate support amongst a juvenile readership. Perhaps owing to the substantial effort involved in producing these publications, it would appear that the venture was short-lived and was wound down after a few short years.¹⁴⁷ Unperturbed, in 1958 the society launched yet another periodical. Entitled *Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary*, this quarterly was aimed specifically at an American readership.¹⁴⁸ As one of number of Irish missionary bodies to gain an official foothold in America in the 1950s, the Holy Rosary Sisters had been granted permission to establish a house in the archdiocese of Philadelphia in 1951.¹⁴⁹ Just like the Columbans, by launching an American orientated magazine the sisters sought to make the most of their opportunity.

Reflecting the inextricable connection between the missionary movement and its periodicals, as Irish Catholic missionary zeal reached its zenith in the 1950s and early 1960s so too did the missionary magazine. With a seemingly insatiable public appetite for all things missionary, the circulation of the missionary periodical continued to soar. Using extant information, it would not be unreasonable to estimate that at their peak the Irish home-produced missionary periodicals had a combined circulation of approximately 800,000 in Ireland alone.¹⁵⁰ Differing substantially in format, quality and content to what could be considered its rivals, the SVD's highly successful title *The Word* is not included in this estimation nor are publications imported from outside of Ireland.

In addition, the consumption of periodicals produced by mission-aid organisations also reached a climax during this period. Although circulation figures for magazines

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, *Missionary Junior*, i, no. 1, (Oct. 1956).

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, *Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary*, i, no. 2 (Summer, 1958), available in the HRA archive.

¹⁴⁹ 'History' (<https://www.mshr.org/history/>) (1 Dec. 2018).

¹⁵⁰ This is a conservative estimate and has been based upon the circulation figures given in the *Institute of Public Administration, yearbook and diary, 1972* (Dublin, 1971), pp 176-7 and figures given in annotations on religious magazine survey, 1969 (Spartan Archive, Editors' papers, box 2).

produced by these organisations prove particularly difficult to pin down, it is highly probable that the growth of their support bases translated into a greater interest in their publications. The Association of the Holy Childhood, for example, was reported to have 250,000 members in 1958.¹⁵¹ Its ‘parent’ organisation the APF enjoyed even greater success. In 1952 Ireland’s contribution to the cause stood at a massive £95,000. The following year the society’s periodical *Catholic Missions* declared that ‘20% of Ireland’s adult Catholic population’ to be members of their organisation. Ten years later this figure was reported to have risen even higher reaching a massive thirty percent.¹⁵² Whilst members were still required to donate a halfpenny each week it would appear that this no longer automatically entitled one to a free copy of their periodical. However, it is reasonably logical to assume that in the context of surging missionary enthusiasm and increasing donations that the circulation of *Catholic Missions* also grew.

The 1960s witnessed the abrupt end of Ireland’s missionary golden era. Surviving circulation figures of the SMA’s *African Missionary* chart the sudden downturn in popular enthusiasm for the cause. In 1961 circulation increased by an impressive 5,118. The following year this slowed to a growth of 2,149. In 1963 it expanded by only 266. 1964 marked a turning point. Sales dropped by 4,021 and continued to fall by an average of 3,300 per year until 1973 when the rate of decline slowed.¹⁵³ All of its rivals with the exception of the atypical *Word* suffered the same fate. The OLA’s *Tidings*, for example, went from a circulation of 18,000 in 1962 to less than half that figure in under a decade.¹⁵⁴

In retrospect this plunge in popular support may be read not only against the backdrop of the broad ranging societal paradigm shifts of the 1960s, but also in the more specific context of the concurrent upheavals within the Catholic Church associated with the Second Vatican Council. Announced by Pope John XXIII in 1959 and held between 1962 and 1965, the Council marked a crucial period in the history of Catholicism. Whilst scholars routinely debate the extent to which the momentous convocation was a top-down or grass roots led initiative, it is widely accepted as the Church’s response to

¹⁵¹ *Irish Press*, 16 Dec. 1938.

¹⁵² As reported in *Africa*, xxv, no. 7 (Oct. 1936).

¹⁵³ Report of editor of the *African Missionary* to the annual recruitment meeting, Blackrock, 1 Dec. 1973 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 5).

¹⁵⁴ Report on *Tidings*, undated c. 1975 (OLA Archive (OLAA), *Tidings* file).

the expansive cultural changes which occurred in the aftermath of the Second World War. The official findings of the Council as well as the more general spirit of *aggiornamento* (modernisation) which it engendered dramatically altered the Catholic lay experience.¹⁵⁵ An unforeseen and unintended casualty of this overhaul, the modern Catholic missionary movement as a whole was plummeted into crisis.¹⁵⁶ With the ‘renewed’ Church now espousing the virtues of ecumenism and confirming that eternal salvation was no longer the sole preserve of those of the Catholic faith, the entire concept of ‘pagan’ missions was fundamentally undermined.¹⁵⁷ The fate of the ‘black baby’, the goodly Chinese and all the other major and minor ‘pagan’ characters of the missionary magazine was no longer deemed to be hanging so urgently in the balance.

In addition to defanging the principle justification on which ‘pagan’ missionary endeavour was predicated, the missionary cause was further injured by the simultaneous change in attitudes surrounding popular piety. The general demotion of paraliturgical activities impacted ‘the missions’ significantly. In the context of the ‘modernised’ and streamlined Catholicism set out by the Council, devotional practices such as the myriad expressions of Marianism became increasingly considered relics of a bygone era. Whilst the Council did not expressly condemn devotionism, it stressed the centrality of the liturgy, Mass and especially Sunday Mass in the life of the Catholic.¹⁵⁸ The decline in support for missions must also be read as a part of the wider drop off in paraliturgical practices. The drop-off in sales of the missionary magazine was arguably the first tangible evidence of an Irish response to this broader shift in Catholic behaviours.

Whilst historical analyses of the Second Vatican Council often point to signs in the years and even decades leading up to the assembly that forewarned of the sea change to come, the Irish missionary community was caught completely unawares.¹⁵⁹ They were of course not alone in this regard. Catholics and Catholic institutions the world over similarly grappled to come to terms with the greatest reforms to the faith since the

¹⁵⁵ For in-depth discussion of these shifts in Ireland see Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: the undoing of a culture* (Dublin, 2002).

¹⁵⁶ For discussion of the origins of this crisis of legitimacy within the movement see Prudhomme, *De l’aide aux mission*’, pp 9-28.

¹⁵⁷ Daniel A. Keating, ‘Mission and evangelisation’ in Lewis Ayres and Medi Ann Volpe (eds), *The Oxford handbook of Catholic theology* (Oxford, 2019), pp 329-40.

¹⁵⁸ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950*.

¹⁵⁹ For one of many texts discussing the lead up to Vatican II see Giuliana Chamedes, *A twentieth century crusade: the Vatican’s battle to remake Christian Europe* (London, 2019).

Council of Trent some four hundred year earlier. So dependent on maintaining mass circulations to sustain their society's respective endeavours, the editors of the missionary magazines were unsurprisingly alarmed by the declining public support. They were also perplexed as to its cause. From the editors' perspective their publications had kept pace with the modern world.

The post-war growth in African nationalism and the accompanying shifts in western discourse surrounding the African other had, for example, a notable impact on the Irish missionary magazines. Over the course of the 1950s and 60s, missionary rhetoric took on what could perhaps be best described as a more respectful tone. The most derogatory constructions of the savage, unintelligent and weak-willed African featured less and less. Emphasis, particularly in the male-produced titles, instead began to increasingly focus on the African man as the future leader of his newly independent country. The Eurocentric underpinnings of the missionary message although presented more subtly did however remain largely intact. In addition to triumphantly proclaiming the role of the westerners, the Irish and Catholic missionaries in educating Africa's political elite, the magazines continuously warned of the ongoing need for missionary intervention. This was particularly evident in discussions of the Catholic African Hierarchy. Summarising this attitude one 1957 edition of *Africa* asserted that it will only be 'with the aid of missionaries who have brought the Faith to them' that the African clergy will 'only after many years be able to take control of the government of the Church completely'.¹⁶⁰

In addition to keeping readers abreast of each society's growing number of mission fields, the post-war missionary magazine also absorbed surging western anxieties about communism into their discourses. As with numerous other threats that had gone before, including the two world wars, the 'red scare' was easily absorbed into the missionary narrative. Clearly influenced by broader discourses on the subject communism was routinely denounced. Catholicism and Catholic missionaries were presented as a much needed bulwark against this 'virus of division'. It must be noted, however, that discussions of this threat were relatively muted in both the *Far East* and *Eastern Star*. This is particularly surprising given that the Columbans were most affected by the

¹⁶⁰ *Africa*, xix, no. 6 (Aug.-Sept. 1957).

growth of communism, firstly in their primary mission-field of China from which they were officially expelled in 1952 and also in a number of other Asian countries to which they had expanded most notably the Philippines and Korea. The deaths of seven of the society's priests in the Korean War, were for, example, reported in the *Far East* with a detached calmness. Whilst regrets and the known facts of how the men died were relayed, they were not accompanied by a diatribe against communism. Readers were informed that 'While the present outlook may be dark I really think this country will find its feet again ... While lives may have been lost there is great consolation in the fact that the Korean Clergy and Catholics stood their ground so well during the past few months'.¹⁶¹ The exact reason as to why the magazines did not fully exploit its opportunities to proclaim the perils of communism and thus further legitimize the existence of its society remains unclear.

Whilst in some respects the content of the missionary magazine had kept up-to-date with the world around it, discussions surrounding ecumenism are testament to the difficulties experienced by the missionary movement in trying reposition itself as relevant in the 'renewed' Church. One 1963 edition of *Africa*, for example, asserted that 'the ecumenical idea is one of the most significant and heartening things to come from the bewildered and rather frightening times we live in'. Attempting to challenge established missionary narratives, it added that 'in many ways the Mohammedans, among all the great non-Christian religions, are our nearest neighbour'. Arguing the case for reconciliation between the two religions, and in the same breath undermining its own argument, the article also reminded readers of numerous historical atrocities carried out by Muslims against Christians.¹⁶² With no mention of offences carried out by Christians against Muslims, a very un-ecumenical sense of resentment clearly persisted.

With sales continuing to fall, the editors of a number of Ireland's home-produced missionary magazines decided to join forces to collectively seek out ways to halt this decline and so in 1966 or early 1967 Missionary Magazine Editors' Association (MMEA) was formed. Made up of representatives from at least ten of the country's Catholic mission-sending institutions, consensus quickly emerged. Poor standards were

¹⁶¹ *Far East*, xxxiv, no. 1 (Jan. 1951); *Far East* xxxiv no. 2 (Feb. 1951).

¹⁶² *Africa*, xxv, no. 2 (Mar. 1963).

identified as the major cause of the decline in circulation. Members agreed on 'the pressing need to improve the quality and format of their publications if they are to increase their readership, or, in many cases hold their existing readership.'¹⁶³ Stiff 'competition from television and from glossier and secular publications' was seen as exacerbating the problem.

The way forward as set out by the association's Chairman was relatively simple: missionary magazines must compete with the rising standards of their secular counterparts by becoming 'more informative and attractive'. In order to achieve this 'professional training' would be required. To rectify their 'inadequacies ... the Editor needs special expertise in editorial composition, magazine lay-out, condensing of matter, finance, type-face, printing etc. He needs the ability to give an exact directive to contributors on the mission field as to what the magazine requires.'¹⁶⁴ Revealing a hint of resignation, the Chairman further added that failure to improve the missionary magazine 'must ultimately hasten its extinction'.¹⁶⁵ This sense of inevitably and almost-prophetic insight into the fate of the missionary magazine was, however, rare during this period.

Seemingly unable, or unwilling, to engage with the broader problems, the editors concentrated their efforts on producing more appealing publications. This is perhaps understandable. With the onset of the wider Vatican II-induced existential missionary crisis, this was at least one definable and rectifiable problem.¹⁶⁶ The rationale for focusing on quality was also obvious. Ireland's Catholic missionary magazines had never fully recovered from the Emergency era shortages. Whilst the number of pages was restored, the quality of paper used retained a cheap and flimsy appearance. The standard of content, which in part owing to communication difficulties, also suffered during the war had never fully recovered either.¹⁶⁷ The articles, stories and letters that made up the magazines became notably more superficial in tone. Features of a more anthropological or intellectual bent such as discussions on native beliefs became a rarity. The magazines of the 1930s were appreciably more dynamic than their 1950s

¹⁶³ Minutes of MMEA, 7 Sept. 1967, (Spirtan Archive, Editor's papers, box 3).

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ See, for examples, *Far East*, xxxiv, no. 6 (Jun. 1951); *African Missionary*, xxxii, no. 9 (Nov. 1954).

counterparts. None of this, however, had mattered at the peak of the Catholic missionary golden era. By then such an unquestionably integral facet of Irish Catholic culture circulations of the missionary magazine continued to soar. Now confronted with the demise of their publications, this decline in quality provided the editors with a much needed explanation to their woes.

Propelled by a sense of urgency, the Holy Ghost Fathers set to work immediately. An internal commission was formed to investigate options for the society's *Missionary Annals*. The resultant report considered a range of ways in which the design, content and printing could be improved. The finances and pricing structure of the magazine were also examined. Concerned about the costs that an upgrade would entail, in 1966 the society began a push to find advertisers. Whilst the *Far East* had sold advertisement space since its launch and nearly all of Ireland's other missionary titles had followed suit, by the mid-1960s it would appear that the Holy Ghost had largely eschewed this stream of revenue. Twenty-five Dublin-based advertisement agencies were amongst those contacted in the bid to revivify it. A letter drawn up to entice businesses explained that 'The Missionary Annals, the family magazine rated highest in its class by a recent survey, now in its 42nd year, is to be modernised to meet present-day requirements'. Reflecting the genre's predominantly female readership, the letter further added that 'It is planned to publish a brighter, more colourful, livelier journal carrying a wide variety of interesting and controversial subjects, including an up-to-the minute women's section, embracing knitting, fashion, child care, house craft, beauty, films etc.' With circulation declared to be standing at 79,000 it further asserted that 'at least 150,000 adult females' read the magazine each month.¹⁶⁸

Hoping to add weight to these claims the Holy Ghost applied for a certificate from the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC). Issued in 1967, the society was likely disappointed by its circulation figures which for the first half of the previous year were recorded at an average just under 70,000. Their vigorous efforts to improve their propaganda organ was, however, having an impact. True to their word both quality and content improved dramatically. A number of articles written by renowned author John B. Keane, were, for

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, G. Kavanagh to Mr. Fitzpatrick, 6 Jul. 1966 (Spiritan, Archive, Editors' papers, box 9).

example featured alongside the promised female-specific pieces.¹⁶⁹ The ABC certificate issued the following year noted that average circulation was now standing at an impressive 81,380.¹⁷⁰

In May 1967 the editor received a letter which hints at the doggedness with which the revival of the magazine was pursued. Written by the director of Kennedy's baking and confection company based in Dublin 1, it stated

Thank you for your letter of the 3rd. instant, with which you returned our donation, and in which you expressed your regret and displeasure that we have reluctantly decided to discontinue our advertising in *Missionary Annals*. In the circumstances, we feel that the matter should be the subject of further discussion with our Advertising Agents, and we are arranging to review the position with them.¹⁷¹

This brief resurgence was short-lived. The Holy Ghost's 1970 Chapter decided that the *Missionary Annals* which had existed for fifty years should be scrapped and replaced with a 'renewed' magazine. In 1971 *Mission Outlook* was launched. Once again joining the downward trajectory experienced by most of its rivals, in 1972 circulation was just 65,000.¹⁷² That same year the circulation of the *Far East* was reported to be 194,000.¹⁷³ In 1969 this figure had stood at approximately 225,000.¹⁷⁴ The figure given for *Africa* in 1972 was 160,000, down from 175,000 in 1969.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, in 1972 the *African Missionary* stood at 44,656.¹⁷⁶ In 1969 it had been approximately 56,000.¹⁷⁷ Although certainly still substantial, the ongoing erosion of these figures was a clear indicator of the massive shift in public attitudes towards the concept of Catholic missionary endeavour. The missions and their magazines increasingly became associated with an Ireland of the past.

¹⁶⁹ List of sixteen features submitted by Keane between 1966 and 1968 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 6).

¹⁷⁰ ABC certificate, 1967 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 9).

¹⁷¹ Peter Kennedy to Fr Sheridan, 9 May. 1967 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 8).

¹⁷² ABC Certificate (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 5).

¹⁷³ *1972 Yearbook*, p. 176. This figure refers to circulation in England and Ireland.

¹⁷⁴ Annotations on religious magazine survey, 1969 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 2). Again, this figure refers to circulation in England and Ireland.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *1972 Yearbook*, p. 176.

¹⁷⁷ Annotations on religious magazine survey, 1969 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 2).

As circulation continued to decline members of the MMEA became increasingly frustrated.¹⁷⁸ Whilst the association remained focused on improving missionary magazines through a variety of training courses and seminars, a growing sense of dissatisfaction and discord emerged. As members were undertaking efforts to revive the fortunes of their publications a sense of anger emerged from within the missionary movement itself. Much of this anger was directed at the missionary magazine.¹⁷⁹ As the 1960s came to a close, the shift in public opinion away from missionary activity in favour of aid provided by the emergent NGO sector had become obvious.¹⁸⁰ Missionary organisations and their missionaries struggled to make sense of this sudden change. Less than ten years earlier ‘the missions’ in Ireland were booming, enjoying unquestioned public adulation. Missionaries were held up as heroes and presented as the pride of Ireland. The teachings and the attitudes of the Second Vatican Council called into question the ‘very method of missioning’.¹⁸¹ With public support wavering Irish missionary societies scrambled to reformulate their image. The missionary magazine was identified as a major cause this decline in support and subjected to particularly ‘trenchant criticisms’.¹⁸² These internal criticisms contended that the missionary societies and missionaries had been let down by the missionary magazine. One editor summed up the general nature of these angry assessments:

Some have allegedly lost touch with the missionaries for whom they speak. They are accused of over simplification of not telling it like it is, of being oily public relations pieces and begging pages. They are not, it is said, on today’s mission problems for our people at home, glossing over more complicated facts that might reduce contributions or vocations. While they have used abject poverty pictures to attract contributions without any sensitivity to the peoples thus exposed ...¹⁸³

Whilst the missionary magazine had provided amply in the pre-Vatican II era by the end of the 1960s many missionaries viewed it as a very public reminder of the now outmoded nature of Catholic missions. A sense of ‘apathy or even opposition’ to the

¹⁷⁸ See, for example, minutes of MMEA, c. 1970, (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 5).

¹⁷⁹ See, for example, the report on the Missionary National Study Week in *Irish Independent*, 5 Sept. 1968.

¹⁸⁰ Kevin O’Sullivan, “‘Ah Ireland the Caring Nation’: Foreign Aid and Irish State Identity in the Long 1970s’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii, no. 151 (May 2013), p. 479.

¹⁸¹ Enda McDonagh to Fr James Kielt, 13 Jan. 1968 (Columban Fathers’ Central Archives (CFCA), IEI/50).

¹⁸² *Irish Independent*, 5 Sept. 1968.

¹⁸³ Presentation by Fr Jim Sheerin entitled ‘Writing for the Mission Magazine’, c. 1972 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 5).

publications emerged within some congregations.¹⁸⁴ According to this viewpoint the problem was not the missions themselves but how the missions were presented. This take on the situation is perhaps very understandable, or at least very human. Many of those launching these criticisms had spent much of their lives devoted to the conversion of ‘pagans’, toiling for years in undeveloped and often hostile countries thousands of miles from home. The impact of the sudden collapse of Irish missionary confidence on these individuals is difficult to comprehend. Directing anger at the missionary magazine was arguably an expression of unwillingness, or more likely inability, to fully accept the dramatic shift in lay and papal attitudes towards missionary endeavour.

In the face of this internal backlash solving the problem of the missionary magazine seemed much more complex than simply undertaking training courses. In 1970, one editor asserted that the missionary magazine situation had ‘more angles than a car load of broken glass’.¹⁸⁵ Conflicting opinions emerged over the achievements of the MMEA. Some felt that despite their efforts, missionary publications had actually ‘deteriorated all round’. Others objected arguing that their work had in fact been ‘very successful’.¹⁸⁶ Whatever the outcome, it was clear that editors had invested significant time and energy into improving their publications. The missionary magazine of the 1960s differed substantially from the publications of the golden era. Whilst the purpose of the magazine remained focused on attracting vocations and donations the images of the ‘black babies’, ‘savage pagans’, and ‘leper colonies’ was replaced by the language of the NGOs with an emphasis on development and social justice. Fulfilling one of the MMEA’s primary aims these updated discourses were presented in a much ‘glossier’ format.¹⁸⁷ However, in the wake of the stream of continuous criticisms all agreed that there was a ‘lack of appreciation for the work done by missionary magazines on the part of superiors and brethren.’ The members felt that their work was disregarded and ‘not given the moral and financial support given to other areas of missionary activity’.¹⁸⁸ In 1973, in response to this internal disdain, the editor of the SMA publication concluded that:

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Minutes of MMEA, c. 1970, (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 5).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ See, for examples, *Medical Missionary of Mary*, xxviii, no. 1 (Nov. 1967); *Africa*, xxxvi, no. 10 (Oct. 1968).

¹⁸⁸ Minutes of MMEA, 16 Dec. 1972 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 5).

if we are ashamed to promote the magazine or don't think it worth the effort, then we should wind it up immediately rather than let it dribble along. Personally I believe in the magazine but only if the society believes in it. Otherwise my position as editor is just impossible¹⁸⁹

One possible alternative was given serious consideration – a common missionary magazine. This proposal would see the independent periodicals merge into one united publication. The idea had originally been attempted in France in 1952 and 1962 but on both occasions failed to get off the ground.¹⁹⁰ The first common missionary magazine, *Kontinente*, was eventually launched in Germany in 1966. Started by only four institutes within two years the publication had expanded to encompass twelve missionary organisations with a circulation of 200,000.¹⁹¹ A united French magazine was then successfully introduced in 1967 with the launch of the monthly *Peuples de Monde*. This French effort represented nineteen organisations, absorbing some of the most popular missionary periodicals in France. In 1968 the Dutch followed suit with the amalgamation of more than fifteen magazines. Numerous other European countries including Belgium, England, and Italy began to consider the option. The idea of a common missionary magazine had been circulating amongst Irish missionary editors from the mid-1960s.¹⁹² In October 1967, Fr Fergus Duffy, a Columban trained in journalism, was dispatched to Europe to examine these amalgamated efforts on behalf of the MMEA.¹⁹³ Reporting back to the association Duffy spoke enthusiastically about what he had found. He set out the significant attractions of such an undertaking. Firstly, the fusion of the missionary magazines could be regarded as a response to the Second Vatican Council's 'clear call for co-operation among missionary bodies'. It was also seen as a way to improve public perception of the missions as a disjointed and therefore as ineffective means of aid, presenting missionaries as 'co-workers' as opposed to 'competitors'. Duffy noted that all he spoke to during his investigations had been 'dissatisfied with the old situation'. The experience of France, Germany, and Holland was almost identical to Irish situation. Continental missionary editors felt there had

¹⁸⁹ Report of editor of the *African Missionary* to the annual recruitment meeting, Blackrock, 1 Dec. 1973 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 5).

¹⁹⁰ Duffy published an article based on his report to the MMEA see Fergus Duffy, 'United European Missionary Magazine' in *The Furrow*, xix, no. 3 (Mar. 1968), pp 131-7.

¹⁹¹ Report from the board set up to consider the possibility of a common magazine for England and Wales, 25 Jan. 1968 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 14).

¹⁹² Fr Sheridan to Fr Ralph which mentions common magazine, 6 Sept. 1969 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 2).

¹⁹³ Minutes of MMEA, 7 Sept. 1967 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 3).

been “‘too many’” magazines” that “‘were poor in appearance and in content’”. They asserted that the ‘Good Catholic families’ who bought them only did so out of a sense of obligation. By pooling their resources they could ‘turn out a review comparable in quality and attractiveness with the those of the secular press’. As presented by Duffy, these news European titles seemed to achieve exactly what the MMEA were struggling to reach. They reflected the ‘current scene’ and brought ‘the missionary relevance’ to the ‘world of today’. Unlike publications of old they were bold and were not afraid to take on ‘live topics that the individual magazine cannot or dare not tackle.’ The Dutch publication went as far as including ‘ecumenical news and reports of the Protestant missions’.¹⁹⁴

Despite repeated discussions about an amalgamation of Irish missionary magazines the idea never gained sufficient support. Irish missionary congregations continued to ‘cling to the old, well proved ways’.¹⁹⁵ In 1973, Fr Pat O’Toole of the *African Missionary* declared that the idea of a united publication ‘so fashionable a few years back, is now dead. They tried it on the Continent and it failed’.¹⁹⁶ This pronouncement came only five years after Duffy’s glowing report. According to O’Toole, the ‘common substituted magazine never reached the circulation of even the most popular missionary magazine suppressed.’ It would appear that the hesitation and caution of the Irish missionary editors paid off as ‘all’ societies involved in a united production had once again ‘started bringing out their own Newsletters, a few timid pages at first, then more pages and finally new magazines’.¹⁹⁷

For Irish missionary societies the independent magazine was simply too precious to forfeit. Despite falling sales these publications remained a vital propaganda organ.. Reflecting the continued importance of popular periodicals to ‘the missions’ in Ireland, the editor noted that the magazine was ‘the only means of communication between us and our legion of followers’, he predicted that it would remain ‘a valuable source of vocations’ and thus ‘the profitability in financial terms is not the most important

¹⁹⁴ Duffy, ‘United European Missionary Magazine’, pp 131-7

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Report of editor of the *African Missionary* to the annual recruitment meeting, Blackrock, 1 Dec. 1973 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 5).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

factor'.¹⁹⁸ By the end of the 1970s the urgency of the missionary magazine situation had dissipated. In 1979 the Chairman of the MMEA asserted that the association's quarterly meetings 'no longer seem to play an important part' with 'fewer, and fewer' members attending.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Report on *Mission Outlook*, 197 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 5).

¹⁹⁹ MMEA Chairman's report for 1978/9 (Spiritan Archive, Editors' papers, box 5).

Chapter three

Beyond the magazine

Writing in 1968 under the auspices of the Fides Press Agency – the Vatican’s official missionary news service – Joseph Kelly, a Holy Ghost priest, published a lengthy article entitled ‘Organisation of Missionary Activity’. Opening his discussion of finances he declared: ‘It is almost a mystery how Missions are supported at present. Even many of us who are in them would be hard put at the end of the year to say where the finance came from that was needed to run them over the past months’.¹ Attempting to provide at least a partial answer, Kelly noted the work of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith (APF) in collecting and distributing funds, the income generated by Mass stipends, stole fees and the contributions made by converts on the mission-field.² These sources were, however, just the tip of an enormous iceberg. As quickly revealed by a visit to the archives of any of the numerous Catholic missionary bodies in Ireland, Kelly’s assessment was correct. Funding the missions was a highly convoluted business. As the golden era of the modern Catholic missionary movement progressed and each society sought out new revenue streams to fund their expanding endeavours, these finances became increasingly complex. Unpicking this labyrinth of missionary income and expenditure proves a difficult task. Unlike the APF who, in line with other international mission-aid organisations including the Association of the Holy Childhood, regularly published the minutiae of their accounts as a matter of principle, Ireland’s missionary congregations felt no such obligation.³ It would seem that bookkeeping was not an especially high priority for these organisations. Whilst it is plausible that meticulous records of all monies coming in and out are locked away in archival vaults inaccessible to researchers, extensive examinations of the papers that are available would suggest that this is not the case. Further confirming Kelly’s analysis, the prevalence of partial accounts scribbled at the bottom of loose pages, on torn up bits of cardboard or in half-used copybooks within these archives are illustrative of a somewhat haphazard approach to finances. The occasional more detailed records documenting changes in incomings and outgoings from one year to the next provide a

¹ International Fides Service Bulletin, 26 Feb. 1968, iv, no. 58 (Spiritan Archive, Paris, IEL.2.1).

² Ibid.

³ For an example of the publication of finances see *Catholic Missions*, xcvi, no. 11 (Apr. 1935).

particularly useful snapshot into the ways by which missionary congregations sustained themselves.⁴

Designated under the single title of ‘Propaganda’ or sometimes ‘Promotion’, the search for donations and vocations went hand in hand. There was often little delineation as to where the quest for one began and the other ended. For example, by encouraging children to act as fundraising agents, the individual society sought to secure a useful stream of immediate income, establish a more long-term habit of supporting their work and plant the seed of vocations which may pay dividends in years to come. This amalgamation of goals further complicated the financial affairs of a mission-sending body. The sum of a society’s promotional activities could not be broken down into a simple cost and return formula. Value in terms of future recruitment as well as the less tangible concept of general publicity had to be considered.

Each society usually had two, three or four members appointed to the role of ‘propaganda’. In many cases these individuals were chosen because their health could no longer withstand life on the mission-field. Sometimes they were picked for their special talent in the art of fundraising. As with those who worked on producing the missionary magazine, ‘propaganda’ was not considered the most fulfilling job by those who had signed up with the intention of spending their life in a faraway land.⁵ The vow or rule of obedience often came into play. Mother and General Superiors were not above getting involved in this work. This was especially true for younger congregations who were often operating on a more precarious financial footing than their more established rivals.⁶

Whilst print media, and most especially the missionary periodical, remained the focal point around which mass support for the missions operated, a seemingly ever-growing myriad of other ways and means of propaganda emerged over the course of the modern missionary revival. The Irish were not alone in this regard. As with many other aspects of the movement, parallels can be identified in other mission-sending countries. In his

⁴ See, for example, ‘*desfrais et recettes, Maison de Prov. D’Irlande en 1950*’ (Spiritan Archive, Paris, folder 7G1.6a1).

⁵ For discussion on attitudes towards missionaries who did not actually work on the missions see field see (Columban Fathers’ Central Archive (CFCA), IEI/15).

⁶ This was especially true of Mary Martin as detailed further below.

study of francophone missionary institutions, Jean Pirotte, for example, has observed the similarly convoluted nature of their promotional efforts. He concluded that although certainly fruitful, missionary propaganda always retained something of an ‘artisanal’ quality.⁷ Long predating Pirotte’s analysis, the 1946 report on the provincial assembly of the Irish branch of the SMA was highly critical of this *ad hoc* approach. Addressing the society’s financial strategy, the report concluded that ‘We must work more according to “big business” than according to huxter-shop methods. It is hoped the distinction is obvious’.⁸

No such aspirations were ever realised. The economy of salvation could never be transformed into a straightforward transactional affair. The business of saving of souls had to take into account the complexities of abstract spiritual concerns that underpinned the entire concept of missions. Ultimately reliant on the charity of the god-fearing masses to supply both donations and vocations, missionary societies also had to find ways of stimulating and harnessing missionary zeal that offended the sensibilities of neither the clergy nor the laity. Although each mission-body developed its own unique web of propaganda with their own individual peculiarities, there was substantial crossover. As with the missionary magazine, if one society appeared to have success with one particular method others were quick to follow. In the context of an urgent battle to save souls, there was no time to fret over the ethics of poaching the innovations of others.

Whilst remaining cognisant that the missionary periodical and the messages therein cannot be neatly divorced from other aspects of missionary propaganda, this chapter explores the ways in which Irish missionary bodies engaged the laity beyond the printed word. By doing so it seeks to provide further insight into how the missions became such an integral part of Irish Catholic culture for much of the twentieth century. Using material relevant to missionary propaganda works sourced from both mission-sending institutions, diocesan archives, missionary magazines and newspapers it also aims to further elucidate the lay experience of the missions. This chapter will begin by

⁷ Jean Pirotte, ‘Aux sources des propagandes modernes, l’appel à la mission’ in Gilles Routhier and Frédéric Laugrand, *L’espace missionnaire: lieu de innovations et de rencontres interculturelle* (Paris, 2002), p. 139.

⁸ 1946 Report of the fifth assembly of the Irish Province (Society of African Missionaries (SMA) Archive, Cork, Irish Provincial Assemblies box 1925-1989).

exploring the staples of missionary propaganda work. Highly aware that not all Irish missionaries or missionary supporters were Catholic, it seeks to at least partially situate these major promotional endeavours in a broader denominational context. This chapter also examines the role of laypeople in assisting Ireland's Catholic missionary fundraising and further probes the way in which idealised gender norms impacted the average experience of missions. Looking beyond the endeavours of the individual mission-sending congregations, this chapter also addresses the impact of the mission-aid organisations in stimulating and harnessing popular missionary zeal. It then moves on to examine the small-scale gambling endeavours which, although for many years technically illegal in Ireland, were largely tolerated by the State. Building on subjects addressed in the previous chapter, it will then look at the way in which Irish missionary bodies tapped American wealth. Finally, as the Irish missionary movement began to reach its climax in the 1950s, this chapter will explore the role played by the Irish hierarchy as they attempted to control the frenzied battle for donations and vocations.

The humble collection box was the most ubiquitous of all missionary fundraising techniques. Also known as mite boxes or alms boxes, this method of collection had long been exploited by all manner of charitable organisations. Arguably, these boxes were the ultimate manifestation of the much broader change in western charitable giving which from the late eighteenth century saw the top down system of endowments and trusts give way to models that harnessed small sums collected from the masses.⁹ Aside from the occasional loss of income through acts of petty theft, the collection box proved a relatively hassle-free and reliable source of income.¹⁰ Readers of the home-produced missionary periodicals, and especially juvenile readers were routinely encouraged to write in for a cardboard mite box of their own. Suggestions for filling it were also printed: place it in their home, go door to door or make collections amongst friends.¹¹ As the golden era of Catholic mission progressed, missionary collection boxes also became an increasingly common sight in shops, churches, and pubs. In addition to the opportunistic offerings of those who may have had one or two spare coins in their pocket, the presence of such collection boxes in workplaces and, most especially, in

⁹ Sarah Roddy, Julie-Marie Strange and Bertrand Taithe, *The charity market and humanitarianism in Britain, 1870-1912* (London, 2019), p. 4.

¹⁰ For examples of such thefts see *Irish Times*, 11 Mar. 1942 and *Western People*, 3 Feb. 1962.

¹¹ See, for examples, *Far East*, xi, no. (5 May 1928); *African Missionary*, xxxi, no. 4 (Apr. 1953).

schools played an integral role in establishing the missions as a routine part of the Irish Catholic experience.

Often treated with a ritualistic reverence, those who passed through Ireland's Catholic system between the 1930s and 1960s commonly recall bringing in their weekly 'Penny for the black babies', usually on a Friday. Whilst most remember these boxes to have been relatively simple often just adorned with the image of an African infant, in her 1988 novel *Black Baby* Clare Boylan depicts a somewhat more elaborate design. Describing how the fictitious Alice, an ageing Dublin-woman assumed the young black woman who arrives at home to be the 'black baby' that she had paid 2/6 for as a child, Boylan writes: 'There was as much pleasure in putting a penny in the mission box with its nodding black head on top, as in spending it on an orange'.¹² Whether such mechanised collection boxes existed remains unclear. Either way, the very public act of giving and the expectation that one should do so, reinforced the message of printed missionary propaganda. For children whose parents did not or could not provide these sums, the basic message was still clear. 'Black babies' needed saving and regularly giving alms to this end was a normal part of life.

Rather less pedestrian than the trusty collection box, event-based propaganda methods proved popular. Perhaps the most straightforward of these was the missionary lecture. Given by returned missionaries, often with the aid of illustrative magic lantern slides, these lectures became increasingly common during the inter-war years.¹³ Again, this was not a new innovation. Typifying the much broader cross-fertilisation of promotional techniques, Protestant missionaries had been giving lectures in Ireland years before Irish Catholics adopted the method. Reflecting the surge in Protestant enthusiasm for 'pagan' missions in the nineteenth century, by 1900 a number of missionary societies which had been founded in Britain had long-established active branches in Ireland.¹⁴ In 1909, for example, a Miss Gollock gave a lecture entitled 'Womanhood and the foreign missions' to the Hibernian Church Missionary Society in

¹² Clare Boylan's *Black Baby* as cited in Bryan Fanning, *Racism and social change in the Republic of Ireland* (Manchester, 2002), p. 16.

¹³ See, for examples, *Irish Times*, 11 Dec. 1924; *Connacht Tribune*, 13 Nov. 1926; *Drogheda Independent*, 8 Mar. 1930.

¹⁴ See, for examples, discussion of the Hibernian Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society in *Irish Times*, 26 Jun. 1860; of the Irish branch of the London Missionary Society in *Irish Times*, 16 Apr. 1861; of the Irish Auxiliary of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society in *Irish Times*, 30 Mar. 1893.

Gregg Memorial Hall located in Dawson Street, Dublin.¹⁵ Arguably indicative of the inferior status afforded to the missionary sister when compared with her Protestant counterpart, the Catholic missionary lecture remained the sole preserve of the priest. Widely presumed more worldly, better educated and far more suited to the public sphere than the religious sister, the authority of priest was seemingly assumed to be part of the attraction for a Catholic audience. Sometimes presented to large crowds in ‘packed’ theatres in the capital and sometimes presented at smaller but equally ‘packed’ venues in more rural locations across the country, newspaper reports almost always stressed the ‘most interesting’ nature of these lectures.¹⁶

Symptomatic of the wholly uncritical public discourses which supported the boom of Catholic missionary endeavour, Irish newspapers were thoroughly positive in their reportage of all things missionary. Often replicating the narratives espoused by the missionary magazines, features on Catholic missions and missionaries became increasingly common in both regional and national titles. Whilst the *Irish Times*, widely regarded as the newspaper of Ireland’s Protestant ascendancy, was more likely to document the activities of Protestant missions, as Irish Catholic zeal gathered momentum it too began to carry reports on Catholic missionary organisations. Although notably less fawning in tone than some of the titles traditionally associated with the emergent Catholic orientated state, it was far from critical. For example, a 1940 announcement of a forthcoming variety concert to be held in Dublin’s Theatre Royal in aid of the Capuchin missions declared that ‘Liberal entertainment will be assured for everyone who attends’.¹⁷ Retrospective reports also routinely noted both the success of these endeavours as well as the high level of attendance.¹⁸

Whilst the *Irish Times* along with other national papers tended to report on the most extravagant of these events held in the large theatres in the centre of Dublin, scaled down versions of the missionary benefit concert also became increasingly common in towns and schools up and down the country. Advertising one such example of this more

¹⁵ *Irish Times*, 22 Oct. 1909.

¹⁶ See, for examples, *Connacht Tribune*, 13 Nov. 1926; *Drogheda Independent*, 8 Mar. 1930; *Irish Times*, 14 Dec. 1937.

¹⁷ *Irish Times*, 24 Jan. 1940.

¹⁸ See, for examples, the report detailing the success of a concert held in aid of the Augustinian missions to Nigeria in *Irish Times*, 17 Oct. 1949 and the benefit concert held by the Irish Jesuit Mission to China 6 Jan 1937.

local support, a 1948 edition of Cork's *Southern Star* urged readers to come and 'support the greatest Charity on earth' promising a 'feast of laughter and song'.¹⁹

Again, this was nothing new. By the time concerts began to be used as a means of aiding Ireland's Catholic missions in the 1920s, similar events were already a mainstay not only of Protestant missionary fundraising but of all sorts of other charitable endeavours. Benefit concerts, dances and plays held to support schools, hospitals, orphanages and causes such as the Red Cross were an accepted part of life, or at least of middle-class life, in Ireland. As convincingly argued in a recently published study, *The Charity Market and Humanitarianism in Britain 1870-1912*, the late Victorian era witnessed the emergence of the modern 'charitable fundraising "market"'.²⁰ As a growing number of organisations vied to capture the attention of potential donors, innovation in fundraising techniques abounded. Whilst it remains unclear as to what extent Ireland experienced this increasingly frenetic surge in charitable competition, the proliferation of what is termed the 'entertainment-cum-fundraiser' had certainly made its way to Irish shores.²¹

Identified as a long-established fundraising 'staple' in Britain, the 'charity bazaar' also proved fruitful for Ireland's Catholic missionary bodies.²² Although very much based on the same model of an event at which a variety of donated goods, often homemade, were sold, refreshments were provided and other forms of entertainment such as music sometimes featured, the term 'Sale of Work' prevailed in Catholic Ireland. Whilst there were no hard and fast linguistic rules surrounding this title, it would appear, at least in Ireland, that Catholics came to associate the 'bazaar' and even more so the 'fete', which referred to an outdoor version of this type of fundraiser, with Protestants. The reverse, however, was not true with Protestant organisations often using the terms interchangeably.²³

¹⁹ *Southern Star*, 17 Jan. 1948.

²⁰ Roddy, Strange and Taithe, *The charity market*, p. 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²³ See, for example, the announcement of the Church Missionary society's sale of work in Dublin in *Irish Times*, 14 Nov. 1940.

Beginning in the mid-1920s, the Holy Ghost Fathers were the first of Ireland's Catholic missionary bodies to establish the Sale of Work as an annual addition to their propaganda campaign.²⁴ Held in St Mary's College, a school run by the society in the suburb of Rathmines in Dublin, the event was routinely advertised in both the *Missionary Annals* and newspapers. Typical of the goods offered, the 1928 Sale of Work promised a 'wonderful selection of articles' including 'hand-worked cushions' 'children's suits', 'table cloths' and 'tea cosies' donated by 'our Benefactors and convents throughout the country'. Setting a trend that was soon imitated by a number of other Catholic missionary societies, the Holy Ghosts held the event in the run up to Christmas with the express aim of appealing to those seeking 'Splendid Christmas presents at astonishingly low prices'.²⁵

The 1930s saw a significant growth in the number of Ireland's Catholic missionary organisations adopting this method. With the aim of maximising footfall and therefore returns, a prime city centre location was considered a must. Whilst the Cork-based SMAs and their affiliated body of Sisters (OLA) held such events in their city of residence, Dublin was selected as the prime location by most. Those who, unlike the Holy Ghost Fathers, had no suitable premises of their own in the capital, sought out venues in Dublin's city centre. Although the Catholic Commercial Club situated on the main thoroughfare, O'Connell Street, proved a popular choice, the Lord Mayor's Mansion House was a particularly firm favourite with the more recently founded congregations of missionary sisters. Lacking the same level of prestige associated with the priesthood, these fledgling ventures sought to fully exploit the promotional value that could be derived from an event held in this grand venue. In 1936, for example, the Cavan-based Holy Rosary Sisters advertised their forthcoming sale of work in the *Irish Press*.²⁶ The notice stated that 'A wide variety of attractive and inexpensive articles suitable will be on sale, a running buffet will be provided and only a nominal charge made' and 'A drawing of prizes will take place under the patronage of Lord Mayor of Dublin'. A day after the event, a further article appeared in the same paper reviewing the occasion. Typical of the press' approach to missionary undertakings, the feature was wholly positive. It was noted that 'The many visitors who attended yesterday afternoon

²⁴ *Irish Independent*, 28 Nov. 1924.

²⁵ *Evening Herald*, 14 Dec. 1928.

²⁶ *Irish Press*, 16 Dec. 1939.

were enabled to combine aid to a deserving object with the task of buying suitable seasonal gifts, mostly of Irish manufacture.’²⁷

As noted in the aforementioned study on British charity, this interplay between consumerism and charitable giving is significant. Despite the Catholic Church’s routine denouncement of materialism, the combination of ‘compassion *while* consuming’ proved a winning formula.²⁸ As with the increasingly popular missionary raffle, discussed further below, the rise of the sale of work must be read in the context of growing Irish consumerism. Whilst little historical research exists on this topic, Barbara Walsh’s history of Woolworths and the Irish main street, for example, supports the theory that the trajectory of the Catholic missionary boom in Ireland coincided with a broader surge in Irish consumer materialism.²⁹

Although certainly not exclusive to this time of year, the growing flurry of sales of work in the weeks before Christmas was not coincidental. Missionary bodies along with a growing number of other necessitous organisations sought to fully exploit the holiday synonymous with consumption, Christian charity and increasingly consumerism.³⁰ With advertisements always stressing the affordability of the goods on offer, those under pressure to provide presents were clearly targeted. For poorer attendees, this was a means of securing much-desired gifts which they may not otherwise have had the means to buy. There was, however, no loss of respectability. If anything quite the opposite. In a still relatively poor Ireland, these sales clearly served more than their charitable function. Wealthier patrons could similarly enjoy all these events had to offer including the sense of occasion often enhanced by the presence of dignitaries, the excitement of a raffle, the refreshments and entertainment. The chance to buy goods at a more affordable price undoubtedly also held appeal for the better-off even if it was not motivated by necessity. Such was the popularity of the sale of work by the close of the 1940s many had been transformed into two and even three day events.³¹

²⁷ *Irish Press*, 17 Dec. 1936.

²⁸ Roddy, Strange and Taithe, *The charity market*, p. 4.

²⁹ Barbara Walsh, *When shopping was good: Woolworths and the Irish main street* (Kildare, 2011).

³⁰ Examples of the growing number of other non-missionary bodies exploiting this fundraising method include the Catholic Girl Guides and the Order of St John and St Malta.

³¹ See, for example, discussion of the Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) sale of work in *Irish Press*, 9 Dec. 1949.

Whether those in attendance were there out of economic requirement or not was of little concern for the organisers. These occasions were significant money spinners for Irish missionary bodies. As the public appetite grew many started to charge two or three pence to simply gain admission.³² Responding to popular demand, the Holy Ghost Fathers soon sought out more central venues to hold this annual event. Indicative of the success of the missionary sisters, their 1950 sale took place over three days in the Mansion House.³³ It raised £3,853. This accounted for a significant portion of the £22,081 recorded net income brought in that year through fundraising initiatives. By way of comparison, mite boxes raised less than a tenth of that figure with a total of £378 collected.³⁴

Whilst clearly profitable, the organisation of these extravagant sales of work was a substantial undertaking. Perhaps the most labour intensive of all the missionary fundraisers, vast quantities of saleable items had to be sourced, sorted and transported, the venue arranged, volunteers found to man the stalls, raffle prizes secured etc. Primarily concerned with their endeavours on the mission-field, missionary societies were more than happy to outsource this type of fundraising work. Most of Ireland's Catholic mission-sending bodies formed lay committees who helped in varying degrees to lighten this load. Often composed of friends and relatives of missionaries in each relevant society as well as individuals who had an affinity for the cause, the number of female participants far outstripped that of men.³⁵ This was of course very much in the same vein of the by now relatively well-documented surge of philanthropic 'ladies committees' in the nineteenth century. As noted by Maria Luddy, such endeavours were divided along denominational lines. Protestants worked with Protestants and Catholics with Catholics. Class also played a fundamental role in determining who assisted philanthropic causes. Women of an upper or middle class background were far more likely to have the time and means to commit energies to unpaid work. Luddy further notes that the system whereby lay female Catholic philanthropists assisted specific

³² See, for example, announcement concerning the forthcoming MMM sale in *Evening Herald*, 7 Dec. 1943

³³ *Irish Press*, 14 Nov. 1950.

³⁴ '*desfrais et recettes, Maison de Prov. D'Irlande en 1950*' (Spiritan Archive, Paris, folder 7G1.6a1).

³⁵ For discussion of the committee formed to support the Holy Ghost Fathers see, for example, *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 7-8 (Jul.-Aug. 1926).

religious congregations which a friend or relative had joined was similarly commonplace in the nineteenth century.³⁶

Men were not excluded from these committees often occupying the most prominent positions of leadership. Typifying this gender imbalance as well as the subordinate and often more laborious nature of the tasks carried out by women, the committee that organised the Holy Rosary sisters' 1936 sale of work mentioned above was headed by Bishop Shanahan in the role of Honourable President. The positions of the actual president and chairman were taken up by laymen. Of the three secretaries two were also men. All of the stalls at the event itself were, however, staffed by 'ladies'.³⁷

Further building on the disproportionately high levels of female support of the missions evidenced in chapter two, women and female religious were considered to have a greater role to play in providing materially for the cause. Many of the goods actually sold at these sales of work had, for example, been collected and even handmade by women religious in convents throughout the country.³⁸ Whilst it was never stated that males did not have an equal part to play, it was by default clearly implied. Chiming with the rhetoric surrounding the missionary sister, who, as proclaimed by one Irish bishop in 1945, were required to 'do the spade-work' on the mission-field, the bulk of the everyday burden required to support the missions on the 'home front' fell as if naturally on female shoulders.³⁹ Fitting with the broader thesis on the feminisation of the Catholic Church, the allocation of this role to women did not require vigorous justification. This expectation that women should take on this work was presented as a given in the missionary magazine.⁴⁰ It was easily absorbed into broader discourses of the archetypal virtuous, pious and self-sacrificing woman.

The Apostolic Work perhaps best epitomised this highly gendered division of missionary aid- giving. Modelling itself on an Italian society founded in the nineteenth

³⁶ Maria Luddy, 'Women and Philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland' in *Voluntas: International Journal of Non-Profit Organisations*, vii, no. 4 (1996), pp 350-67.

³⁷ *Irish Press*, 17 Dec. 1936.

³⁸ See, for examples, *Irish Independent*, 28 Nov. 1924; *Irish independent*, 10 Dec. 1938.

³⁹ This comment on 'spade word' was made by Dr Lyons, the bishop of Kilmore during a sermon given at ceremony to welcome new members in 1945 see *African Rosary*, vi, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1945).

⁴⁰ See, for one of many examples, the *Far East*, i, no. 4 (Apr. 1918) in which a section is devoted to the special role of convents in helping to secure a wider circulation of the magazine.

century, the first branch of this organisation was founded by a small group of women in Dublin in 1930. It did not work for any one mission-sending body but was closely connected with the APF. As explained in *Catholic Missions* it is ‘an Association of women, who, for their own personal sanctification, engage in the activity of helping the Foreign Missions in pagan lands (a) by prayer (b) by supplying material requirements. The members meet for two hours each week to sew for the Altar and to recite certain prescribed prayers’.⁴¹ Items produced included the wide variety of garments and linens required for the celebration of Mass as well as shirts, socks and pyjamas for the missionary priest.⁴² Materials were paid for by the one pound subscriptions made by honorary members and monthly ‘secret collections made by active members’. In return for their contributions both class of members could enjoy a host of ‘rich indulgences’. Those unsure of their sewing skills were assured that ‘With the needle in her hand every women has it in her power to become an artist for God’.⁴³

A time consuming commitment, in 1938 it was estimated that 545 active members of the Dublin branches had made a collective contribution in work and prayer of almost 12,000 hours. It was noted that this did not include the further hours spent sewing by members at home.⁴⁴ This somewhat unusual combination of a confraternity-like structure and missionary charity proved popular. By 1952 there were forty one branches in Dublin alone.⁴⁵ The society had also been set up in a number of dioceses outside of the capital. The Tuam branch in Galway established a custom whereby brides presented their wedding gowns to the society to be made into vestments. Capturing something of the essence of this fusion of self-sacrificing femininity with the poignant nobility of the missionary cause, commending this tradition the Archbishop of Tuam declared ‘what happier memory of her wedding day could a woman have than to think that somewhere in a far-off mission land her bridal dress is being worn each morning by a priest as he celebrates mass’.⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Catholic Missions*, cxv, no. 2 (Apr. 1952).

⁴² Promotional brochure for the Apostolic Work, undated (Dublin Diocesan Archives (DDA), XVI/V/20/38).

⁴³ *Catholic Missions*, cxv, no. 2 (Apr. 1952).

⁴⁴ *Catholic Missions*, cii, no. 3 (Jul. 1939).

⁴⁵ *Catholic Missions*, cxv, no. 2 (Apr. 1952).

⁴⁶ *Connacht Tribune*, 18 Jul. 1969.

Ireland's other Catholic mission-aid bodies similarly advanced Irish missionary zeal beyond the realm of the printed word. Whilst most like the St Joseph Young Priests' society played a relatively minor role, joining in with traditions such as the Christmas sale of work, the contribution of the APF was significant.⁴⁷ In its capacity as the Church's 'chief' mission-aid society, it introduced the concept of the Missionary Exhibition to Ireland's Catholic masses in 1932. Very much a product of what has been dubbed the 'golden age of great exhibitions', the Great Exhibition held in London in 1851 may be regarded as the genesis of the 'exhibition network' that flourished across much of the western world, and in some cases beyond, right into the middle of the twentieth century.⁴⁸ Whilst the original of the species was primarily intended as a celebration of modern industrial innovation with an emphasis on trade, a variation, the colonial exposition, that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century was more concerned with identity formation. A spectacle of power, influence and dominant ideologies, such events worked to reinforce popular acceptance of empire.⁴⁹

Further illustrating the interconnectedness of the colonial and missionary frameworks and more specifically of the ways in which both enterprises were encountered by western audiences, the emergence of the missionary exhibition in the early 1900s was very much inspired by the colonial exposition. Geographer, Denis Linehan, in his article 'Irish Empire: assembling the geographical imagination of Irish missionaries in Africa' has explored the way in which both types of exhibition contributed to Irish conceptions of African 'otherness'.⁵⁰ He notes, for example, that as part of the Irish International Exhibition held in Dublin in 1907 real African people, including children, were put on display in a mock up Somali village.⁵¹

As in many other aspects of the modern missionary revival, Protestants led the way, being the first to exploit the propaganda value of the exhibition. The 1910s witnessed a surge in Protestant missionary bodies organising such events in Ireland.⁵² The 1912

⁴⁷ See, for example, *Evening Herald*, 27 Oct. 1936.

⁴⁸ Marta Filipová 'Introduction: the margins of exhibitions and exhibitions studies' in Filipová (ed.), *Cultures of international exhibitions 1840-1940* (Surrey, 2015) p. 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 7-9

⁵⁰ Denis Linehan, 'Irish Empire: assembling the geographical imagination of Irish missionaries in Africa' in *Cultural Geographies*, xxi, no. 3 (2014), pp 429-47.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 437.

⁵² See for examples, the exhibition entitled 'Africa and the East' held in Ulster Hall, Belfast in *Irish Times*, 17 Nov. 1910; the Orient Missionary Exhibition promoted by the Dublin's Methodist Churches in

exhibition organised by the Irish Auxiliary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and held in the Royal Dublin Society was one of the most extravagant. As with practically all other missionary exhibitions, the primary aim was ‘the spread of reliable information concerning the foreign missions and the awakening of fresh interest’ for the cause.⁵³ Staged over a number of days some of its many attractions included ‘a personally conducted tour’ of a dioramic African village, scenes from ‘Moslems lands’ and Japan, as well as a range of lectures ‘all given by ladies’ who have spent many years in the countries of which they speak’.⁵⁴ Unspecified thousands were reported to have attended.⁵⁵ Indicative of the popularity of the missionary take on the great exhibition, in its glowing account of the spectacle the *Irish Times* declared that ‘It must be gratifying to learn out of the 200 similar exhibitions that had been held in different cities under the auspices of the C.M.S.’ this one ‘promises to be the most successful in every respect’.⁵⁶

The aforementioned Vatican Exhibition of 1925 provided the prototypical Catholic version of the grand missionary exposition.⁵⁷ Although routinely ignored in the relevant historiography, the advent of the Irish Catholic Missionary Exhibition was arranged to coincide with the Eucharistic Congress in June 1932. Staged in the Grand Hall of the National University of Ireland on St Stephen’s Green in central Dublin, the event consisted of a series of stalls each dedicated to a separate Catholic missionary body present in Ireland.⁵⁸ Symptomatic of the gulf that existed between the Catholic and Protestant world, the front cover of the official catalogue proclaimed it to be ‘Ireland’s First Foreign Missionary Exhibition’.⁵⁹ In addition to featuring the endeavours of all the major players on the Irish Catholic missionary scene, a number of stalls were occupied by societies who were relatively unknown as mission-sending institutions. Illustrating the growing complexity of this network, largely unheard of organisations such as the Kerry-based Dames de St Maur and the Longford-based Franciscan Missionaries of Mary both promoted their Japanese missions. Other far more established societies who

Irish Times, 7 Mar. 1913; the exhibition of the Irish Auxiliary of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith held in the Rotunda, Dublin in *Irish Times*, 11 Feb. 1914.

⁵³ *Irish Times*, 4 Jun. 1912.

⁵⁴ *Irish Times*, 27 May 1912.

⁵⁵ *Irish Times*, 4 Jun. 1912.

⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, 27 May 1912.

⁵⁷ For further discussion see chapter one, p. 96.

⁵⁸ *Irish Independent*, 30 Jun. 1932.

⁵⁹ Catalogue of the exhibition (Capuchin Archive, CA/ZAM,14/10-19).

quietly sent out missionaries also had the opportunity to advertise these efforts. For example, the Redemptorist Fathers presented a small display on their work in the Philippines, the Vincentians on their efforts in China and the Dominican Fathers on their work in Trinidad. A total of nineteen congregations were represented. Both the APF and the Association of the Holy Childhood also had their own respective stalls. The SJYP had a more minor role, displaying relevant literature and pamphlets.⁶⁰

Highly similar to its Protestant predecessors, the reported ‘aim of its designers has been to place before the people a vivid picture of life in pagan lands’ thus stimulating even more enthusiasm for the cause.⁶¹ The subject of extensive press coverage, most reports tended to focus on the African section of the exhibition. This was in part a reflection of the fact that ten of the societies featured worked on mission-fields of Africa. It was, however, also motivated by a more general popular fascination with the ‘Dark Continent’. As noted in chapter one, Africa was widely deemed the epitome of otherness. The land of ‘savages’, ‘black babies’, ‘witchdoctors’, jungles, lions and snakes, it captured the imagination of the masses in such a way that even the enterprising Maynooth Mission to China (Columbans) failed to compete. Giving insight into the composition of the event, the *Meath Chronicle* declared ‘there will be displayed a magnificent set of objects, curios, native products, native clothes, religious idols and fetishes, and animals, that will help portray very geographically the peculiar climate of Africa’.⁶²

With each society responsible for furnishing its own stand, some pulled out all the stops. As detailed in the catalogue sold at the exhibition for just two pence, the Holy Ghost Fathers’ stand appears to have been the most elaborate featuring four hundred items. Some of the objects displayed included a diorama of a mission station, a variety of relevant paintings, snakeskins, ‘exquisite specimens of native African ivory work’, ‘African woodwork masks and idols’ and ‘Native musical instruments’. Not to be outdone, the Columbans also made a substantial effort. Whilst the veracity of the claim is questionable, the *Irish Times* reported that ‘every one’ of the items featured at their stall had been ‘provided or made in China specially for this exhibition’. Objects

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *Irish independent*, 30 Jun. 1932.

⁶² *Meath Chronicle*, 25 Jun. 1932.

displayed included a timber pagoda, '2 Peking rugs', a map of China, 'several pieces of porcelain (donated by Bishop Souen)' and 'Various linen tea-table embroideries, woven cushion covers, panels etc.'⁶³

Further adding to the spectacle, the exhibition was honoured by visits from the great and the good of the Catholic hierarchy including the Primate of All Ireland, Cardinal MacRory, the Apostolic Nuncio and various other bishops.⁶⁴ Indicative of its success, the intended run of nine days lasting from 17-25 June was extended. On 30 June it was reported that the exhibition 'continues to attract immense crowds'.⁶⁵ Deemed a major success, a review that featured in both the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times* proclaimed that 'those in a position to judge have said that it rivals the missionary exhibition of the Exposition Coloniale held in Paris last summer.'⁶⁶

Demonstrating the futility of measuring missionary propaganda on a straightforward cost and return basis, the individual societies actually lost out financially by their participation. In addition to the costs entailed in furnishing their stall, each congregation put up between twenty and seventy pounds to pay for the event. With the aim of promoting Catholic missionary enthusiasm generally, a concerted effort was made to point out that the exhibition was not a money making exercise. With the exception of the sale of the catalogue and the presence of boxes for "voluntary contributions", it was stressed that 'no other voluntary transactions are being allowed'.⁶⁷ With just over £318 brought in through these two revenue streams, each society received a partial refund on their initial contributions.⁶⁸

Although not financially rewarding, the exhibition was considered to have 'surpassed all expectations' by the APF. Such was this level of perceived success it was decided that another similar event should be put on in Dublin's Mansion House in 1934. It was also agreed that those further afield should have the opportunity to see the exhibition and so preparations began to stage it in Belfast. All, however, did not go smoothly.

⁶³ Catalogue of the exhibition (Capuchin Archive, CA/ZAM,14/10-19).

⁶⁴ *Irish Independent*, 30 Jun. 1932.

⁶⁵ *Irish Times*, 30 Jun. 1932.

⁶⁶ *Irish Independent*, 30 Jun. 1932; *Irish Times*, 30 Jun. 1932.

⁶⁷ *Irish Independent*, 8 Jun. 1932.

⁶⁸ Catalogue of the exhibition (Capuchin Archive, CA/ZAM,14/10-19).

Arranged in conjunction with the Catholic Truth Society's (CTS) annual congress being held in the Ulster Hall, Belfast in June 1934, sectarian tensions erupted over the event. In a somewhat confusing chain of events, the venue was seemingly double booked. The Armagh True Blues, an organisation associated with the Orange Order, was also expecting the use of the hall on one of the days on which it would be occupied by the exhibition. Owing to the financial gains of facilitating the longer event which was to be held over ten days, Belfast Corporation seemingly requested that the Armagh True Blues consider moving the date of their booking.⁶⁹ Whilst it remains unclear as to what exactly happened, the perception that the Corporation had shown favour to the CTS provoked uproar. A major protest meeting held under the auspices of the Mitchelsbourne Club, Belfast, of the Apprentice Boys of Derry followed. Held in the Ulster Hall itself, the *Irish Times* reported that 'Thousands packed the hall, and overflow meetings were held outside, while drummers and bands paraded the streets and prevented the traffic proceeding along the street.' A resultant resolution was 'unanimously adopted' calling upon the Government to prohibit the Conference from being held in any part of Northern Ireland.⁷⁰

Followed closely by the press, the incident attracted widespread criticism from both sides of the sectarian divide. The Protestant Dean of Belfast denounced the protest as a 'matter of sorrow and shame'. He pointed out that 'no one denied the right of the Protestant citizens, minority though they were' to hold their meetings and exhibitions in the Mansion House.⁷¹ Following the forthright criticisms of Cardinal MacRory who placed the incident in a wider narrative of 'bigotry' in Northern Ireland, the Grand Master of the Belfast Orangemen emphatically distanced his organisation from the protest.⁷² A subsequent dialogue between MacRory and the Grand Master paved the way for a compromise. The CTS wrote to the Corporation stating their willingness to waive their claim on the hall for 'in order that "Armagh True Blues" may be able to hold their Sunday ceremony without embarrassment'. During this time the exhibition would be held in a number of smaller venues across the city. It would then take up residence in the Ulster Hall for the remainder of its run.⁷³

⁶⁹ *Irish Times*, 29 May 1934.

⁷⁰ *Irish Times*, 25 May 1934.

⁷¹ *Irish Times*, 4 Jun. 1934.

⁷² *Irish Times*, 2 Jun. 1934.

⁷³ *Irish Times*, 5 June 1934.

Obviously more complex than a tiff over a double booking, Northern Ireland's contemporary political climate provides crucial context. For many Irish Protestants, the 1932 accession of Fianna Fáil to power in the Free State was an unwelcome development. Understood to be far more nationalist than their predecessors, the new government was deemed a potential threat to the only recently established status quo.⁷⁴ As widely acknowledged in the relevant historiography, the Eucharistic Congress, coincidentally held just three months after the installation of this new government, was exploited by de Valera as a means of legitimization. Playing a highly visible role in the celebrations, this reaffirmation of harmony between Church and State worked to assuage fears about de Valera's anti-Treaty past. Whilst not dismissing the religious aspect of the congress, it has also often been interpreted as a sort of crowning ceremony of the rebel turned statesman.⁷⁵

The CTS conference planned for Belfast was in essence a scaled down version of the Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin just two years before. Organised for almost the exact same dates in June and complete with its very own elaborate missionary exhibition, the similarities were certainly not lost on Northern Ireland's already uneasy Protestant communities. De Valera's unofficial enthronement was likely of little comfort to those who had rallied around the slogan 'Home Rule is Rome Rule'. It was perhaps not surprising that a re-enactment of the occasion north of the border ignited tensions.⁷⁶ Whilst in many respects an exceptional case, the incident underscores the way in which such events took on a significance beyond their ostensible aims. Whereas the missionary magazine was relatively inconspicuous, often consumed in the comfort of one's own home or community, the missionary lecture, sale of work but most especially the grand exhibition was a loud and very public assertion of identity.

Three years after the debacle it was decided to put on the missionary exhibition in Cork city. A far more straightforward affair, it was widely hailed as a success. Newspapers reported that over 116,000 people visited.⁷⁷ In 1940 it headed westward with Sligo,

⁷⁴ Alan Megahey, *The Irish Protestant Churches in the twentieth century* (London, 2000), p. 105.

⁷⁵ Ronan Fanning, *Éamon de Valera: A will to power* (Cambridge Massachusetts, 2016), p. 201.

⁷⁶ Megahey, *The Irish Protestant Churches*.

⁷⁷ *Drogheda Independent*, 14 Aug. 1937.

selected as ‘the most convenient, most accessible and best suited centre.’ Dubbed ‘The Fifth National Missionary Exhibition’, it was similarly proclaimed a triumph.⁷⁸ Perhaps owing to the Emergency, or perhaps owing to fact that east, north, south and west had been covered, the APF halted the tradition.

Film added yet another string to the missionary propagandist’s bow. Whilst for many Irish Catholics the grand missionary exhibition was a once in a lifetime event, as the golden era of Catholic missions progressed missionary films became relatively commonplace. Reflecting broader advances in cinematic technology and the growing mass popularity of the medium, a number of Ireland’s missionary bodies began exploiting cinema in the 1930s. By no means mavericks in this regard, this was part of a wider phenomenon of the western world. Very much connected with the contemporaneous rise of Christian film generally, that same decade organisations such as the London Missionary Society, the Norwegian Missionary Society and Paris Evangelical Missionary Society began using film as a standard promotional tool.⁷⁹ In some cases the subject of entire collections, the medium of the missionary film has been the subject of greater levels of academic scrutiny than its much older trusty colleague, the missionary magazine. Flourishing over a period of approximately thirty years, 1930 to 1960, this is perhaps in part explained by the more manageable size of the source.

Most of the films shown by Irish missionary congregations in the 1930s had been acquired as opposed to actually produced by the societies themselves. The “26 Martyrs of Japan”, for example, which upon its ‘pre-view’ at the Savoy Cinema in Dublin in 1937 was labelled ‘the Franciscan Missionary film’ was by then already six years old. Produced by a Japanese film studio, the project had been financed by a prominent lay figure of Japanese Catholicism.⁸⁰ As was often the case with missionary fundraising events, the Franciscans sought to exploit the ‘pre-view’ as a means of publicity. A sufficiently special occasion to warrant a photograph in the *Irish Independent*, Holy Ghost Missionary Bishop, Dr Neville, and American diplomat, Alvin Owsley, were pictured in attendance. Arguably indicative of the non-specificity of the racialised

⁷⁸ *Catholic Missions*, ciii, no. 2 (Apr 1940).

⁷⁹ Émile Gangnat, Annie Lenoble-Bart et Jean-Francois Zorn (eds), *Mission et cinema: films missionaries et missionaries au cinema* (Paris, 2012), p. 12.

⁸⁰ ‘The 26 martyrs of Japan’ (<http://www.infoans.org/en/sections/news/item/2604-vatican-presentation-of-the-film-the-26-martyrs-of-japan>) (1 Sept. 2019).

understandings of the world, the ‘Chinese visitors’ who were also present were included in the shot.

With the same *modus operandi*, in 1938 the Holy Ghost Fathers presented a film entitled ‘The Call’ for a week long run in a Dublin cinema.⁸¹ A biography of a Fr Charles de Foucauld, ‘a French hero, who was in turn a soldier, spy, hermit and missionary of the Sahara’ he ‘met a savage death’ on the mission-field and was thus considered a martyr. Again, the film had no particular connection to the society bar its missionary theme. Awarded the ‘Grand Prix of the Cinema Francais’ the Holy Ghosts simply wanted to make use of the film as a source of income.

The Holy Rosary Sisters were one of the first to break with this pattern. In the late 1930s the Sisters shot ‘picture’ at home and on their mission-field in Nigeria which was then edited to make a film. Remaining untitled, the feature was simply referred to as ‘our film on the missions’. Perhaps owing to the amateur nature of the footage, the society forewent a grand premiere. Instead it was immediately shown to religious and school groups at local venues across the country. Promoted in the society’s propaganda organ, the *African Rosary*, an in-depth discussion of the film detailed its content. Footage included scenes of Africans ‘walking, talking, at the market, at Religious Instruction’, in the hospital, as well as images of ‘the irresistible babies’.⁸²

A testimonial alleged to have been written by the pupils of the Convent of Mercy, Galway who had been shown the feature, further illustrates this crossover between the content and goal of the missionary magazine and film. It states ‘We were deeply moved by the Reception Ceremony at Killeshandra, and the departure of the Sisters for the mission-field ... the Sacrifice is great, yet the pleasures of this world are joyfully given up, and the crusade of love for Christ is begun’. Moving on to review the footage on the mission-field it was declared that ‘the most poignant and pathetic of the scenes were those showing the lepers in their settlement. To many they would seem repulsive, loathsome creatures, but yet their souls are spotless ... They have been abandoned, rejected. But you see the Sisters wending their way far up into the mountain, where these stricken people dwell, bringing gifts and words of peace and consolation’.

⁸¹ The standard anglophone title of the film was *The Call of Silence*.

⁸² *African Rosary*, iv, no. 2 (Feb.-Apr. 1940).

Stressing the goodliness of the angelic missionary sister, it was concluded that they ‘have taken a generous work, they are succeeding in installing that great Faith so characteristic of the Irish race’. Underscoring the promotional value of the film it was added that ‘We hope, if it be God’s Will, that some of us at least may have the privilege of labouring with them one day in the “far-away fields” where it is always “Harvest Time”’.⁸³

As the 1940s progressed more and more of Ireland’s Catholic missionary bodies began to exploit the lure of cinema. Many continued to show films that they had acquired whilst a growing number also committed the resources required to make their own bespoke feature. Premiered in 1948, the MMM’s offering arguably marked the highpoint of the missionary film in Catholic Ireland. Entitled ‘Visitation’, the name further emphasised the centrality of that biblical event in the construction of the society’s identity. Seeking to fully maximize the promotional value of the medium the MMM’s founder, Mother Mary Martin [Marie Martin], commissioned ‘noted English documentarian’ Andrew Buchanan to make the film.⁸⁴ Detailing the plight of ‘the leper’, featuring images of ‘black babies’, and portraying the work of the virtuous missionary sister, ‘Visitation’ was highly similar to the Holy Rosary sisters’ effort made almost a decade before.⁸⁵ As noted by scholars of the subject, this ‘hybrid drama documentary’ style was widely popular with contemporary missionary and colonial filmmakers alike. Exploiting many of the same tropes and stereotypes, both secular and religious cinematic renderings of the non-western world often worked to reinforce long-established narratives surrounding ‘otherness’.⁸⁶

Launched with fanfare, ‘Visitation’ was premiered three times over: firstly in Drogheda, home of the MMM’s headquarters; then in Armagh, the seat of the Primate of All Ireland, and finally in the capital, Dublin. The guest list of this last premiere held in Dublin’s Regal Cinema was by far the most impressive and included the President, the Taoiseach, senior members of government, numerous foreign diplomats and members

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ *Irish Independent*, 27 Sept. 1948.

⁸⁵ Medical Missionary of Mary pamphlet discussing film, 1948 (National Archives of Ireland (NAI), DFA 350/7).

⁸⁶ Emma Sandon, ‘Conversion, salvation and the ‘civilising mission’: Christian missions and documentary film in India (1900-1960)’ in Ian Aitken and Camille Deprez (eds), *Colonial documentary film in south and south-east Asia* (Edinburgh, 2017), p. 150.

of the Irish Hierarchy.⁸⁷ Proof of Mary Martin's exceptional skill in the art of public relations, all three events received extensive press coverage. Testament to its quality, the film was extremely well received. Most reviews went above and beyond the usual deference afforded to Catholic films. One lengthy appraisal featured in the *Irish Independent* proclaimed 'Visitation' to be 'an excellent piece of work, skilfully conceived and beautifully photographed'. The critic further added that 'no film I have seen gives such a vivid impression of the African scene and such a faithful account of the way of life of the African people'.⁸⁸ Following these premieres, the film was then toured in the cinemas of Ireland for over three years. Operating on a percentage basis, the owners of the theatres were usually offered a fifty percent cut of the profits.⁸⁹ A book detailing the content of the film as well as an account of how the project was realised was also released to maximise promotional value.

Eager to emulate the MMM's success, just two years later the Holy Rosary sisters launched a sequel to their original film. Clearly inspired by their rivals, this time they decided to employ the help of professionals. Titled 'Out of the Darkness', it was similarly 'premiered' multiple times over in 1950.⁹⁰ Whilst generally given a warm reception, the Holy Rosaries failed to wholly imitate the buzz that had surrounded MMM's offering. The *Irish Times*'s film critic, for example, went as far to assert that 'All in all, it is a brave essay in the documentary style: but it is much too long and suffers from an air of respectful inhibition'.⁹¹

In 1954 the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Africa (FMSA), another female congregation, followed suit with 'More Than I Can'. Investing significantly in the endeavour, footage was shot in black and white but then copied to 'Kodachrome' to provide colour.⁹² Again although widely praised, it also failed to generate the same interest as 'Visitation'. Its premiere was a comparatively restrained affair which featured a rather lacklustre list of attendees. The film was then similarly toured in

⁸⁷ *Irish Examiner*, 16 Oct. 1948; *Irish Press*, 6 Oct. 1948.

⁸⁸ *Irish Independent*, 27 Sept. 1948.

⁸⁹ Mother Mary Martin to Bishop Browne, 24 Dec. 1948 (Galway Diocesan Archive (GDA), Browne papers, B/3/9).

⁹⁰ *Irish Press*, 17 Apr. 1950; *Anglo-Celt*, 22 Sept. 1950.

⁹¹ *Irish Times*, 11 Sept. 1950.

⁹² Souvenir Programme for 'More Than I Can' (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, box 3).

cinemas up and down the country but was more quickly relegated to showings in community halls and schools.⁹³

Despite the religious nature of the missionary film, in the context of widespread concern over evil influences, even the missionary film failed to avoid the snip of the censor's scissors. The use of film by religious congregations was of particular concern to the influential Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid. Widely remembered as an authoritarian pedant, McQuaid's approach to the Sisters' cinematic offerings does nothing to dispel this image. He took a particular heavy hand with the MMM's 'Visitation'. Although technically only holding authority over his own See of Dublin, following a viewing of the film he 'indicated to the Film Censor' a number of scenes which he considered 'unsuitable for showing in any diocese'. It was made clear to Mary Martin that he expected his cuts would be implemented in all versions of the film. One of his main concerns was with the 'nakedness and medical parts' which included 'a very realistic scene of a caesarean section'. He deemed that this footage would 'offend people's sensitivity'.⁹⁴ This instruction was perhaps not hugely surprising. The canonical ban preventing religious taking up midwifery and surgical medicine had after all only been lifted just twelve years earlier.⁹⁵

McQuaid did, however, also insist on a series of somewhat more bizarre cuts. Writing to Cardinal D'Alton, the Primate of All Ireland and therefore McQuaid's theoretical superior, McQuaid sought to explain why he had ordered that closeups of D'Alton be removed. He stated that this had been necessary because 'sexual scenes represented the consecration in the Mass and one represented the Blessing with the Sacred Host'.⁹⁶ What he actually meant by this rather odd assertion remains unclear. It would certainly seem to fit with popular understandings of McQuaid as a driving force behind the Catholic Church's preoccupation with all matters relating to sex during this period.⁹⁷ It is also plausible that the Archbishop was in part motivated by a desire to limit D'Alton's role in the film. Disapproving of such public displays of episcopal patronage,

⁹³ See for examples *Sligo Champion*, 18 Feb. 1956; *Connacht Tribune*, 2 Feb. 1957.

⁹⁴ McQuaid to Mother Superior, 9 Aug. 1948 (DDA, McQuaid Papers, Female Religious Orders, Medical Missionaries of Mary, box 22).

⁹⁵ See chapter two for further discussion.

⁹⁶ McQuaid to Cardinal D'Alton, 13 Jul. 1948 (Cardinal Ó Fiaich Memorial Library (COFML), D'Alton papers, Irish Diocese, folder b).

⁹⁷ John Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid: ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin, 1999), pp 277-83.

McQuaid himself routinely refused to attend events put on by religious congregations. Unlike most other senior members of the Hierarchy he had, for example, rejected an invitation to attend the extravagant Dublin premiere of 'Visitation'.⁹⁸

A member of the Ireland's largest mission-sending body, the Holy Ghosts, McQuaid was, however, by no means unsympathetic to the cause. He had of course never actually gone on 'the missions' himself. Entering the congregation in 1913, McQuaid joined long before the swell of Irish Catholic missionary zeal.⁹⁹ Much to the dismay of the Motherhouse in France, Irish men who joined the Holy Ghosts in these pre-boom years often had little desire to tend to 'pagans' directly.¹⁰⁰ Instead many, including McQuaid, took up posts in the society's elite Catholic schools for boys. With missionary endeavour always remaining the congregation's *raison d'être*, all members were expected at minimum to show support for this work. One small example of this may be seen in McQuaid's contributions to the early editions of the *Missionary Annals*.¹⁰¹ Presiding over the Archdiocese of Dublin from 1940 to 1972, McQuaid assumed significant influence over Ireland's Catholic missionary congregations during the zenith of the movement.¹⁰²

Although structures of governance within the Catholic church can be relatively complex, the vast majority of mission-sending bodies fell under the direct authority of the local bishop in which their headquarters were founded. Dublin, as the capital, was considered the prime location to establish a religious society. Already home to numerous congregations, McQuaid's predecessor, Archbishop Byrne, had, however, refused to allow any fledgling Catholic missionary ventures to be founded in his diocese.¹⁰³ With the local bishop ultimately responsible for the fortunes of congregations under his authority, many were reluctant to take on what could become a significant burden. The MMMs, for example, had engaged in a protracted hunt for a willing bishop and had even considered setting up shop in England before Cardinal

⁹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 1 Oct. 1948; McQuaid to Mary Martin, 28 Oct. 1948 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, box 22, folder 1).

⁹⁹ Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁰ Report on recruitment Irish Province, c. 1935 (Spiritan Archive, Paris, 7GI.6a1).

¹⁰¹ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 2 (Feb. 1922).

¹⁰² Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid*, p. 15.

¹⁰³ See, for example, discussion of this letter from Mary Martin to Fr Clarke, 9 May. 1936, (Medical Missionaries of Mary Archive (MMMA), I/Cong/1 (e)/17).

MacRory of Armagh came to their rescue.¹⁰⁴ Practically all other missionary congregations including the Columbans, the Holy Rosaries and the Kiltigans were similarly dotted in various dioceses beyond the capital. Covetous of Dublin's high population density and comparative wealth, all were eager to gain access to its laity. Whilst long-established societies such as the Capuchins, Jesuits and the Holy Ghosts benefited greatly from already having foundations and schools in the capital, those with no such connections were very much at the mercy of the Archbishop. As was standard practice, all those seeking to carry out any sort of propaganda work were first obliged to obtain the express permission of the relevant bishop. With Dublin considered to be the most fertile field for both vocations and donations, Byrne and then McQuaid wielded substantial authority on the Irish Catholic missionary landscape.

Granting this type of permission had by and large become a matter of course by the time McQuaid took office. As was the case in dioceses across the country, each year the same societies wrote in requesting the same consent to carry out the same promotional work in the capital. Sales of work, the missionary lecture and recruitment talks given in secondary schools were routinely signed off by the Archbishop with little fuss.¹⁰⁵ However, as the golden era of the Catholic missions progressed this process became far less straightforward. As each society scrambled to fund and man their growing commitments abroad, Irish missionary bodies found themselves operating in an increasingly competitive market.

Anxious to secure their own specific work, promotional innovations became increasingly commonplace. Hitherto most societies were seemingly content to abide by the unwritten code of conduct surrounding Catholic propaganda work. As observed in a 1922 edition of the *Missionary Annals*, religious congregations could not stoop to 'vulgar' and 'glaring' commercial methods of promotion such as the billboard. Instead they had to bear in mind religious sensitivities and opt for a 'more refined type' of advertisement.¹⁰⁶ However, in the heat of the increasingly frenzied battle for resources these unofficial rules were often forgotten. In 1951, for example, the Holy Rosaries

¹⁰⁴ Mary Martin to Cardinal Hinsley, 27 Jun. 1938 (MMMA, I/Cong/1 (e)/31).

¹⁰⁵ See, for examples, letters requesting permission to conduct 'propaganda works' (DDA, McQuaid papers, Male Religious Orders, St Patrick's Missionaries, Kiltegan).

¹⁰⁶ *Missionary Annals*, iv, no. 2 (Feb 1922).

wrote in seeking permission to hold a benefit GAA football match in Croke park which they estimated could bring in two hundred pounds. Unimpressed, McQuaid immediately shot down the ‘unusual request’.¹⁰⁷ One of a number of similarly rejected suggestions included a benefit fashion show proposed by the Columban sisters. Explaining his refusal, the Archbishop asserted that such events are wholly unsuitable for ‘convent charities’.¹⁰⁸

Mother Mary Martin provoked particular ire with regards to her creative propaganda efforts. Buoyed by her wealthy background, elite connections and, as noted above, a flair for promotion, Martin, was perhaps the shrewdest of the propagandists ever to grace Ireland’s Catholic missionary scene. In the position of Mother Superior of the MMMs, she was a particularly vocal advocate for the congregation which she herself had founded. Challenging the boundaries of the ‘ideal’ of the unassuming and subservient female religious, she garnered an almost celebrity-like or perhaps more aptly a bishoply-like public image. Purposefully cultivating this aura of Catholic prestige, Martin was routinely photographed in the company of high-ranking ecclesiastics and statesmen. No opportunity was wasted. In addition to creating hype around major events such as the premieres of ‘Visitation’, she also sought to maximize the promotional value of more mundane happenings. Taking just one of many examples, Martin somehow managed to secure exceptional levels of press coverage surrounding the society’s annual sale of work. In the run up to the 1941 sale to be held in the Mansion House, for instance, the *Irish Independent* featured a large photograph of Martin with members of the organising committee preparing for the event.¹⁰⁹ Commenting on this forthright attitude, in 1957 distinguished scholar, Monsignor Partrick Boylan, wrote to McQuaid exclaiming ‘Mother Mary never had the slightest tendency to look on the authorities of the Dublin Diocese as deserving any special recognition or respect’.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Sr Catherine to McQuaid and annotated instruction for reply, 18 May 1951 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Holy Rosary Sisters box, folder 1).

¹⁰⁸ McQuaid to Reverend Mother, 14 Nov. 1960 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, Columban Missionary Sisters, box 4).

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Independent*, 6 Nov. 1941.

¹¹⁰ Boylan to McQuaid, 25 Oct 1952 (DDA, Correspondence with the Holy See, xvi/20, AB8/b/xvii/728).

Of all of Ireland's missionary bodies, the MMMs created the most intricate web of fundraising initiatives. In addition to the standard magazine and its connected schemes of monetization, sales of works and film, Martin, from the earliest foundations of the society, was constantly on the lookout for new ways to generate donations and to a lesser extent vocations.¹¹¹ Often taking an act now and apologise later approach, she launched a wide variety of methods including flags day, whist drives and a 'Leper Fund Sweep' on the Irish Grand National.¹¹² In part explained by the general growth of competition amongst Catholic missionary bodies, this drive for innovation was also motivated by the fact that the MMMs was a female congregation. As noted in the discussion of periodicals in chapter two, female missionary societies were disadvantaged by the popular preference for all things priestly. It was no coincidence that all three major Catholic missionary films produced in Ireland came from congregations of missionary sisters.

As well documented in the Dublin Diocesan Archive, McQuaid frequently took issue not with the MMM's schemes themselves but the manner in which they had been advertised. In 1944, for example, Martin was informed that the Archbishop had taken 'grave exception' to the way her 'Leper Fund Sweep' had been so publicly advertised using a return address in his diocese.¹¹³ Indicative of the importance of place when it came to stimulating support from the laity, Martin often sought to give the impression that her society had a foundation in Dublin with the aim of loosening the purse strings of the capital's inhabitants. The residence in question was actually supposed to be nothing more than a hostel for the society's aspirants who were pursuing medical studies in Dublin. In 1937 Archbishop Byrne had granted permission for this hostel under strict conditions. To be used simply as lodgings, it was quite clearly set out that the house should not be treated as if an official foundation in his diocese.¹¹⁴ Much to McQuaid's annoyance, Martin routinely flouted these limitations. In 1949 she went as far as to print promotional literature declaring the residence to be an 'Associated

¹¹¹ With the popularity of 'the missions' going into decline in the 1960s, Martin commissioned a report into the society's promotional networks which spoke of the MMMs' particularly 'intense and multifaceted' approach to fundraising see Report on fundraising, 1970 (MMMA, III/Cong/2/31).

¹¹² McQuaid's secretary to Mary Martin, 22 Mar. 1944 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, Medical Missionaries of Mary, box 22).

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Letter sent at the behest of Archbishop Byrne to Mary Martin, 21 Dec. 1937 (MMMA, I/Cong/1(1)/40b).

Generalate'.¹¹⁵ In an effort to avoid tensions that this backdoor approach created, in 1961 Martin wrote to the Archbishop requesting permission to establish an official house in his diocese. McQuaid flat out refused declaring that 'Dublin is already overwhelmed with every manner of missionary collection. My Council will scarcely favour being opened up to still another very active agency of collection.'¹¹⁶

Whilst Martin's tactics regularly provoked the Archbishop, their relationship was not wholly acrimonious. As with many of her peers, Martin was fully aware of the importance of keeping the influential McQuaid on side. She routinely responded to his complaints with grovelling apologies, usually chalking all down to some sort of misunderstanding.¹¹⁷ McQuaid's rejection of Martin's request for an official footing in his diocese was perhaps not personal. As the wider Catholic culture that nourished Irish missionary zeal continued to thrive in the 1940s, 50s and early 60s, many of Ireland's bishops were inundated with similar appeals. With Ireland, quite rightly, considered one of the most fruitful fields for vocations in the entire world, all manner of religious congregations were desperate to establish themselves in this apparent wonderland of Catholicism. Making reference to the unofficial code of conduct that governed Catholic propaganda in Ireland, in 1954 Bishop Browne of Galway criticised the way in which American societies conducted themselves. Routinely trying to place advertisements in the press, Browne argued that if he allowed such activity to occur unfettered, it would 'bring ridicule on the religious state'.¹¹⁸ In addition to receiving countless similar requests from across the world, McQuaid was also regularly approached by those who, like Mary Martin, had their headquarters elsewhere in Ireland. Turning down one of the many petitions made by the Salesian sisters of Limerick alone, in 1962 the Archbishop explained that he had only recently dealt with 271 similar appeals.¹¹⁹

Ireland's male missionary societies were certainly not immune to this increasingly competitive environment. Even the Columbans who had been founded with the official

¹¹⁵ McQuaid to Mary Martin, 22 Feb. 1950 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, Medical Missionaries of Mary, box 22, folder 2).

¹¹⁶ McQuaid to Mary Martin, 12 Aug. 1961 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, Medical Missionaries of Mary, box 22, folder 3).

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Mary Martin to McQuaid, 6 Nov. 1952 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, Medical Missionaries of Mary, box 22, folder 2).

¹¹⁸ Bishop Browne to Brother O'Malley, 6 Nov. 1954 (GDA, Browne papers, B/3/1).

¹¹⁹ McQuaid to Provincial, 8 Jun. 1962 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, Salesian Sisters, box 35).

backing of the Irish hierarchy began to struggle. In 1948, for example, they wrote to McQuaid seeking permission for their usual request for ‘one or two of our priests to do propaganda work in the archdiocese of Dublin. They explained that there would be ‘no question of making any direct appeal for money’. Instead, they would operate according to their usual *modus operandi* and with the permission of the local priest, enter a parish to find subscribers for the *Far East* and promote their Irish Missionary League. Further arguing their case, it was noted that unless this type of work was undertaken ‘it is almost impossible’ to maintain the circulation of their propaganda organ on which ‘we are altogether depending’.¹²⁰ McQuaid initially refused to grant permission. His reply stated ‘the extent of the collections in this city made for missionary and every form of charitable enterprise is such that only those, who have an intimate knowledge, could appreciate how the City and Diocese have been honeycombed’.¹²¹ Likely cognisant of the Columbans’ special standing with the Hierarchy he did, however, eventually relent.¹²²

The quest for vocations also became increasingly fraught. Generally speaking, male congregations endeavoured to enlist boys to begin preparations for their prestigious priestly training at an earlier age than female congregations sought out girls.¹²³ Recruitment talks to secondary school children were therefore a fundamental aspect of the male societies’ propaganda work. Often given by returned missionary priests, these presentations became a standard feature of the Irish Catholic experience. Indicative of the thriving nature of Irish Catholic culture, in a letter of 1949 McQuaid exclaimed that ‘the schools are obsessed by priests and nun visitors looking for postulants, even for Dutch and French Congregations’.¹²⁴ As the gatekeeper of his flock, McQuaid, like a number of other Irish bishops, saw fit to place restrictions on such visits. Beginning in

¹²⁰ Columban priest to McQuaid, 27 Feb. 1948 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Male Religious Orders, Columbans, general folder 1).

¹²¹ McQuaid to Fr O’Dwyer, 8 Mar. 1948 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Male Religious Orders, Columban Missionaries, folder 1).

¹²² McQuaid to Fr Leahy, 22 Feb. 1949 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Male Religious Orders, Columban Missionaries, folder 1).

¹²³ For further discussion see reports on recruitment in the Irish Province, undated c. 1935 (Spiritan Archive, Paris, folder 7GL6a1).

¹²⁴ Letter from McQuaid to Fr Gilmartin, 22 Feb. 1949 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Male Religious Orders, St Patrick’s Missionaries, Kiltegan, folder 2).

the late 1940s the once standard one month granted to each society to carry out this work was reduced to a fortnight or even a week.¹²⁵

Absorbed with finding sufficient donations and vocations to expand their own endeavours, missionary congregations were not overly concerned about the culminative impact of 'the missions' on the Irish laity. Aware of the 'very heavy burdens' imposed on the masses by zealous charitable collectors, the authority of the Hierarchy offered at least some measure of protection to the many who felt compelled to support a multiplicity of causes.¹²⁶ Whist religious congregations were largely obliged to yield to will of the Episcopate, the situation became more complicated when lay men and women became involved. Very much mirroring the smallness of Dublin's middle class philanthropic scene which emerged in the nineteenth century, the very first lay committee founded to provide material assistance to an Irish missionary congregation had been set up by Mary Martin's mother in the early 1920s.¹²⁷ Founded in connection with the Holy Ghosts, Martin's mother had been motivated by the initial departure of her daughter to the Nigerian mission-field where she had worked under the tutelage of famed Holy Ghost man, Bishop Shanahan.¹²⁸ Thirty years later in 1950 Mother Mary herself founded the Ana Guild to help her own society. Typical of its kind, this 'ways and means committee' was charged with organising events such as sales of work as discussed above. Reacting to a fundraiser advertised under the name of the guild, McQuaid complained to Martin that they had no authority to 'act independently'.¹²⁹ In her typical fashion, Martin replied to explain that whole thing had been a 'misunderstanding on the part of the Ana Guild' and that they had in fact only ever been intended as a 'private subcommittee' whose function was to hire the Mansion House for the MMMs' annual sale of work.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ See, for example, annotations on letter from C. Plunkett to McQuaid, 5 May 1949 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Male Religious Orders, St Patrick's Missionaries, Kiltegan, folder 2).

¹²⁶ Bishop Browne to Sr Andrea, 2 Jan. 1953 (GDA, Browne papers, B/3/1).

¹²⁷ *Missionary Annals*, viii, no. 7-8 (Jul.-Aug. 1926).

¹²⁸ Ailish Ellen Veale, 'It's all a matter of balanced tensions : Irish medical missionaries in Nigeria, 1937-1967' (Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2015), p. 64.

¹²⁹ McQuaid to Mary Martin, 4 Nov. 1952 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, Medical Missionaries of Mary, box 22, folder 2).

¹³⁰ Mary Martin to McQuaid, 6 Nov. 1952 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Female Religious Orders, Medical Missionaries of Mary, box 22, folder 2).

Determined to retain as much control as possible over all manner of Catholic fundraising initiatives, McQuaid similarly endeavoured to thwart what he perceived as interference from Rome. In 1947 he received a decree issued by *Propaganda Fide* that asserted that the ‘Central Council’ of the aforementioned Apostolic Work Society had been founded in Dublin. With no knowledge as to how this decree had come about the Archbishop went to great lengths to have it revoked.¹³¹

The use of small-scale gambling initiatives, although for many years technically illegal, was of little concern to the Irish hierarchy. The emergent popularity of the missionary raffle in the early years of the Free State belies the fact that under laws introduced by British parliament in the nineteenth century, lotteries remained unlawful. Widely used to help fund all manner of charitable endeavours, such practices had, however, long been tolerated in Ireland.¹³² Predominately used by Catholic bodies, Protestant denominations tended to be far more disapproving of any sort of gambling.¹³³ In part owing to the prevalence of illegal gaming ventures, the government of the twenty-six counties legislated for the hospital sweepstakes in the early 1930s. However, up until 1956 most other types of lotteries remained outside the remit of the law.¹³⁴ With the state turning a partial blind-eye, numerous Catholic missionary congregations sought to exploit this source of revenue. Eager to start up their own initiative, in the late 1920s, a Holy Rosary sister contacted a Columban priest seeking information on how to conduct a raffle. The resultant correspondence would seem to indicate that whilst government would tolerate these lotteries, there were quite clear limits as to what would be permitted. A memo setting out the requested advice indicated that the directions had been ‘Taken from communications’ with the Department of Justice. The letter stated that ‘No prize must exceed £30 in value’ or where a number of prizes were offered ‘the total value of all prizes must not exceed £100’. Noting further limitations, it was declared that ‘Lotteries where the number and value of the prizes are not clearly stated in advance, or where the prizes depend on the amount of ticket, or where the prizes

¹³¹ See correspondence (DDA, McQuaid papers, Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide file, xvi/v/20/1-64).

¹³² Marie Coleman, “‘A terrible danger to the morals of the country’: the Irish hospitals’ sweepstake in Great Britain, 1930-1987’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, cv (2005), pp 197-8.

¹³³ Kerry Chambers, *Gambling for profit: lotteries, gaming machines, and casinos in cross-national focus* (Toronto, 2011) p. 61.

¹³⁴ *Review of Gaming and Lotteries Acts, 1956-86*, Report of the interdepartmental group, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Dublin, 2000) p 19.

consist of sweepstake tickets will not be tolerated'.¹³⁵ As with many other Irish lotteries including the hugely popular hospital sweepstakes, the Columbans had clearly sought to maximize income by appealing to those beyond Irish shores. Advising on how best to circumvent gambling laws in other jurisdictions, most likely Britain and America, the memo explained that tickets 'to be sold outside the 26 counties' required a different design. The Columban priest suggested that the sisters use 'small lettering at the bottom of the ticket' to stipulate something along the lines of – 'This ticket represents a voluntary contribution of 3d to Colum's Sanctuary Fund'. By adding this it could be claimed that the purchaser was not actually buying the ticket.¹³⁶

As noted in chapter one, the missionary raffle was often promoted in the home-produced missionary magazine. However, its reach extended well beyond this readership. Indicative of a wider consumption of this type of fundraiser, a 1943 raffle ticket produced by the Holy Rosary sisters stated that winning numbers would be printed in a number of newspapers including the *Independent*, the *Anglo-Celt* and the *Irish Catholic*. Still adhering to the advice issued by the Columbans, the total value of all prizes was well within the one hundred pound limit. A book of tickets could be obtained for 2/6. Further incentivising sales and demonstrating the way in which such raffles engaged those who did not necessarily read a missionary magazine, the individual who sold the most tickets was promised their own prize of two pounds.¹³⁷ As with many other types of lottery draws conducted by Irish charities, numerous other Catholic missionary congregations similarly published winning numbers in both national and regional papers. In 1949, for example, the Columban sisters issued the outcome of their draw in the *Irish Press*. With goods as well as money offered as prizes, some of the thirty-two items won included 'a Chinese Kimono', cigarettes, a fox fur and two pairs of nylons.¹³⁸

The Gaming and Lottery Act of 1956 brought charitable raffles in the Republic of Ireland under the official rule of law. Whilst this new legislation enabled missionary bodies to offer far grander prizes, the advertisement of lotteries was now greatly

¹³⁵ Letter, undated c. 1928 (Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary Archive (MSHR), 2/2/5/10).

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Book of raffle ticket issued by the Holy Rosary sisters dated 1943, (National Library of Ireland (NLI), Ceannt and O'Brennan papers, Other papers 1912-1945, MS 41,522/11/19).

¹³⁸ *Irish Press*, 6 Dec. 1949.

restricted. Winning prize numbers could still be published but the lotteries themselves could no longer be publicly promoted. The Holy Ghosts were quick to adapt. In 1957 they instead publicised their annual raffle through a direct mail system. Sending out in excess of 7,000 ticket ‘packets’, they targeted a number of groups including past pupils of their schools, former winners of their crossword puzzles and residents of Belfast whose names were taken from the ‘Northern Street Directory’.¹³⁹ The greatest number of tickets were, however, sent to farmers. Anxious to maintain the income generated through raffles, the society either paid for or acquired by some other means the addresses of ‘approximately 319,000 Irish Farmers’ which was declared to represent ‘the entire Irish Farming Community’. Obtained from a professional mailing and market research company, the list was declared to have been originally prepared by the Central Statistics Office ‘for use by a semi-Government concern’.¹⁴⁰ As the owners of three of the most elite schools for boys in the country, the Holy Ghosts were widely perceived to be a wealthy organisation. Whilst this worked in their favour when looking to attract aspirants, it was hardly conducive to eliciting the sympathy of the masses. An ongoing concern for the society, the letter which accompanied the ticket ‘packets’ declared that ‘We have no other source of revenue but charity’. It was clearly stressed that all funds raised would go towards the society’s missionary as opposed to educational endeavours.¹⁴¹ With their diverse target market in mind, the holder of the first ticket drawn could choose from a Volkswagen De Luxe car, four hundred pounds or a Ferguson tractor.¹⁴² Whilst the profits brought in from this effort appears to have been just in excess of £525, by the early 1960s the society had fine-tuned their methods. In 1961 it was recorded that their raffle generated almost £5,000. The figure for the following year was even greater.¹⁴³

Whether generated through the sale of raffle tickets abroad, the missionary magazine, fundraising tours or as was the case with the Columbans, through their propaganda work conducted from their base in the United States, American dollars had long played a significant role in supporting the Irish Catholic missionary movement. International in

¹³⁹ ‘Returns for Special Raffle’ (Spiritan Archive, Dublin, Editors’ papers, box 8).

¹⁴⁰ Promotional material of mailing and marketing company (Spiritan Archive, Dublin, Editors’ papers, box 8).

¹⁴¹ Circular letter dated Sept, 1957 (Spiritan Archive, Dublin, Editors’ papers, box 8).

¹⁴² Raffle ticket, (Spiritan Archive, Dublin, Editors’ papers, box 8).

¹⁴³ Holy Ghost Missionary League Account 1961-1962 (Spiritan Archive, Paris, Dossier of Gen. Council, folder 4N4.1a2, subfolder 1).

outlook from their beginnings, in addition to securing a foothold in Australia, the Columbans had wisely established stateside foundations in the late 1910s.¹⁴⁴ Aside from the blip brought forth by the Wall Street crash of 1929, the bountiful stream of American money was the envy of all other Catholic mission-sending bodies in Ireland.¹⁴⁵ As in Ireland, the growth of Catholic missionary zeal in America caused ecclesiastical authorities to become increasingly guarded about permitting access to their flock. Whilst intermittent collections were routinely facilitated in this ‘El dorado’ of fundraising, the establishment of a permanent foundation was a whole other matter. Owing to their affiliation with the Columban fathers, in 1930 the Columban sisters gained a footing in America. Typical of the way in which priests and women religious often replicated ‘ideal’ gender relations, in his request to have sisters sent over from Ireland, the aforementioned E.J. McCarthy, who had assumed the leadership of the society in America, asserted that the Sisters were needed to ‘oversee our kitchens and domestic economy’.¹⁴⁶

The promotion of Richard Cushing to the role of Archbishop of Boston in 1944 would prove fortuitous for Ireland’s female missionary congregations. The son of Irish emigrants, Cushing ascended through the ranks of the American hierarchy to preside over the quintessential heartland of Irish-American Catholicism, which as in Ireland, reached its zenith in years between the conclusion of the Second World War and Vatican II. A popular and exceptionally generous figure, Cushing proved remarkably talented in the art of fundraising.¹⁴⁷ A former director of the American branch of the APF, he had a particular affinity for the missionary cause.¹⁴⁸ In 1948 he extended an invitation to the Columban sisters to move their American novitiate from the sleepy village of Silver Creek, in New York county to the far more urban Hyde Park area of Massachusetts. The Archbishop provided half of the money required for the relocation.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ For a first-hand account of the Columbans’ early years in America see the recollections of E. J. McCarthy written down in 1949, (CFCA, USA 1/11).

¹⁴⁵ For an in-depth discussion of the Columbans in America see Angelyn Dries, OSF, *Be centred in Christ and not in self: the Missionary Society Saint Columban: the North American story (1918-2018)* (Bloomington, 2017).

¹⁴⁶ E. J. McCarthy to Jim Wilson, 16 Oct. 1924 as cited in Dries, *Be centred in Christ*, p. 317.

¹⁴⁷ James Rudin, *Cushing, Spellman, O’Connor: the surprising story of how three American cardinals transformed Catholic-Jewish relations* (Michigan, 2012) pp 51- 4.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Reflections on World Mission Sunday: Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa’ (<https://www.thebostonpilot.com/article.asp?Source=Archives&ID=13996>) (2 Sept. 2019).

¹⁴⁹ Dries, *Be centred in Christ*, p. 320.

In 1950 Mary Martin approached Cushing about the possibility of touring ‘Visitation’ in his diocese. Giving a wholly unexpected response, the Archbishop instead suggested that the MMMs establish a house in Boston. Elated, Martin was quick to accept.¹⁵⁰ As the society continued to grow and missionary endeavours expanded, debts mounted quickly. In Ireland’s flailing economy, Martin’s aptitude for fundraising could only go so far. The Irish people, she observed, ‘are generous but not wealthy’.¹⁵¹ Whilst their film had provided well for the society for over three years, in early 1951 it was noted that its earning potential was now ‘practically finished in Ireland and England’.¹⁵² Hinting of the riches that awaited, Cushing donated a large house situated on a grand boulevard near the centre of Boston to the MMMs. In a further effort to provide financial assistance, he arranged for the society to be the special focus of a fundraising club and also assisted in establishing a related lay guild.¹⁵³

With the house in Boston secure, Martin returned to Ireland to tend affairs from her headquarters in Drogheda. Mother Therese was left in command. Despite initial hopes, the first months in America proved something of a culture shock. The expected financial gains failed to materialise.¹⁵⁴ Writing to Martin in November, 1950 Mother Therese lamented that ‘things are exceptionally quit [sic] since you left us, no callers, no dollars and very few bookings’ for their film.¹⁵⁵ Adding further to the sense of bewilderment, they also began receiving malicious phone calls and letters. One of the more succinct of these communications declared ‘Attention Sisters, Go back to Ireland where you belong. Leave Americans alone. You are a bunch of homosexuals’.¹⁵⁶

Interactions with Cushing were also a source of anxiety. As was typical of relations between the Hierarchy and religious congregations, the Sisters had to be extremely careful to maintain the goodwill of their bishop. Unlike in Ireland, where the rules of engagement were for the most part understood, Mother Therese was at a loss as to how

¹⁵⁰ Martin to Mother Therese, 29 Jan. 1951 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/20).

¹⁵¹ Martin to Cushing, 14 Mar. 1951 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/29).

¹⁵² Martin to Mother Therese, 29 Jan. 1951 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/20).

¹⁵³ See background information given in catalogue with code number (MMMA, I/Fou/3).

¹⁵⁴ For discussion of this disappointment with results in America see Sr Margaret to Mother Columbanus, 12 Nov. 1950 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/5).

¹⁵⁵ Mother Therese to Martin, 10 Nov. 1950 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/6).

¹⁵⁶ Copies of two of the letters received (MMMA, I/Fou/3/108); for further discussion of these communications see Mother Therese to Martin, dated Nov. 1950 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/7).

best to handle their generous benefactor. A somewhat flighty character, the MMMs found themselves subject to his many unpredictable dictates. Far more involved in the routine affairs of this fledgling American branch than was the norm in Ireland, one fundamental tension lay at the heart of the Sisters' unease. For Martin, the most pressing concern was to generate income that could be sent home to Ireland. Cushing, however, took a different view. Leaving himself open to criticism for allowing necessitous congregations into his diocese, he was keen to make the society more palatable to the American laity.¹⁵⁷ Much to the disappointment of the Sisters he did not, for example, wish to have announcements about showings of 'Visitation' made in the Churches.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, he told Mother Therese not to permit the lay fundraising club "to get up any raffles or chances".¹⁵⁹ Despite such restrictions, donations did begin to flow more readily. Sales of work, film showings and donations generated through the fundraising club and guild were just some of the ways the famed American wealth was tapped. Concerned that the Archbishop would direct how such monies should be spent, Martin sought to avoid putting some portion of these monies 'through the books'.¹⁶⁰

The single greatest source of contention, at least from the MMMs' perspective, was Cushing's insistence that the society establish a Novitiate for training American aspirants as soon as possible. Although the Archbishop was willing to financially back this project, Martin was keen to postpone making such a commitment.¹⁶¹ She instead favoured training any American postulants in the house they already had in Boston and then sending them to the MMM Novitiate in Ireland. Discussing the issue with Mother Therese, Martin declared 'You know, dear Sister, His Excellency is a bit like this – just says these things but may change his mind when he has thought it over and when he realise[s] our difficulties'.¹⁶² Despite the MMMs efforts to subtly dissuade the Archbishop, he persevered. On 20 July 1952 the MMMs American Novitiate was opened in Winchester, Massachusetts.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ For reference to these criticisms see letter from Mother Therese to Martin, 13 Nov. 1950 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/4).

¹⁵⁸ Mother Therese to Martin, 10 Nov. 1950 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/6).

¹⁵⁹ Mother Therese to Martin, 4 Nov. 1950 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/3).

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, Mother Therese to Martin, dated Nov 1950 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/7).

¹⁶¹ For discussion of this financial backing see Mother Therese to Martin, 13 Mar. 1952 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/68).

¹⁶² Martin to Mother Therese, 29 Jan. 1951 (MMMA, I/Fou/21).

¹⁶³ Copy of press release about the opening the new Novitiate (MMMA, I/Fou/3/79).

Cushing's persistence likely aided the MMMs' American endeavour, at least in the longer term. More than thirty years earlier the Columban Fathers had grappled with much the same issue. Shortly after his arrival in America in 1919, E.J. McCarthy wrote to his superiors in Ireland making the case for establishing a seminary in their adopted country. He asserted that 'We must be something more than a mere collecting organization. If we aim at nothing more we will scarcely be a success ... It seems to be an ungrateful kind of thing to raise money in a country for an enterprise for which another country gets all the credit'.¹⁶⁴ As the American Hierarchy became increasingly dismayed by the presence of permanent fundraisers who offered nothing to the American Church in return, the need for the Seminary became more apparent. Spurred on by the fear that they may be kicked out of America, by 1922 the new Columban seminary in Omaha, Nebraska was accepting its first students.¹⁶⁵ As with the Columbans before them, the MMMs expressed concern about the quality of candidates. Just one of many similar assertions, Mother Therese stated that the Americans 'need much more help and attention and spiritual motivation than the girls at home – the background of the Faith is not there and so they are more changeable'.¹⁶⁶ Whilst both the Columbans and the MMMs routinely proclaimed the potential of American recruits, the belief that the Irish were morally superior was often noted in the correspondence that went between the two countries.¹⁶⁷

Disappointed with the early results of their Boston venture, in 1951 Martin sought out the advice of a high-up Columban priest. She was 'privately' informed that from their work in America 'they are able to send one third of their income home and also maintain their houses in the East'.¹⁶⁸ Seemingly assured by this information, Martin began to accept that the much hoped for flow of American dollars would come in time.¹⁶⁹ The MMMs, however, did not have to wait too long. A report of income from 1954 recorded that over \$24,000 was raised through their guild and donations. Almost \$6,000 was raised from church collections and another \$6,000 brought in through other

¹⁶⁴ E. J. McCarthy to John Blowick, 18 Jun. 1919 (CFCA, USA 1/19).

¹⁶⁵ E. J. McCarthy to John Blowick, 29 Jun. 1919 (CFCA, USA 1/19); Dries, *Be centred in Christ*, p. 15.

¹⁶⁶ Mother Therese to Martin, 9 Nov. 1953 (MMMA, I/ Fou/3/153).

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, E. J. McCarthy to Michael O'Dwyer, 15 Nov. 1924 (CFCA, USA 1/19).

¹⁶⁸ Martin to Mother Therese, 29 Jan. 1951 (MMMA, I/Fou/21).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.; Martin to Mother Therese, 7 Aug. 1951 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/47).

sources.¹⁷⁰ This of course did not include monies that may have been left out of the official accounts.

In 1952 Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa (FMSA) who had their headquarters near Dundalk, county Louth were similarly gifted a house in the diocese of Boston. This was, however, not the first time the society were the grateful recipients of Cushing's profuse generosity. It would seem that in 1929, after meeting the founder of the FMSA Mother Kevin, Cushing had raised \$30,000 on her behalf.¹⁷¹ As with the MMMs, this latest offer was a strings attached affair. In return for setting up shop in Boston the Sisters had to give something back to its population. In a 1954 radio broadcast the Archbishop announced that the FMSA 'are taking in old people at his request for 3 dollars a day'. Clearly concerned about optics, he similarly declared the ways in which other communities he had allowed into Boston would also be of assistance to his laity.¹⁷² The Sisters' acquiescence certainly paid off. In the late 1950s, Cushing, who by then had been promoted to the title of Cardinal, informed the FMSA of his plan to build them 'a whole new convent and Novitiate' in memory of the recently deceased Mother Kevin. The estimated cost of the undertaking was half a million dollars.¹⁷³ Typical of Cushing's sometimes madcap plans, in 1959 he announced to the press that he was going to charter a flight to fly all the trainee Sisters in Dundalk for the opening of these new buildings. Embarrassed by the prospect of such an extravagant display of riches, an internal circular composed by the Mother Superior asked for 'all to please pray hard that he changes his mind'. She noted that she herself would also 'gently and TACTFULLY [sic]' endeavour to dissuade him.¹⁷⁴ Fortunately for the FMSA, their prayers were seemingly answered and Cushing dropped the idea.

Irish missionary congregations were by no means the sole beneficiaries of the Archbishop's grandiose munificence. By the time of his death in 1970, the Cardinal had in fact more than emptied the diocesan coffers. As noted in one study of Boston's

¹⁷⁰ Report of the year 1954, Archdiocese of Boston – Charitable Institutions and Societies (MMMA, I/Fou/3/208-9).

¹⁷¹ 'Reflections on World Mission Sunday: Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa' (<https://www.thebostonpilot.com/article.asp?Source=Archives&ID=13996>) (2 Sept. 2019).

¹⁷² Mother Therese to Martin, 15 Oct 1954 (MMMA, I/Fou/3/199).

¹⁷³ Circular sent to Mother and Sisters dated Christmas 1959 (Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Africa Archive (FMSA), box 25, folder 5).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Catholic culture, despite Cushing's reputation as 'a champion fundraiser ... he was even better at spending than raising money; his non-stop building projects and open-handed generosity to the myriad of causes left the Boston archdiocese with crushing debt'.¹⁷⁵

Whilst the Columbans' early American efforts continued to pay healthy dividends, the society was less than satisfied with its performance at home. As the battle for vocations and donations continued to intensify across the 1950s, Ireland's first indigenous missionary society struggled. At a time when overall missionary vocations were increasing, numbers joining the Columbans were in decline. Swirling rumours that Ireland's bishops were on the cusp of introducing far stricter rules on recruitment visits to schools added further to this sense of alarm. By no means baseless, as the 1950s progressed a growing chorus of criticism about these promotional visits emerged within the Church. As summarised by Bishop Brown of Galway, it was feared that the current approach taken by missionary societies was in fact causing harm 'to the respect of the children for the religious life'.¹⁷⁶ In 1955 a priest from Cork, with the permission of Cardinal D'Alton, arranged a conference to explore the issue. In an effort to stress the extent of the problem, the invitation that was issued to numerous missionary societies featured quotes from Irish bishops on the subject. The Bishop of Derry, for example, was declared to have asserted 'that the present system of recruiting was not in the interest of vocations or even of religion' whilst 'His Grace of Tuam' was quoted as having said that 'the boys are more incline[d] to be amused than edified'.¹⁷⁷

Following the receipt of the invitation, the Columbans sought to take pre-emptive action. In a bold move, they drew up an eight page document that was sent to the entire Irish Catholic hierarchy. The purpose of the submission was to argue the case as to why the Columbans should be exempt from any changes to the *status quo* in propaganda work, most especially recruitment talks. Predicated on one main line of reasoning – the petition sought to assert or reassert the society's special status as having been founded with 'unique approval from the hierarchy'. It was noted that the Columbans had no schools of their own from which they could draw vocations but instead relied on only

¹⁷⁵ Philip F. Lawlor, *The faithful departed: the collapse of Boston's Catholic culture* (New York, 2008), p. 99.

¹⁷⁶ Letter from Bishop Browne to Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate, 1 Jun. 1956 (GDA, Browne papers, B/3/1).

¹⁷⁷ Invitation to meeting of Postulators sent to Maynooth Mission to China, 15 Apr. 1955 (CFCA, IEI/10).

three propaganda methods; the *Far East*, the Irish Mission League and regular recruitment visits made to schools. In the increasingly competitive missionary landscape, these techniques ‘which our promoters originated and which were approved by the hierarchy for us have now become common property and are used indiscriminately by various religious bodies’. Furthering their case it was declared that they have ‘nothing else to fall back on’. Likely in reference to the more innovative methods of fundraisings dreamt up by others, it was also declared that the Columbans ‘in no way abused the trust of the hierarchy but merely follows the road which they approved’. Concerned that their pleas may be dismissed on the basis that it was ‘well known’ that the Columbans were supplied with men and money from both America and Australia, it was noted that ‘we must still rely on Ireland for a substantial part of our income and for the preponderant majority of our vocations’. In recognition of the similar links between St Patrick’s missionary society (Kiltegnans) and the Irish hierarchy, the document stated that they too should qualify for the same exemption.¹⁷⁸ For reasons which remain unclear, it would seem that the Hierarchy did not introduce official and definitive limits on school visits, but instead left it in the hands of the individual bishop.

Exploring how best to improve their financial returns in Ireland, the Columban authorities privately pondered a number of ideas. With the introduction of the new laws surrounding gambling, the society could no longer use its propaganda organ to promote raffles. However, it was noted that the ‘raffle technique’ was ‘one of the most successful ways of raising money’. Like the Holy Ghosts, the SMA, it would seem were quick to adapt and were alleged to have a ‘shilling a week draw running non-stop throughout the country’. The Columbans envisioned the introduction of a ‘Share the Profits’ scheme whereby parish priests would sell the tickets on behalf of the society and would then keep one third or one half of the money made. Prizes, it was declared, ‘would really have to be of a first class nature in the nature of motorcars’ or ‘TV sets’ or ‘£1000’. Unwilling to risk damaging relations with the Hierarchy and the local clergy, the Columbans, however, decided against introducing such ‘vulgar’ promotional methods.

¹⁷⁸ Document submitted by Maynooth Mission to China to the Irish Hierarchy, 24 Mar. 1956 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Male Religious Orders, Columban Missionaries, folder No.2).

This deference to the Hierarchy paid off. Sympathetic to their situation, Archbishop McQuaid threw the Columbans a lifeline. In 1957 he brought up the possibility of the society opening a house in Dublin. Although the residence in question would ostensibly only be for the purpose of accommodating aspirants attending university, it would appear that McQuaid was clearly aware of the promotional value that it could bring. Initially ‘taken aback’ by the generous offer, the Columban leaders sought quickly to make use of this golden opportunity. As noted by the Superior General ‘The expense both of buying and maintaining a house would be considerable; however, it was deemed that ‘getting the attention of Dublin’ was ‘essential to the welfare of the Society’.¹⁷⁹

As the 1950s progressed the competition between missionary congregations continued to intensify. Angered and dismayed by these growing tensions and the resultant zealotry with which vocations and donations were pursued, McQuaid sought to exert some control over the situation. In 1958 the first General Assembly of Male Orders in Ireland was arranged. No female equivalent as yet existed. Convened for the purpose of establishing a permanent Conference of Religious Superiors in Ireland, it aimed to foster a ‘fraternal union’ between members ‘for the benefit of all Religion’. Whilst it remains unclear as to how the idea came about, it is likely that McQuaid had a hand in its orchestration. Either way, he was invited to address the opening session of the assembly. The Archbishop used the platform to attack the current state of relations between Religious Orders and the Irish Hierarchy declaring that there was ‘a failure to understand the doctrinal basis of a Bishop’s role’. Although there were criticisms all-round, particular condemnation was reserved for ‘The Foreign Missions’ which was ‘the specific sphere of many Institutes represented’ at the meeting. McQuaid sought to unambiguously remind these congregations that ‘if the Catholic Parish had not been so wisely conceived and so faithfully guided by the Bishops for so many generations, not one of your Institutes would be flourishing to-day’. The very ‘existence’ of these Orders was declared to prove just ‘how mightily the Irish bishops have fostered the Foreign Missions’.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Superior General to James Kielt, 16 Oct. 1957 (CFCA, IEI/90).

¹⁸⁰ McQuaid’s address to the Assembly, 6 Aug. 1958, (COFML, D’Alton papers, Conference of Major Religious Superiors folder).

The competition between missionary congregations was also directly addressed with the Archbishop pointing out that ‘there is a distribution of activities, but it is the same God who activates them all in everyone’ and that ‘there is no place for any attitude but that of cooperation with the authority of God. In his concluding remarks the Archbishop asked for God’s blessing for a ‘firmer unity of bond with those whom, in his mysterious providence, God has chosen to rule the Church of God’.¹⁸¹

The address was subsequently circulated to Catholic bishops across the country. Clearly striking a chord beyond Dublin, the Bishop of Ossory, Patrick Collier, wrote to commend McQuaid on the ‘splendid document’, which he declared to be timely and true in substance and form’. Sympathising with the Archbishop’s plight, Collier detailed his struggle to prevent the Capuchins in his own diocese from overstepping their boundaries. He noted their attempt to build ‘a big Hall for social purposes without the knowledge of the Bishop and a passion for pilgrimages here and there, which are really a “day out” with little religion.’¹⁸²

Despite McQuaid’s blunt criticisms Irish Catholic culture continued to boom, congregations continued to vie for vocations and donations. The worst offenders, the missionary bodies, made at least some effort to present a semblance of cooperation and following the assembly set up the Missionary Service Centre. A toothless organisation, its function was solely ‘informational and advisory’.¹⁸³ With each individual society so fiercely protective of its own resources, the constitution of the new body was clear to assert that ‘Under no circumstances’ would it become involved in fundraising.¹⁸⁴ Determined to ensure and expand their own society and missionary endeavours, in the context of surging popular support for all things missionary there was simply too much to be lost by conceding any real autonomy in the name of cooperation.

Further confirming Joseph Kelly’s assessment of the complexity of funding ‘the missions’, the propaganda works discussed in this chapter represent just a portion of

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Bishop of Ossory to McQuaid, 29 Aug. 1958 (DDA, McQuaid papers, Hierarchy correspondence, XV/C/579).

¹⁸³ Joseph Dowdall O.S.B. to Cardinal D’Alton, 26 Mar. 1958 (COFML, D’Alton papers, Conference of Major Religious Superiors folder).

¹⁸⁴ Constitution of the Missionary Service Centre (Irish Jesuit Archive (IJA), ADMN/44/4/9/3 82).

revenue streams used to support the Irish Catholic missionary movement. Whilst certainly the most conspicuous portion, beyond the multiplicity of promotional strategies that were dependent on engaging the masses, each society had its own peculiar and more discreet web of income. Although impossible to trace, individual missionaries were, for example, routinely encouraged to make ‘private’ collections amongst family and friends.¹⁸⁵ Some male societies ran farms.¹⁸⁶ Others derived income from investments in stocks and shares.¹⁸⁷ The Holy Rosary sisters made altar bread and did ecclesiastical embroidery work.¹⁸⁸ The SMA ran a trade in altar wine.¹⁸⁹ The Jesuits sent out letters to solicitors requesting that they ask clients to remember their missions in their wills.¹⁹⁰ Financial and material assistance provided by mission-aid organisations added further to this complex of revenue. The APF played the most significant role in this regard. Monies they collected were used to provide grants which could provide a significant boost to income, albeit in an unpredictable fashion.¹⁹¹ Actions in this public realm ensured that lay experience of missions was not confined to the printed word, but informed the events people attended and shaped the routine of their daily lives.

In 1961 Ireland’s final ever grand Catholic missionary exhibition was staged in the Mansion House in Dublin.¹⁹² Hinting of the changes to come, the priest charged with preparing the Holy Ghost’s display on Kenya noted that the setup they had used at the 1932 exhibition would ‘now be outmoded’. He added that ‘with so many Africans in Dublin their reactions to what is displayed cannot be overlooked. One undiplomatic display might cause real trouble!’ It was decided that they needed to show a ‘Kenya of the future with the Africans themselves very much to the fore in Church, school, hospital etc.’¹⁹³ Despite such efforts to adapt to changing postcolonial worldview, from the latter part of the 1960s, ‘the missions’ increasingly faded from public view. No

¹⁸⁵ See, for example, General Report of Provincial Assembly 1925 (SMA, Cork, Provincial Assemblies box).

¹⁸⁶ See, for example, discussion of farm in General Report of the Provincial Chapter, 1931 (SMA, Irish Provincial Assemblies box, 1925-1989).

¹⁸⁷ See, for example, ‘Visitations reports, 1956-1960’ (Capuchin Archive, CA/ZAM/VIST/ 9).

¹⁸⁸ See, for examples, *African Rosary*, ii, no. 1 (Feb-Apr 1938); *African Rosary*, ii, no. 3 (May-Jul 1938).

¹⁸⁹ 1952 Provincial Report (SMA, Cork, Provincial Assemblies box).

¹⁹⁰ T. J. Martin to the Provincial, 3 Jan. 1955 (IJA, ADMN/44/4/9/3 40).

¹⁹¹ See, for example, documents in (SMA archive, Cork Propagation of the Faith box).

¹⁹² *Irish Times*, 17 Jun. 1961.

¹⁹³ Letter from unidentified Holy Ghost priest to Enda Watters, 3 Jan. 1961 (Spiritan Archive, Editors’ papers, box 10).

longer the object of unquestioned adulation, Catholic Ireland's missionary bodies became an increasingly obscure facet of an Ireland of old.

Chapter four

Missions and the State

In late 1949 Fr E. J. McCarthy sat down to commit his recollections of his society's beginnings in America to paper. A founding member of the Columbans, having simultaneously worked in the roles of manager and editor of the *American Far East* at the same time as serving as regional superior, McCarthy was an unparalleled authority on his subject. Before launching into a lengthy retelling of the Columbans early difficulties and triumphs in ensuring their position within the America Catholic Church, he paused to record his account of the first ever meeting of Éamon de Valera and Archbishop Mannix in June 1920. Commonly identified as a key moment in the developing alliance between two of the most prominent figures of Irish nationalism, and later of the anti-Treaty side, McCarthy proudly noted that the encounter had taken place at the Columban headquarters in Nebraska. With both men in America for the same purpose of rousing support for an independent Ireland, the occasion was imbued with significance for McCarthy.¹ As noted in chapter one, the Columbans had hitched their wagon to the nationalist cause, presenting 'pagan' missionary endeavour as a natural extension of the Irish fight for freedom.²

Keen to show off the site chosen for the Columbans' American seminary, after hosting lunch McCarthy took his 'two distinguished visitors' on a drive. Reportedly impressed, Mannix was said to have likened the location to the "the country between Cork and Blarney". De Valera's 'approach to a compliment took a different and rather unexpected approach'. It was contended that he had proclaimed "If I was a young man I'd be going with ye to China". As observed by McCarthy, this utterance could never have been 'put to the test ... because in addition to being the titular President of an Irish Republic', de Valera was already 'a married man with a young family'. However, recalling the 'quite sincere look' of the future Taoiseach's face, the Columban man interpreted the 'statement as a genuine expression of goodwill'.³

¹ Joseph Broderick, 'De Valera and Archbishop Daniel Mannix' in *History Ireland*, ii, no. 3 (1994).

² McCarthy to Donal [surname not specified], 11 Nov. 1949 (Columban Fathers' Central Archive (CFCA), USA 1/11).

³ Ibid.

When de Valera became the President of the Executive Council of the now independent Free State twelve years later in 1932, evidence of this ‘goodwill’ soon became apparent. Whilst certainly not hostile to Ireland’s growing Catholic missionary zeal, throughout their ten year administration, Cumann na nGaedheal had remained largely muted on the cause. In contrast, de Valera became a loud champion of the movement as a whole and of individual missionary congregations. Eager to similarly associate themselves with the surging popularity of the missions, both his political allies and opponents quickly followed suit. Thus, over the course of Catholic Ireland’s missionary boom, the nation’s political elite played a key role in establishing the missions as a cornerstone of Catholic Irish identity. With the numbers of Irish on the ‘pagan’ mission fields growing almost year on year, the missions were increasingly held up by leaders of Church and state as evidence of the success of the fledgling nation. However, even with de Valera at the helm, the relationship between the Irish state and Irish missionaries had strict limitations. This ‘goodwill’ only went so far.

This chapter explores the complexities of relations between the modern Irish missionary movement and the Irish state. With the aforementioned near absence of Cumann na nGaedheal input, it begins in 1932 just as Irish missionary zeal began to boom and concludes in the late 1960s by which time the downward trend in popular support for the cause had become apparent. Broadly divided into two main sections, this chapter firstly explores the ways in which the Irish state aligned itself with and furthered the success of the movement. Within this, it focuses on the role of the public missionary spectacle in asserting the state’s endorsement of the Catholic missions and *vice versa*. It then moves on to examine the contribution of de Valera and his political peers in promulgating and fortifying the already existing narratives of Catholic Ireland’s missionary exceptionalism. Finally this section probes the use of the missions within Irish political discourse and debates with an emphasis on the concept of the ‘Irish spiritual empire’. Popularised in the nineteenth century, the presentation of the Irish diaspora as apostles of this ‘spiritual empire’ provided a sugar-coated interpretation of mass emigration in post-famine Ireland.⁴ The second part of this chapter explores the limitations of the missionary-state relationship. It asks when and why political leaders

⁴ For discussion of the concept of ‘spiritual empire’ in the nineteenth century see Sarah Roddy, ‘Spiritual imperialism and the mission of the Irish race: the Catholic Church and emigration from nineteenth-century Ireland’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii, no. 152 (2013).

proved unwilling or unable to exploit the apparatus of state to assist the nation's widely revered Catholic missionaries. It examines how the state's passive approach to the increasingly prominent position of the missions within Catholic Ireland's classrooms simultaneously served and hindered the cause. The final section addresses the impact of the Irish state's post-war re-emergence onto the world stage on the relationship between the two entities. With the 1960s serving as the backdrop of both the pinnacle and sudden decline of the missionary movement, this period brought the limitations of the relationship into sharp focus. Exploring the rise of NGOs in Ireland, it asks why the Irish state's interactions with this new form of aid giving was so different from its approach to the missionary movement.

Public missionary celebrations such as jubilees, anniversaries and opening ceremonies were an important feature of missionary propaganda. As mentioned in chapter one, these events were staged to impress, surrounded by as much pomp and ceremony as was possible. Fundamental in creating a sense of occasion, the attendance of dignitaries was essential. Whilst in the 1920s the most glittering of these guestlists were made up of members from the upper echelons of the Catholic Hierarchy, by the end of the 1930s the attendance of figures of state had become something of a requirement. Whilst the patronage of the Episcopate always took precedence, the endorsement of Catholic Ireland's political elite added a further much desired boost to prestige. With the aim of maximizing promotional value, the ideal guestlist included key members of both Church and State with the occasional appearance from 'prominent professional men'.⁵ Exploited on both sides as a means of mutual legitimization these very public displays served to bolster bonds not only between the individual congregation and government but also by extension between Church and State generally. In addition to providing useful promotional fodder for the respective society's propaganda organ, the often widespread coverage of these events in both regional and national papers had the added benefit of bringing the attention of a much wider audience.⁶ Very much in line with the surging popularity of all things missionary, within one three month period in late 1938 the Columbans staged a spectacle at which the cornerstone of their new college was

⁵ *Irish Independent*, 16 Dec. 1938.

⁶ See, for example, discussion of the SMA's centenary celebrations in *Irish Examiner*, 1 Oct. 1956.

laid, the Holy Ghosts had the blessing of their new senior scholasticate and the Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) celebrated the opening of their new Novitiate.⁷

The Holy Ghost's celebration was by far the most extravagant of these events. Reporting on the occasion the *Evening Herald* declared that this new missionary college opened in Kimmage, Dublin had 'the distinction of being the second largest Scholasticate in the world' second only to that at the society's Mother House in Paris.⁸ Attended by numerous Irish Catholic missionary bishops as well the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Minister for Finance and a host of other TDs, all took their place in the procession which formed a key part of the ceremony.⁹ Typifying the way in which these spectacles promoted and reinforced the alliance of Church and state, the Holy Ghost Provincial took the opportunity to make a toast to 'their most distinguished past pupil', de Valera. He thanked "'An Taoiseach'" for creating a 'truly Christian Constitution' which was declared to have settled 'the centuries-old quarrel between this country and England'. In response, de Valera spoke of the assistance he had received in drawing up the recently enacted *Bunreacht na hÉireann* and went on to declare that 'he was sorry that he was not at liberty to say how much of that service and help he got from members of the Holy Ghost Society'.¹⁰

The simple attendance of prominent statesmen quite often sufficed in adding to the pageantry of these celebrations. It was, however, not uncommon that they lend further weight to the occasion by making an address. Just as missionary societies were happy to extol the virtues of the fledgling nation and its leaders, the political elite was more than willing to return the favour. Unsurprisingly, the content of these speeches, both scripted and seemingly impromptu, reflected the wider thoroughly positive consensus surrounding Irish Catholic missionary activity. At the same Holy Ghost ceremony W. T. Cosgrave, for example, made a speech in which he declared 'These new buildings were symbols evident and unimpeachable proofs of the rebirth and splendid revival of the olden spiritual vigour and missionary enterprise of the Irish people. The continuity of

⁷ *Anglo-Celt*, 15 Oct. 1938; *Irish Independent*, 31 Oct. 1938; *Irish Independent*, 16 Oct. 1938.

⁸ *Evening Herald*, 31 Oct 1938.

⁹ *Irish Independent*, 31 Oct 1938.

¹⁰ *Irish Times*, 31 Oct. 1938.

their country's history and their survival as a nation were due under Providence to one thing above all-the attachment of the people to the Faith'.¹¹

Whilst such displays of public state backing only became the norm towards end of the 1930s, a standardized rhetoric was quick to emerge. Cosgrave's toast conformed to a formula that was followed by political figures attending missionary celebrations right up until the late 1960s.¹² The function of these speeches was not only to pay homage to the society in question but to also draw wider links between Irish missionary activity, the Irish nation and Irish Catholicism more generally. With routine references made to the 'rich harvest of souls', Ireland's missionary heroes and the exceptionalism of the 'Irish Faith', these speeches very much replicated the narratives propagated in the home-produced missionary magazines.¹³ The success of the individual missionary order was placed into a wider context in which all Irish Catholics could share in the glory. Political leaders exploited missionary achievements as a source of collective pride and an uncontentious focal point of Irish Catholic identity.¹⁴ The oft-made references to Ireland's ancient missionary heritage found in the home-produced missionary magazines was regularly invoked in these speeches as a means of asserting the special role of Irish Catholics 'as conveyors of the good news' and their position in the world.¹⁵

Not all congregations were equally adept in making use of political patronage. True to form, Mary Martin, the founder of the MMMs, was something of a master in exploiting this type of publicity. Unlike the Holy Ghosts who had long run some of the country's most elite Catholic schools for boys and could therefore call upon the loyalties of distinguished past pupils to spruce up a guestlist, as Ireland's youngest religious congregation the MMMs had no such reserves of cultural capital. Martin was, however, not wholly bankrupt in this regard. As a member of a prominent Dublin family who had earned significant wealth through trade, she invested much energy into transforming her own familial connections into gains for her society. In addition to the aforementioned premieres of their film 'Visitation', in the space of twenty-five years the MMM held

¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 31 Oct. 1938.

¹² See, for example, Jack Lynch's address at the fiftieth anniversary of the Columban Fathers in *Irish Press*, 7 Sept. 1968.

¹³ See, for example, *The Medical Missionary of Mary*, xii, no. 2 (Mar. 1952).

¹⁴ See, for example, de Valera's address to American visitors during the Eucharistic Congress in *Irish Press*, 27 Jun. 1932.

¹⁵ *Irish Press*, 6 Jun. 1962.

five other major public spectacles.¹⁶ Numerous more modest occasions were also staged with relative frequency.¹⁷

Coming at the very pinnacle of Catholic Ireland's missionary zeal, the celebration of the MMM's 1962 silver jubilee was the most extravagant of all these public missionary spectacles. Held in Drogheda, home of the MMM's headquarters, the event received extensive press coverage. A photograph of Martin with the two 'guests of honour', Cardinal D'Alton and President de Valera graced the front page of the *Irish Press*. It reported that the two men received a warm welcome from cheering crowds who gathered along the flag and bunting decked route to the Church' where they attended 'a special High Mass'. On arrival the President 'inspected a guard-of-honour of Gardaí' and after Mass both were formally received by Martin at the MMM hospital attached to the society's headquarters. In addition to the usual 'dignitaries of Church and State' and 'distinguished visitors', high-ranking 'members of the diplomatic corps' were also in attendance. Further heightening the sense of occasion, the US ambassador to Ireland made an address calling for an 'international effort' to support the congregation.¹⁸ As was typical, Archbishop McQuaid shunned the event.

This relentless drive for publicity and cultivation of links in the upper echelons paid dividends. Proclaimed to have 'caught the imagination of the public' by the *Irish Times* in 1946, the MMM's quest to attract the support of the masses was in part facilitated by the endorsement of the political elite.¹⁹ In preparation for Taoiseach John A. Costello's 1956 trip to America, a lengthy speech was drafted which set out the 'glorious' history of Irish missionaries. Whilst the name and mission-fields of all of Ireland's male societies were given, the work of their female counterparts was summed up in one short phrase – 'Missionary sisters go all over the world too'. However, highlighting not only the prominence of the MMM but also Martin's ability to transcend the cloak of modest anonymity that was deemed to befit women religious, her society were the only female missionary body mentioned by name. The speech noted that the MMM was as 'one of

¹⁶ See chapter three for further discussion of Martin's background and the premiere of 'Visitation'.

¹⁷ Anastasia Taggart and Isabelle Smyth, *The Medical Missionaries of Mary in Drogheda: 1939-1936* (Drogheda, 1999), pp 11-51.

¹⁸ *Irish Press*, 11 Jun. 1962; *Irish Independent*, 11 Jun. 1962.

¹⁹ Description of the congregation in *Irish Times*, 16 Mar. 1946.

the most notable developments of recent times', asserting that 'Their leprosy settlements in Nigeria have become very famous'.²⁰

The love-in between the Irish Catholic missionary movement and the Irish state could be dated back to the 1932 Eucharistic Congress. As noted in chapter three, this event was – and still is – widely regarded as a pivotal moment in Church-state relations in Ireland. Considered the most public of declarations of the alliance between the two, albeit not technically an official one, this pageantry of Irish Catholicity was very much staged for all the world to see.²¹ The inclusion of Ireland's first Catholic missionary exhibition at the Congress was not insignificant. It is, however, notable that this aspect of the spectacle was largely ignored by the political elite. Although patronised by a long list of Irish and foreign bishops as well as the Apostolic Nuncio, there were no reports of members of government having visited or even commented upon the exhibition itself.²²

Nor was any mention made of the nation's contemporary missionary output at the Holy Ghost' extravagant garden party. Held to honour the arrival of Cardinal Lauri, the Papal Legate to the Congress, the event was staged in the grounds of the society's prestigious Blackrock College, de Valera's *alma mater*. With more than 20,000 guests in attendance which included the elite of Church and state, the spectacle seemed, at least retrospectively, ripe for a nod to 'the missions'.²³ Whilst ostensibly a straightforward celebration, the entire event had been contrived by president of the college and future Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, as a means of helping the new Taoiseach out of a political quandary. As detailed by John Cooney, as part of his election campaign, de Valera had promised the abolition of the role of Governor-General. Although a largely ceremonial post, its association with British rule had made it a target of the Fianna Fáil political offensive. With the position still very much intact by the time the Congress came to pass, de Valera was aware that the Papal Legate would expect to meet the holder of the office, James MacNeill. A demonstration of the oft-

²⁰ Copy of speech given by Costello in America (University College Dublin Archives (UCDA), Costello papers, P190/870).

²¹ For further discussion of the Eucharistic Congress see Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and the Vatican: the politics and diplomacy of Church-state relations, 1922-1960* (Cork, 1995), pp 93-8.

²² *Irish Times*, 30 Jun. 1932.

²³ *Kerryman*, 25 Jun. 1932; *Irish Times*, 22 Jun. 1932.

noted close relationship between two of the most influential figures of public life in twentieth-century Ireland, McQuaid orchestrated the occasion so that de Valera could avoid interacting with MacNeill thus saving the new Taoiseach from embarrassment.²⁴

De Valera's address made in Dublin Castle later that day to welcome Lauri similarly paid no heed to the nation's modern-day missionaries. With the entire Congress declared to mark the 1500th anniversary of St Patrick's mission to Ireland, this omission was perhaps surprising. However, as with the garden party more immediate political concerns dominated. With the next best thing to the Pope in his midst, the newly elected leader of the Irish Free State instead used the opportunity to further establish the groundwork for his ongoing efforts to dismantle the Treaty. Remaining within the realm of politeness that respected the religiosity of the event, after making the required salutations de Valera focused on the role of the 'successors of Peter' in coming to the aid of the Irish who for centuries suffered under 'unjust domination'.²⁵

The opening of the Athlone Broadcasting Station, 'Ireland's first high power station' offers perhaps a more apt date of origin. Whilst the station had been temporarily used during the Eucharistic Congress to transmit Pope Pius XI's address from Rome, it was only officially opened in February 1933. Keen to exploit the propagandistic value of radio that could reach far beyond Irish shores, de Valera had been a key champion of the project.²⁶ To officially mark its completion he took to the airwaves to speak to the nation and its diaspora. With a mass audience in mind, de Valera used the broadcast to affirm his vision of Ireland and its people. Drawing on many already popular foundational narratives long associated with nationalist Irish identity, the new leader of the Free State rattled off a rendition of Irish history that would have made the hearts of the nation's Catholic missionary propagandists soar. As if lifted straight from the pages of one of their home-produced magazines, de Valera began with the arrival of Christianity to Ireland, moved on to assert the glorious role of the Irish 'in christianising [sic] and civilising the barbarian hordes that had overrun Britain and Europe' after the

²⁴ John Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid: ruler of Catholic Ireland* (New York, 2000), pp 73-4.

²⁵ Maurice Moynihan (ed.), *Speeches and statements by Éamon de Valera 1917-73* (Dublin, 1980), pp 217-19.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p 230.

fall of 'Imperial Rome' and concluded by linking these past efforts to the modern day missionary endeavour.²⁷

As in the missionary periodical, the more recent waves of mass emigration were seamlessly absorbed into this history. The 'eloquent proof of the zeal of her people' was declared to have 'manifested once more in modern times in North America and Australia and in the mission fields of Africa and China'. Proclaimed 'Ireland's greatest contribution to the welfare of humanity', these 'services to religion' were seconded only by her 'devotion to freedom' which had been tested over 'seven hundred years' of invasion. Centred around the understanding of Ireland as the land of saints and scholars, the address went on to assert the value of the Irish language, music and poetry. Very much in line with the exclusivity of the Irish-Ireland movement, this idealised version of Ireland was unapologetically Catholic. Contemporary Irish Protestant missionary efforts, for example, went unmentioned. Unconcerned, de Valera concluded 'You sometimes hear Ireland charged with a narrow and intolerant nationalism, but Ireland today has no dearer hope than this: that, true to her own holiest traditions, she may humbly serve the truth and help by truth to save the world'.²⁸

This teleological account of history asserting the link between the Ireland's ancient and present day missionaries quickly became a staple of de Valera's public addresses. Versions of this narrative proved particularly apt for what would become his traditional St Patrick's day broadcast. In 1936, for example, he declared 'this country would be called on to play in the struggle to maintain Christian civilisation in the coming age, a part as great as it played ... in the past'.²⁹ Again Protestant efforts were afforded no airtime in this projection of Irishness. Their absence was symptomatic of a stripping of any sense of the wider missionary revival, Protestant or Catholic, from this tale of Irish exceptionalism. Devoid of context, the constructed Irish missionary movement of the twentieth century was easily manipulated to serve de Valera's nation-building project. Missionary successes were interpreted as a 'sign' of 'the renaissance of the Irish nation'.³⁰ Spurred on by the surge in popular missionary zeal in the post-Emergency

²⁷ Ibid., pp 231-3.

²⁸ Ibid., pp 231-3.

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 18 Mar. 1936.

³⁰ *Irish Press*, 23 Jun. 1932.

period, at a speech given at a pre-Ard-Fheis meeting in 1948, de Valera took this missionary triumphalism even further. Whilst previously Ireland's modern-day Catholic missionaries were deemed to be emulating the glories of the ancient counterparts it was now concluded that 'to-day missionary work was being done all over the world by Irish people which was even greater in magnitude' than that done in 'the sixth to eight century'.³¹ Largely obscured in the relevant historiography by the concentration on de Valera's often mocked vision of the Irish rural idyll filled with either 'happy' or 'comely' maidens, the place of the missionary in this construction is routinely skimmed over. However, over the course of the 1930s 'the missions' became an established facet of what is often dubbed de Valera's Ireland.

Although merely repeating what the home-produced missionary magazines had themselves been proclaiming for more than a decade, the articulation of this teleological missionary history by the nation's most prominent statesman added further legitimacy to their claims.³² The Irish, it was asserted, were a providentially chosen race and their ancient missionary lineage stood as testament to this fact. They were an inherently Catholic people and had the honour and burden of further propagating their faith amongst what were deemed their inferiors in both the western and non-western world. Lifting missionary discourses beyond the realm of print and into the wider public domain, de Valera's endorsement contributed to Catholic Ireland's rapidly growing embrace of all things missionary. Although not quantifiable, this bestowal of state adulation could only but help the individual congregations in their ongoing quest to secure the donations and vocations required to sustain and expand their endeavours.

It must be noted that the phrase 'spiritual empire' was absent from de Valera's rhetoric. Despite the growing popularity of the concept amongst the Irish Hierarchy and media, likely wary of its imperialistic overtones, it would seem he never used the term. Other members of the nation's political elite had no such qualms. The success of Ireland's missionary 'spiritual empire' was routinely trumpeted as a point of collective pride. Whilst in the 1930s de Valera had been the main proponent of this teleological missionary narrative within the political or quasi-political sphere, he certainly did not remain its sole champion. As exemplified in the discussion of W. T. Cosgrave above,

³¹ *Irish Examiner*, 22 Jun. 1948.

³² See chapter 1 for further discussion of this narrative in the home-produced missionary magazines.

‘the missions’ were readily adopted by figures on all sides of the political divide as a means of asserting Irish identity and ‘specialness’. In 1948, Taoiseach, John A. Costello, for example, used his own St. Patrick’s Day broadcast to assert that Ireland’s ‘spiritual empire whose rule extends throughout all parts of the globe’ was ‘retribution...for our past sufferings and injustices’.³³

As in the missionary magazines themselves, any references or allusions to this ‘empire’ were always quickly followed by assurances of its peaceful and spiritual nature. In 1937, Sean T. O’Kelly, for example, proclaimed ‘our Empire, thanks be to God, is a spiritual not material empire’.³⁴ The inherent implication was, of course, that Ireland’s ‘Empire of Christ’ was unquestionably morally superior to the British empire. Ireland was deemed motivated by God instead of greed and used ‘spiritual weapons’ instead of violence. Irish Senator, P. J. O’Hare put this sentiment rather bluntly when he declared ‘the wisdom of the choice made by Irish people when they preferred the spiritual value of faith and freedom to the doubtful material prosperity of a second-rate tailpiece of empire’ could be ‘seen to-day with the great material empire in its death agonies and Ireland’s faith and faith-in-freedom and spiritual empire as strong and as great as in their pristine glory’.³⁵ Despite the lack of subtlety and somewhat less tactful than the approach of his political superiors, O’Hare accurately captured the boastful triumphalism surrounding Irish missionary success. The fact that Ireland was not capable of having a material empire was rarely mentioned. Such an admission was hardly conducive to the nation-building project.

In the context of Ireland’s worsening emigration crisis, this Irish ‘spiritual empire’ became increasingly attractive concept. With successive Irish governments coming under fire for their failure to stem the ‘national haemorrhage’, it became an expedient means of offsetting the growing chorus of critics charging political failure.³⁶ Through careful manipulation and intentional vagueness it was routinely asserted that Ireland as

³³ *Irish Press*, 18 Mar. 1949.

³⁴ *Irish Press*, 13 Dec. 1937.

³⁵ Speech given at a public meeting to support the candidature of Cahir Healy, MP as reported in *Fermanagh Herald*, 27 Oct. 1951.

³⁶ See, for example, article criticizing the Irish emigration crisis in *Irish Times*, 10 May 1956; see also Enda Delaney, ‘The vanishing Irish? The exodus from Ireland in the 1950s’ in Dermot Keogh, Finbar O’Shea and Carmel Quinlan (eds), *Ireland: the lost decade in the 1950s* (Dublin, 2004), pp 81-4.

a ‘mother country’ had actually ‘sent...out millions of her people abroad’.³⁷ The thousands of migrants who left each year, often for economic reasons, were purposefully conflated with the missionaries who left to work in ‘pagan’ countries. In his 1939 St. Patrick’s Day broadcast de Valera asserted that ‘with Columbanus...began those successive waves of emigrants from Ireland which were destined in the course of the ages to bring such profit and advantage to such a multitude of peoples’.³⁸ Without making direct reference to the ‘spiritual empire’ the meaning was the same: emigrants and religious missionaries were part of one narrative. Both were united by the common cause of aggrandizing the ‘mother country’ by spreading the ‘Irish faith’.

As the emigration crisis came to the head in the 1950s, prominent Fine Gael politician, James Dillon, became a particularly vocal exponent of this line. In June 1950, for example, in his capacity as Minister for Agriculture, Dillon referenced the emigration crisis during an address given at the Ardagh School of Domestic Economy. He declared that he had ‘never believed that emigration was an unqualified disaster for Ireland. I am not so sure that emigration was not, in part, a dispensation of Providence for our people’.³⁹ Five years later, speaking at Maynooth after the consecration of Monsignor McGettrick, a Kiltegan priest who had been appointed the first bishop of a new diocese in Southern Nigeria, Dillon made this point more forcefully. According to the *Irish Press* he declared

Ireland had acquired in the world a great spiritual empire, greater than England or Rome ever had, and in no corner of it was there any desire to undo that imperial heritage. In this time of gloom and pessimism the voice of Ireland and the Irish was powerful to prevent the vice of materialism and other horrors which would prevail if the voice of Ireland was not heard. While emigration from economic necessity would be a disaster, there was, however, a natural tendency for their people to spread themselves across the world. They had done a service to God and the Church and they could be proud of what they had done.⁴⁰

Whilst criticisms of Ireland’s actual missionaries were practically non-existent, support for this all-encompassing ‘spiritual empire’ was certainly not universal. Voices of

³⁷ See for example Sean T. O’Kelly’s address to a gathering of American visitors to Ireland in *Irish Independent*, 19. Sept. 1949.

³⁸ *Irish Times*, 18 Mar. 1939.

³⁹ *Irish Press*, 24 Jun. 1950.

⁴⁰ *Irish Press*, 23 May 1955.

dissent were heard in the media, the Hierarchy and the Dáil.⁴¹ One Independent TD, Jack McQuillen, was particularly disparaging of this construction arguing that ‘we have not got a spiritual empire abroad any more than we have consultation with the man on the moon’, adding that it was ‘claptrap’ to talk about ‘letting people go abroad’.⁴² Even de Valera raised objections. Responding to boasts of Ireland’s empire in the Dáil, he argued that ‘the Empire which Deputy Dillon speaks’ is a ‘by-product’, ‘we would be better pleased if we kept our population...if we kept our 8,000,000, or even 6,000,000 and the rest were sent out as missionaries’.⁴³

Dillon’s own Taoiseach, John A. Costello, was similarly uncommitted to this aggressively optimistic interpretation of the ‘spiritual empire’. At a 1955 function staged by the White Fathers, a French missionary congregation who only arrived in Ireland a few years earlier, Costello gave a slightly unusual speech. Straying from the standardised rhetoric, he declared that ‘one of the reproaches made against the Irish Government in the last thirty years was the number of people who had gone abroad, but one species of emigrant that they did not begrudge in the dark continent of Africa, or any part of the world was the young missionary priest, nun or brother.’⁴⁴ According to this speech, missionaries were above the normal emigrant because ‘they will enrich our own country, increase its renown and bring further spiritual benefits’ to those at home.⁴⁵ Instead of trying to cloak mass emigration in the glory of the ‘the missions’, Costello did the opposite. By setting them apart, he sought to assure his missionary audience that they have not been tarnished by the emigration crisis. Although tailored to suit the occasion, this address illustrates the overall failure of this more complex ‘spiritual empire’. In the short-term it did provide a politically convenient counterargument to the increasingly bitter objections to government responses to emigration, however, beyond this it did not hold much sway. Not even Catholic Ireland could wholly be convinced that the mass exodus of its population was its providential destiny.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Bishop of Cork, Dr Lucey, was the most vocal of critic within the Hierarchy see, for example, his address on emigration at the centenary celebrations of a St. Michael’s church in Ballinasloe in *Donegal News*, 6 Sept. 1958.

⁴² *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxi, col. 1824 (23 May 1957).

⁴³ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, lxxxviii, col. 758 (15 Jul. 1942).

⁴⁴ *Irish Times*, 10 Sept. 1955.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Calls for the government to halt emigration continued throughout the period, see Enda Delaney, ‘Emigration, political culture and the evolution of post-war Irish society’ in Brian Girvin and Gary Murphy (eds), *The Lemass era: politics and society in Ireland of Seán Lemass* (Dublin, 2005), pp 62-3.

Perhaps in demonstration of a genuine belief or perhaps as a function of Church-state reciprocity, numerous ecclesiastical elites gave weight to this interpretation by proclaiming the virtues of this ‘spiritual empire’.⁴⁷ However, not all were as comfortable with the phrase as the existing historiography would suggest. Although mission-sending bodies were certainly gratified by the underlying idea of a worldwide network of Irish Catholic influence, framing this concept in terms of empire raised concern for some.⁴⁸ As noted in chapter one, whilst not totally absent from their rhetoric, the first wave of Ireland’s home-produced missionary magazines largely avoided using the term itself. Responding to the global post-war surge in nationalist movements, in 1957 the Columban Superior General, Timothy Connolly, spoke as a part of a lecture series in Dublin entitled ‘Is there an Irish Spiritual Empire?’. Citing the same concerns that had likely motivated de Valera’s avoidance of the phrase for more than two decades, Connolly concluded that owing to its imperialist connotations the popular term should be ditched. According to the *Irish Times*’ report of the lecture, he asserted that given that ‘Irish missionaries were not working to plant the Irish flag anywhere ... it might be misleading, if not dangerous, to speak of Ireland’s spiritual empire’.⁴⁹

Picking up on Connolly’s assertions, the aforementioned Deputy Quinlan brought up the lecture in the Dáil. He declared that ‘At the present moment, some of the most prominent clergymen in the country are criticising members of this House for suggesting that we have a spiritual empire abroad and that the influence which we have as a nation is of the extent alleged by Deputy Dillion and others here’.⁵⁰ Exemplifying the obsequiousness that characterised Church-state relations more generally, Connolly felt compelled to publicly explain himself. Publishing a letter in the *Irish Independent* he stated that ‘I would like to point out that at no time in my lecture did I make any

⁴⁷ For an example of ecclesiastical endorsement of Ireland’s ‘spiritual empire’ see the Bishop of Waterford’s address to the local St Patrick’s parade in *Irish Press*, 19 Mar. 1948.

⁴⁸ Bishop of Cork, Dr Lucey was the most vocal of critic within the Irish hierarchy see, for example, his address on emigration at the centenary celebrations of a St. Michael’s church in Ballinasloe in *Donegal News*, 6 Sept. 1958.

⁴⁹ *Irish Times*, 16 Nov. 1957.

⁵⁰ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxiv, col. 8 (28 Nov. 1957).

reference to members of Dail Eireann, nor did I criticise them either explicitly or by implication.’⁵¹

Going beyond the somewhat contentious idea of the ‘spiritual empire’, Catholic Ireland’s missionary output became a standard feature of Irish political discourse. Reflecting the trajectory of Ireland’s missionary zeal the frequency of these references to missionaries in both houses of the Oireachtas increased dramatically in the 1930s and reached its peak in the early 1960s. Deputies and senators from all sides regularly invoked ‘that glorious band of missionaries’ as a convenient means of bolstering their arguments.⁵² In 1961 Taoiseach Sean Lemass, for example, cited missionaries in his attempt to explain the nation’s ‘far too heavy’ emigration figures. Arguing his case he declared that ‘we know that something over 1000 priests and nuns leave this country every year for the missionary fields’.⁵³ Although members of the opposition had made almost the exact same assertions during their own reign, this attempt at an excuse or partial excuse was quickly shot down.⁵⁴ As pointed out by Deputy Corish ‘these people have been emigrating every year’ and so do not really alter the figures.⁵⁵

Outside of the thorny subject of emigration parliamentary references to Irish missionaries and their missions were largely uncontentious. Emotive references to Ireland’s pride and joy featured in a wide variety of debates ranging from partition to communism. There were few arguments that could not be enhanced by at least some vague reference to the Irish missions and missionaries. For example, in 1948, Fianna Fáil TD, Michael Kitt ‘made a special appeal to have something done immediately’ to improve the ‘miserable pension’ for retired teachers. In making his case he pointed to the impact these teachers had in moulding good ‘Irishmen and women’ many of whom ‘went forth as missionaries to foreign countries, to spread the Faith’.⁵⁶ Similarly, in a debate on the finances of the Department of Education, one Fine Gael deputy invoked

⁵¹ *Irish Independent*, 2 Dec. 1957.

⁵² *Dáil Éireann deb.*, vol. 34, col. 653 (9 Apr. 1930).

⁵³ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxxxviii, col. 840 (20 Apr. 1961); *Catholic Missions* gives the number of religious departing for the mission-fields in 1961 to be 1,199; this figure includes those who left to work in the western countries including Australia and America as well as those who went to ‘pagan’ countries; it should also be noted that the majority of these missionaries had already been on the missions before, see *Catholic Missions*, cxxv, no. 1 (Jan. 1962).

⁵⁴ See, for example, *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxiv, col. 1141 (22 Mar. 1949).

⁵⁵ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxxxviii, col. 1804 (25 Apr. 1961).

⁵⁶ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cx, col. 1135 (4 May 1948).

missionaries as a means of defending the Irish education system. Justifying the percentage of pupils who remain in education after the age of fourteen, he declared ‘Irish missionaries who go abroad spread the light, not only of Faith but of learning’ and so concluded ‘A system of education that can produced that results [sic] is no mean system and there cannot be very much basically wrong with it’.⁵⁷

Missionaries featured most regularly in debates on international affairs. Just as with domestic issues, missionaries were used to support all shades of opinion on a diverse range of topics. In 1937 Independent TD Patrick Belton, echoing a popular sentiment, condemned the government’s neutral stance on the Spanish Civil War. This opposition was largely based on the belief that non-intervention was an act of support for the anti-Catholic communist Spanish regime.⁵⁸ Belton, the most vocal objector, implored de Valera to consider the ‘terrible shock... Irish missionary workers the world over will feel...when they read in the world press’ about Ireland recognising an ‘anti-Christian government’. Later in the rather drawn out debate Belton once more played the missionary card by declaring:

Why did not the Government of this county, that has sent missionaries to the ends of the earth...show the world that we have a foreign policy worthy of a nation that has sent out those missionaries to spread the Gospel of Christ throughout the world, instead of allying and recognising ourselves with a Government that has set before it the task of wiping out Christianity in Spain.⁵⁹

Such references not only served to illustrate the high regard in which Irish society held missionaries but also demonstrated their essential role in shaping Irish perceptions of the world. Reflecting the success of this element of the nation-building programme there were few world events that were not in some way mediated through a missionary lens. Ireland was Catholic and it was missionary. Missionary endeavours provided national leaders with a claim of having a position of prestige in the world. It was one of the only ways in which the struggling nation could even conceive of having a significant role in international affairs. Liam Cosgrave summarised this attitude in 1956 when he stated: ‘While we have no great material resources or strength, we have, spread throughout the world, Irish missionaries who exert a powerful influence for good’.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Spoken by Donnchadh MacSeoin in *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxviii, col. 1418 (10 Jun. 1958).

⁵⁸ Ferghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999), p. 7.

⁵⁹ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, lxxv, col. 669 (19 Feb. 1937).

⁶⁰ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxx, col. 1648 (11 Jul. 1956).

The Second World War exposed the limitations of the missionary-state relationship. Up until this point interactions had largely been confined to mutually beneficial public exchanges. As China opened up as a theatre of conflict, the safety of Irish missionaries working in the 'Far East' came to the fore. The Department of External Affairs made regular attempts to use diplomatic channels to inquire into the welfare of these citizens.⁶¹ Beyond this, however, there was very little the Irish government could actually do. In 1942, de Valera, addressed this issue before the Dáil. He explained that the 'absence of a representative' presented 'a great handicap in trying to look after the interests of our people in places like the Far East'. This problem was compounded by the 'widely-separated' locations of 'Irish missionary houses' and this was the cause of the long delays in getting 'replies to the inquiries the Department was asked to make'.⁶² Two years later, in a similar speech, he assured Irish religious communities in the 'Far East' that 'we think of them and their sufferings'. He further added that it is 'the constant concern of the Department of External Affairs to do whatever possible...to lighten the suffering of our citizens abroad... within the means at our disposal.'⁶³ These 'means' were, however, extremely limited and remained so throughout the golden era of the Irish missions. Two years after the war, a Jesuit missionary on leave in Dublin approached the Department to raise 'the question of consular representation in China'. Although the 'desirability of having such representation became very obvious during the recent war', the Departmental secretary explained that 'we have not yet the personnel which would enable us to open a consulate'. The only feasible option would be to find 'some suitable resident of the Far East' that could be invited to 'act in an honorary capacity'.⁶⁴

With the post-war growth of Communism in Asia, the fate of Irish missionaries became an increasing concern. In 1949, Minister for External Affairs, Seán MacBride argued that 'although it may appear to many people of no direct interest to this country, it does concern us in a very special way and creates anxieties and problems for my Department'. He rightly asserted that 'The spread of Communist influence throughout

⁶¹ For numerous examples of these inquiries see (National Archives of Ireland (NAI), DFA/5/350/7).

⁶² *Dáil Éireann deb.*, lxxxviii, col. 511 (14 Jul.1942).

⁶³ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxv, col. 1331 (28 Jun. 1944)

⁶⁴ Secretary to the Dept. of External Affairs to Thomas Martin, 29 Oct. 1947 (Irish Jesuit Archive (IJA), ADMN/44/4/9/3).

the Far East is a most grave development from the point of view of these Irish missions'.⁶⁵ MacBride promised that 'Anything that my Department can usefully do will be done at once' and that 'at present' he was 'considering the possibility of appointing consular representatives, at least on a honorary basis, at one or two points in the Far East.' Hopes that it would 'still be possible to carry on the missions satisfactorily under the new circumstances' were quickly dashed.⁶⁶ Reports of communist threats and violence began to feature regularly in Irish newspapers and in missionary publications.⁶⁷ Returned and often exiled missionaries also provided detailed accounts of communist atrocities that added to public concern. Domestic pressure mounted on the government to provide Ireland's national heroes with diplomatic supports.

Despite repeated requests and vague political promises, no such representation materialised. In 1956 Taoiseach John A. Costello remarked that 'I have been pressed very frequently indeed, by lay people and by bishops and ecclesiastical of all kinds to have some sort of representation in the East'. He added that 'it should be a cardinal point of our policy to the extent we can secure it to look after our people and missionaries in the East but it will not be a very easy task'.⁶⁸ By pointing to the difficulty of such an undertaking Costello gave a hint to true opinion on the matter. Diplomatic representation in the Far East was never actually a 'cardinal point' of Irish foreign policy. Whilst successive governments were willing to publicly support the idea, in reality it was never much more than a fanciful notion. During the 1950s expenditure by the Department of External Affairs was still regarded by some as 'the worst type of extravagance'.⁶⁹ Irish foreign policy remained focused on making tentative steps in the western world. An Irish diplomatic mission to the 'Far East' was not considered a viable option.

The plight of Catholic missionaries in the East added to 'popular paranoia' during the Irish red scare. Overlooked in the existing historiography, communist mistreatment of

⁶⁵ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxvii, col. 864 (13 Jul. 1949).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ See, for example, report of communist atrocities in *Fermanagh Herald*, 3 Mar. 1952.

⁶⁸ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, lcix, col. 635 (13 Jul. 1956).

⁶⁹ De Valera speaking on finances for the Dept. of External Affairs in *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxvii, col. 864 (13 Jul. 1949).

missionaries reinforced the majority opinion that communism was an anti-Christ ‘virus’.⁷⁰ In 1953, the internment and eventual release of Columban missionary, Monsignor Quinlan, during the Korean War caught the public imagination making front-page news.⁷¹ In the Dáil a number of deputies used the occasion to once again reinforce links between the Irish nation as a whole and the missions. Independent, Patrick Cogan, remarked on ‘the important contribution not only spiritually that these missionaries are making on the behalf of Ireland’ adding that ‘Ireland is still the mother of saints and heroes’.⁷² Similarly, Fine Gael TD, Declan Costello, praised the missionary for he ‘followed in the finest traditions of the Irish Missionary Church and that he has added great lustre to his country’.⁷³ The discourse deviated from this standard rhetoric when the Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, speaking in Irish, made an expression of gratitude to the British authorities for their assistance in securing Quinlan’s safety.⁷⁴ Advancing this point in English – a language that those being thanked could actually understand – Joseph Blowick, leader of Clann na Talmhan and brother of a founding member of the Columbans, called for recognition for the ‘part that our neighbours across the water played in effecting’ the release. He declared his hope that it ‘may be the foundation upon which can be built a better understanding between this country and England’.⁷⁵ Nearly two decades earlier, proclaimed anglophile Frank MacDermot’s call for reflection upon the Anglo-Irish relationship had similarly rested on recognised British assistance to Irish missionaries. He contended ‘It would be interesting to know in what country in the world the Catholic Church has more liberty than within the boundaries of the British Commonwealth and to what country Catholic missionaries look more readily and more successfully for protection on the hour of need’.⁷⁶

Public acknowledgement of the significance of the British authorities in the success of Irish missionary endeavour was, however, rare. Few ever acknowledged the link. Replicating the approach taken by the missionary societies themselves, Ireland’s

⁷⁰ Emmet O’Connor, ‘Anti-Communism in twentieth-century Ireland’ in *Twentieth Century Communism: a journal of international history*, vi, no. 6 (2014), p. 61.

⁷¹ *Irish Press*, 24 Apr. 1953.

⁷² *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxxxviii, col. 765 (24 Apr. 1953).

⁷³ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxxxviii, col. 727 (24 Apr. 1953).

⁷⁴ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxxxviii, col. 709 (24 Apr. 1953).

⁷⁵ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxxxviii, col. 748 (24 Apr. 1953); Patrick Long, ‘Blowick, John’ in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a0749>) (22 May 2018).

⁷⁶ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, lv, col. 2266 (10 Apr. 1935).

political elite largely just ignored the contradiction that the Irish Catholic missions, a central element of the nation-building narrative, were reliant on the supports of the British empire to fulfil their ‘destiny’ of spreading the ‘Irish faith’. Quinlan’s case reaffirmed the reality of Irish missionary endeavour. Whilst the Irish government could not muster consular representation for its missionaries in distress, the British authorities were willing to provide assistance. After Aiken’s brief expression of gratitude followed by Blowick’s more assertive declaration this contradiction was quickly forgotten again.

Not all Irish missionaries escaped the ‘red menace’ with their lives. Working in East Asia, the Columbans suffered heavy losses in post-war political upheavals. Seven of their priests were killed in the Korean War alone. Whilst the society’s propaganda organ acknowledged these deaths, likely in fear of putting off potential recruits it did not dwell upon them. However, widely reported in regional and national newspapers, the deaths of Catholic missionaries further inflamed Irish anti-communist feeling and heightened public concern for missionaries.⁷⁷ Fine Gael made a rather unexpected attempt to capitalize on this sentiment. In 1957, the party criticised the Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, for his vote at the General Assembly that favoured ‘discussion on the inclusion of Communist China as a member of the U.N.’⁷⁸ This objection became a central issue of the Fine Gael campaign in the Dublin by-election that year. The party printed and circulated a statement entitled ‘profound disagreement’.⁷⁹ In an unprecedented and controversial move they also included ‘a letter from a missionary priest, who had undergone great suffering and long imprisonment in Communist China’.⁸⁰ In this letter, which was originally published in the *Irish Independent*, the missionary denounced Aiken’s vote for being soft on atheistic Communism:

Think of what mockery this vote of the Irish *Vox Hibernae* which this wide world has traditionally identified with Christian fidelity to spiritual ideals...Is that voice, that has ever been raised on behalf of the down-trodden and oppressed, now, all of a sudden, to go on record before a surprised world to champion the most barbaric system of slavery that history records?⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Irish Independent*, 14 Mar. 1958.

⁷⁸ *Irish Press*, 29 Nov. 1957.

⁷⁹ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxiv, col. 1208 (28 Nov. 1957).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Letter read to the *Dáil*, *ibid.*

This move caused uproar in the Dáil. Frank Aiken led the charge in rebuking the opposition. He alleged that it was no more than an ‘ugly and contemptible effort to play upon the deep religious feelings of our people for Party political purposes’. By printing the missionary’s ‘emotional and unequivocal denunciation...only in an election pamphlet’, he argued that Fine Gael sought to make gains from the accusations ‘without themselves’ having to become directly involved.⁸² Aiken asserted that the purpose of this letter was to ‘show that they were Defenders of the Faith against Fianna Fáil Communism’. Minister for Education, Jack Lynch, echoed this condemnation stating that ‘this campaign was purely for the purpose of making political capital and not so much as expressing abhorrence’ of the vote.⁸³ This outrage was in many respects justified. Ireland’s missionaries and their missions were not political fair game. Whilst celebratory, academic and often vague reference to Ireland’s Catholic missionary movement had become an unremarkable feature of Irish political discourse, the involvement of an individual missionary in the murkier game of electioneering was a whole other matter. Typical of the mutually deferential interactions between the nation’s political elite and its Catholic missionaries, Aiken insisted that he was in no way blaming the individual missionary, noting that ‘I do not know what report he got’.⁸⁴

This public display of reverence was not wholly matched behind closed doors. Whilst outwardly the Irish State was more than happy to associate itself with ‘the missions’, the relationship had its limitations. The aspirations expressed by the Holy Ghost Fathers in the early 1920s that the emergent Irish state would recognise its missionary ‘obligations’ and direct policy accordingly remained largely unfulfilled.⁸⁵ As demonstrated in the above discussion of missionary-state interactions throughout the course of the Second World War and subsequent conflicts, although concerned for the plight of its missionaries abroad, successive Irish governments remained unwilling to make any official commitments to the cause.

This sympathetic but ultimately non-formalised state of relations was similarly evidenced in the interactions between the Catholic missionary movement and Ireland’s

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxiv, col. 1208 (28 Nov. 1957).

⁸⁵ See, for example, *Missionary Annals*, v, no. 6 (Jun. 1923).

school system. As discussed in previous chapters, the classroom was a key site of engagement between missionary societies and the faithful. Whether through the home-produced magazine, the presence of the ‘pennies for the black babies’ collection box or recruitment talks which aimed to secure potential vocations, over the course of the missionary golden era interaction with the missions became a standard feature of the Irish Catholic school experience. Whilst bishops could and did exert control over the propaganda works conducted in their respective diocese, the state never sought to interfere.⁸⁶ In many respects this hands-off approach suited both parties. Unhindered by government, missionary congregations successfully tapped the readymade school system to ensure their own survival and expansion. Conversely, with little to no effort on the part of the Irish state, the growing presence of the missions in the classroom stood as testament to claims of Catholic Ireland’s missionary exceptionalism.

Missionary engagement with the Irish school system, however, always remained an extra-curricular affair. As noted by Fiona Bateman, the Irish Catholic missionary community would have certainly welcomed the inclusion of the missions in some aspect of the curriculum. Suggestions to this effect were periodically voiced through the medium of the missionary magazine and other Catholic publications.⁸⁷ Whilst individual schools or ‘mission-minded’ teachers may have chosen to use the narratives, images and maps generated by missionary bodies to inform lessons on subjects such as geography, history and religion, it never became an official requirement. Very much in contrast with the efforts made since the earliest days of independence to establish the Irish language as a core component of national curricula, the modern missionary movement was never afforded the same status by the Irish state.⁸⁸

The third Catholic missionary exhibition held in Dublin in 1934 stands as one of the very few examples of government endorsement of the role of the missions in Irish school life that went beyond the go-to position of passive benevolence. As observed in *Catholic Mission*, ‘Most of the schools in the city and district and not a few in the

⁸⁶ See chapter three for further discussion of episcopal control over missionary propaganda works.

⁸⁷ Fiona Bateman, ‘The ‘battlefield of the schoolroom’: Irish children and Ireland’s spiritual empire’ in David Dickson, Justyna Pyz and Christopher Shepard (eds), *Irish Classrooms and British Empire: Imperial contexts in the origins of modern education* (Dublin, 2012), p. 159.

⁸⁸ For further discussion of the Irish language in Irish curricula see John Coolahan, *Irish education: its history and structure* (Dublin, 1981), pp 223-6.

provincial towns availed themselves of the permissions and facilities granted by the Minister for Education' in relation to the exhibition.⁸⁹ What exactly this entailed remains unclear. It is likely that at a minimum the Minister authorised the time off school required to allow class groups to attend the spectacle. Perhaps he went further and paid the entrance fee of threepence for each child. Maybe he went as far as to assist with the provision of transport.

Whatever the specifics of the Minister's assistance, the fact that this relatively modest offer of state support for the missions can be deemed exceptional is telling. Whilst participation of the political elite in public missionary spectacles was cheap and proclamations of the Irish missionary greatness even cheaper, the potentially costly commitment of state resources to the cause were rarely forthcoming. The government was only ever willing to provide help to missionary bodies on an *ad-hoc*, case-by-case basis.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, Mary Martin proved particularly assertive in this regard.⁹⁰ Extant records indicate that she made more requests for governmental support than any of her missionary peers. In addition to pressing figures of state to attend the MMM's many public spectacles, Martin also sent personally written begging letters. In 1951, for example, she unabashedly requested that President Seán T. O'Kelly make a contribution to her 'world appeal funds' for the completion of the society's 'Missionary Training Hospital' attached to the society's headquarters in Drogheda, County Louth.⁹¹

Typical of Martin's determination to maximize all promotional opportunities, the aforementioned MMM Silver Jubilee provided the occasion to launch yet another 'international appeal for funds'. Not content with the mere attendance of the political elite at the ceremonies held to mark the milestone, Martin also sought to engage prominent figures of both Church and state to act as 'Patrons' of the related fundraising campaign. Having already convinced Archbishop McQuaid, Cardinal Cushing, Taoiseach Seán Lemass and Tánaiste Seán MacEntee to lend their name to the cause,

⁸⁹ *Catholic Missions*, xcvi no. 4 (Oct. 1934).

⁹⁰ See for examples of the numerous requests made by Martin to successive Presidents of Ireland in (NAI, PRES/P/5821).

⁹¹ Mary Martin to Seán T. O'Kelly, 14 Sept. 1951 (National Library of Ireland (NLI), Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh Additional Papers, MS 47,979).

she endeavoured to further enhance this already impressive roll call by securing the support of President de Valera. Reflecting the haphazard nature of missionary-state relations, de Valera refused. Although willing to appear as ‘the guest of honour’ at the spectacle itself, a letter was sent to Martin explaining that ‘having regard to the numerous request of a similar kind’ the president was unable to ‘permit his name to be included’ amongst the sponsors.⁹²

Martin also occasionally made somewhat more unusual requests. In 1954, for example, she called on the Irish representative in Rome to ‘attend the profession of 2 sisters’ at the recently setup MMM hospital in Naples, Italy. ‘Since the opening of the clinic’ the congregation had had ‘various difficulties with the Board of Directors’. As a result, Martin was ‘anxious’ for the presence of an Irish official ‘as an indication that the staff could invoke the assistance from an Irish authority if necessary’.⁹³ Although it would seem that this show of support never materialised, Martin, undeterred, continued to press for state support.

Indicative of the blurred line between and popular associations of Church-state relations in Ireland, in the late 1950s an official from the United Arab Republic approached the Irish Ambassador to the Holy See to request that the MMM ‘supply eight nurses to take charge of the Polyclinic hospital in Alexandria’. This time the embassy ‘gave all possible assistance to Mother Mary Martin’, acting as a source of advice on the proposition and as a go-between with the relevant diplomats.⁹⁴

Martin’s ultimate success with the Irish state came in 1945 when, during a visit to Drogheda, the then Minister for Health, Seán MacEntee, ‘made a very welcome announcement that as soon as funds become available, he would make a grant of £150,000 to the Congregation’s Hospital Building Fund’.⁹⁵ Since its earliest foundations in Drogheda, the provision of healthcare for the local community had been a central component the MMM’s work. Beginning in 1939 with the opening of a maternity

⁹² Secretary to the President to Mary Martin, 8 Apr. 1962 (NAI, PRES/P/5821).

⁹³ Irish representative in Rome to Secretary to the Dept. of External Affairs, undated (NAI, DFA/397/198).

⁹⁴ Irish representative in Rome to Secretary of the Dept. of External Affairs, 13 Feb. 1960 (NAI, DFA/397/198).

⁹⁵ *Irish Press*, 8 Dec. 1945

centre, in 1942 a new extension was added and the facility was given recognition as a training school for midwives. With the aim of building a hospital in which a much wider range of medical expertise could be honed for work on the mission-field, the society engaged in an intensive and sustained appeal for funds.⁹⁶ Indicative of the enormity of the undertaking, it took until 1956 for this 'International Training Hospital' to be just partially opened. Despite the numerous changes in government across this intervening period, the state remained true to MacEntee's promise. Declared to have cost a total of £550,000, the government's £150,000 contribution was widely reported in the press. The Pope's gift of £10,000 was likewise well publicised.⁹⁷ It would seem that the substantial shortfall was made up by the MMM's fundraising efforts.

Whilst this huge grant was in part trumpeted by contemporaries as an expression of the state's endorsement of missionary endeavour, the broader reality was more complex.⁹⁸ Serving a dual function, the MMM hospital provided the facilities to train Catholic medical missionaries at the same time as allowing for the provision of healthcare to the population of Drogheda and beyond. Very much focused on the mission-field, for Martin the primary motivation was the former. For the government it was the latter. Had it not been for the domestic benefits, this grant would not have been made. No other missionary body ever received such a donation from the Irish state. However, as was the case with nearly all other organisations who ran schools in post-independence Ireland, mission-sending congregations such as the Holy Ghosts and the Jesuits did receive capitation grants to subsidize their domestic educational work.⁹⁹ Although these schools came to provide indirect gains for their respective societies' missionary endeavours in terms of vocations and donations, the receipt of government funding was not construed as state endorsement of the missions. Nor, it would seem, were monies raised through these schools used to pay for missionary undertakings. Surviving records indicate that financially these two streams of work were treated as two very distinct entities.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Ailish Veale, 'It's all a matter of balanced tensions : Irish medical missionaries in Nigeria, 1937-1967' (Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2015), pp 113-14.

⁹⁷ See, for examples, *Irish Independent*, 4 Oct 1956; *Irish Times*, 4 Oct 1956.

⁹⁸ See, for example, *Irish Press*, 4 Oct. 1956.

⁹⁹ Ciaran O'Neill, *Catholics of consequence: transnational education, social mobility, and the Irish Catholic elite, 1850-1900* (Oxford, 2014) p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ See for example, Holy Ghost Missionary League Account 1961-1962 (Spiritan Archive, Paris, Dossier of Gen. Council, folder 4N4.1a2, subfolder 1).

Congregations such as the Columbans and Kilteagans who worked exclusively on the mission-field did not receive any sort of sustained monetary support from the Irish state. At most they were treated to modest, sporadic and ultimately tokenistic donations from members of the political elite.¹⁰¹ The government was not willing, or arguably able, to give anything more. Without suggesting a clear-cut reading of the entirety of Church-state relations in independent Ireland, this situation lends weight to the interpretation that economics, not ideology, was the dominant force shaping how the Irish state interacted with Catholic religious bodies. When it came to the stark business of finance, pragmatism took precedence over missionary zeal.

Ireland's admission to the United Nations in 1955 further demonstrated the limitations of the missionary-state alliance. This development marked a significant milestone in Irish foreign policy as the still fledgling nation sought to emerge from post-war isolationism and take up a role in international affairs.¹⁰² Whilst missionary endeavour to 'pagan' countries remained a cornerstone of Irish national identity at one level, it was not a central feature of the Irish state's contribution on the world stage. Grandiose missionary rhetoric had no place at the top table. With the zenith of the Catholic missionary movement broadly coinciding with the first decade of Irish participation at the UN, this divergence in discourse is, at least retrospectively, quite obvious. Despite continuing to boast of the nation's missionary prowess and accepting invitations to all manner of public missionary spectacles, Ireland's political elite were clearly aware that claims or allusions to a powerful Irish 'spiritual empire' would not cut it at the UN. The triumphant rhetoric of Irish missionary exceptionalism was reserved for a specific type of audience.

Taoiseach John A. Costello's aforementioned trip to America serves as one of the many examples of this separation. Over the course of his two week visit in March 1956, Costello's packed schedule required him to make addresses at a variety of institutions, functions and ceremonies. Speaking to the Knights of St Patrick at Yale University, he

¹⁰¹ It remains unclear whether these sums came out of public or private funds; see, for example, de Valera's donation sent to the FMSA which was sent in response to an appeal placed in a Dundalk newspaper seeking out donors who would cover the cost of stain glass windows for their chapel in letter from de Valera to Mother Alacantha, 21 Nov. 1960 (UCDA, de Valera papers, P150/3194).

¹⁰² Gary Murphy, 'A wider perspective: Ireland's view of Western Europe in the 1950s' in Michael Kennedy and Joseph Morrison Skelly (eds), *Irish foreign policy, 1919-1966: from independence to internationalism* (Dublin, 2000), pp 247-52.

unabashedly proclaimed the role of the Irish and Irish missionaries in spreading Christianity across the globe.¹⁰³ Similarly, in accepting an honorary degree from St John's University, a Catholic college in Brooklyn, the Taoiseach provided a lengthy retelling of the well-established account of Irish missionary activity since 'early Christian times' making reference to the 'peaceful' nature of 'Our Empire'.¹⁰⁴ Speeches given at the National Press Club and the Foreign Relations Council in New York, however, made no mention of missionaries.¹⁰⁵ In context of high politics, immediate concerns dominated. Issues such as partition and the Irish stance on NATO took centre stage. This was of course nothing new. More than three decades earlier de Valera had likewise prioritised more politically pressing matters in his welcoming address to the Papal Legate at the 1932 Eucharistic Congress. Although remaining a central feature of the popular vision of the Irish self, the independent Irish state had not taken a seat at the UN with the aim of convincing the international community that its emigrants and missionaries represented some sort of proxy contribution to global affairs. Instead, it sought to find a concrete and meaningful role in world politics that would benefit and give recognition to the Irish state in its own right.

Missionaries were, however, not wholly eschewed in this assertion of Irish state identity. True to form, the nation's political leaders soon found ways to exploit Irish missionary success to serve their own ends. As if instinctively, a reworked telling of Irish missionary history that fitted with Ireland's efforts on the world stage gained traction in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Stripped of the excesses of boastful triumphalism, this version of the missionary narrative was altered significantly to suit the increasingly post-colonial context in which Ireland's reengagement with international affairs occurred. As observed by Kevin O'Sullivan, 'anti-colonialism' came to underpin Irish diplomatic identity at the UN. Ireland was not alone in this regard. 'In the late 1950s, support for decolonisation became important in carving out identities for the small and middling powers in the ideological battleground of the Cold War'.¹⁰⁶ The role of Irish missionaries in fortifying empire was again conveniently

¹⁰³ *Irish Press*, 19 Mar. 1956

¹⁰⁴ *Irish Examiner*, 26 Mar. 1956

¹⁰⁵ *Irish Press*, 16 Mar. 1956; draft of Taoiseach's address to the Foreign Relations Council (UCDA, Costello papers, P190/870).

¹⁰⁶ Kevin O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa and the end of empire: small state identity in the Cold War, 1955-75* (Manchester, 2012), pp 1-12.

forgotten. Once, and to a large extent then still, understood as propagators of the ‘best’ kind of civilisation – Catholic, European and white civilisation – missionary intentions were retrospectively reimagined. Concentrating on their efforts in the realms of education and healthcare as opposed to evangelism, Irish missionaries were now portrayed as allies of decolonisation. Typifying the often vague way in which such discursive connections were forged, in 1963 Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, declared

Under the auspices of the United Nations, several officials of our State Departments and State sponsored bodies, recruited through my Department, are assisting governments of underdeveloped countries in the building of their public administration and economic structure...In all this work for underdeveloped countries, I feel we are trying to maintain the great tradition of service and devotion established under immense difficulties by Irish missionaries.¹⁰⁷

Reflecting the state of flux of international affairs during the period, throughout the late 1950s and 1960s this sanitized account of Irish missionary history existed alongside the increasingly outmoded original take on the narrative. However, as noted in chapter two, shifts in conceptualisations of the post-colonial world coupled with the associated influence of the Second Vatican Council began to have a significant impact on Catholic missionary discourse from the early 1960s. By the mid-point of the decade, the language of development, social justice and humanitarianism had become the new norm. In line with broader global trends, missionary rhetoric surrounding the ‘third world’ began to echo that used in Irish foreign policy.¹⁰⁸

Too late to the UN to have an impact on the first wave of post-war decolonisation in Asia, the end of empire in Africa in the 1960s came to play a prominent and sustained role in shaping Irish state identity.¹⁰⁹ Predicated on the self-proclaimed notion that Ireland, as a formerly colonised nation, was uniquely positioned to understand the plight of the newly independent African states, the role of Irish in empire went unmentioned. The extensive crossovers between imperial and the much consumed Irish missionary discourses which had been particularly evident in relation to Africa remained similarly unsaid. As noted by O’Sullivan, Ireland’s peace keeping mission in the Congo which began in 1960 was presented to the Irish public as a ‘source of pride and extension of

¹⁰⁷ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cci, col. 946 (3 Apr. 1963).

¹⁰⁸ For example of this shift in language see *The Medical Missionaries of Mary* (Jan.-Feb. 1966).

¹⁰⁹ O’Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, p. 2, pp 8-12.

Ireland's missionary identity in another form'.¹¹⁰ In addition to the timing factor, this diplomatic focus on Africa could also be read as an extension of the country's long fascination with the 'Dark Continent'. Whilst the Columbans and others had long laboured in the East, it was missionary endeavours to the land of the 'benighted savage', 'black babies' and 'juju men' that had a far greater hold on the public imagination.

As was and is standard in the realm of international affairs, the Irish state was not solely motivated by an altruistic desire to help emergent nations. Africa offered a wealth of potential trading benefits for Ireland. National leaders sought to exploit Irish missionary links to maximise these commercial opportunities. In 1960 Fine Gael deputy, Denis O'Sullivan, echoing the sentiments of a number of TDs, stated: 'we have such an enormous fund of goodwill in these countries through having many thousands of missionaries there...The continent is there to be tapped and if we can provide the goods which they require there is a vast potential to avail of it'.¹¹¹

The government agreed and within months had established Ireland's first embassy in the developing world was opened in newly independent Nigeria.¹¹² The repeated calls for consular representation in the Far East remained unanswered. An embassy in Nigeria was deemed much more valuable to the Irish state and in keeping with its overall foreign policy objectives. The 'strong connection' fostered by Irish missionaries 'labouring in that country for some fifty or sixty years' could now be exploited to Ireland's benefit. Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, explained to the Dáil that Nigeria 'is bound to exercise an important influence in the future development, political and economic, of that continent'. Located in the heartland of Irish missionary activity, the embassy could support the '1,000' Irish 'priests, brothers and nuns' working in the country whilst also providing what was predicted to be a 'rewarding for the development of our export trade'.¹¹³ It was indirectly hoped that Ireland might now get some return on its investment in the 'black babies'.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

¹¹¹ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxxx, col. 409 (10 Mar. 1960).

¹¹² Initially founded as a consulate, within a few months it had been raised to the status of embassy see *Irish Press*, 16 Jan. 1961.

¹¹³ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, clxxxviii, col. 841 (23 Feb. 1961).

Although happy to take advantage of decades of Irish missionary endeavour to serve as a springboard for the agenda of state, the government's approach to the missionary cause remained unchanged. This was particularly notable in the Irish state's tentative efforts in the arena of foreign aid. Owing to Ireland's still limited economic capacity, successive Irish governments focused aid efforts on the provision of technical and educational assistance primarily in the form of manpower.¹¹⁴ As part of this, in 1962 the regulations applying to secondary school teachers were altered so that individuals who taught in certain African countries could return to Ireland without loss of incremental scale. This marked a notable shift in government policy. The Irish state refused to recognise teaching years even in Northern Ireland as counting towards experience that would increase pay. However, this new change would only be applied to lay teachers. The service of teaching missionaries who worked in the same African nations would remain unrecognised. Fine Gael TD, Patrick Byrne, raised this 'discrimination' in the Dáil. He asserted that 'a number of people are grievously disappointed by the fact that this concession is not being made available to members of religious orders'.¹¹⁵ In making his argument Byrne pointed to 'the fact that to a very large extent secondary education in this country depends on these good people'.¹¹⁶ The Minister for Education, Patrick Hillery, stated that although 'some religious organisations felt there was discrimination against them. It was not intended'. He explained that this was 'an attempt on the part of this country to help' emergent nations. The purpose of the concession was to motivate lay teachers, not more missionaries to work in Africa as per the request of their national leaders.¹¹⁷ It should be restated that this decision came at the very peak of the Irish missionary zeal. Less than three months later the President and numerous TDs made their way to Drogheda to take their place alongside the key figures of the Church at the MMM's aforementioned silver jubilee celebrations.

Two years later the Irish government dealt another quiet blow to the Irish Catholic missionary movement. In May 1964, a Jesuit priest, Michael Pelly, on behalf of fifteen Irish missionary bodies alarmed by the sudden fall off in the circulation of their home-produced periodicals, wrote to the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Michael Hilliard,

¹¹⁴ O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, p. 29.

¹¹⁵ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxciv, col. 516 (27 Mar. 1962).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, cxciv, col. 497 (27 Mar. 1962).

requesting assistance.¹¹⁸ Giving insight into the contemporary confusion amongst missionaries as to the cause of this decline, Pelly explained that their organisations were now facing ‘hardships arising out of the new postal regulations’ as it was ‘affecting the circulation of religious magazines’. He provided the Minister with a detailed memorandum explaining that the ‘mission magazines are the life-blood’ of their societies as they provided ‘a source of vocations’ as well as ‘financial help’. Pelly asserted that the new regulations would ‘cripple’ their work and made a comprehensive case for government help. He optimistically declared that ‘we feel certain that the Department is unaware of this situation, and would not willingly be party to it by lumping religious publications with the commercial variety undertaken for profit’. He went on to make ‘a plea for special consideration’ on the basis of ‘a national historical commitment – Ireland’s spiritual and temporal interest in the developing areas of the world’. The memorandum concluded with the suggestion of an alternative reduced postal rate.¹¹⁹ The impassioned plea fell on deaf ears. Hilliard rejected the request outright. Pelly implored the minister to reconsider, arguing that missionaries were ‘a Voluntary Peace Corps which more than any other single factor maintains an Irish image abroad’.¹²⁰

In an effort to circumvent Hilliard’s refusal, Pelly sought out a more sympathetic ear and made his case to Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken. Explaining the situation, Pelly stated that ‘it was a true blow to us’ that the proposal was ‘apparently considered at Departmental level only’. In an attempt to appeal to the Minister’s portfolio the Jesuit priest argued that Irish missionaries were ‘ambassadors of good will everywhere but especially where we have no representation’.¹²¹ Seemingly convinced or perhaps swayed by a familial missionary connection, Aiken brought the matter to Taoiseach, Sean Lemass. The Minister asserted that the missionaries ‘make a very good case’ and it might be a useful gesture in order to help our people abroad in touch with home’.¹²² Despite Aiken’s best efforts the request was once again denied. Hilliard,

¹¹⁸ Fr Michael Pelly to the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, 25 May 1964 (NAI, DFA/439/45).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Fr Michael Pelly to the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, 7 Oct. 1964 (NAI, DFA/439/45).

¹²¹ Fr Michael Pelly to the Minister for External Affairs, 7 Oct. 1964 (NAI, DFA/439/45).

¹²² Aiken to Lemass, 20 Nov. 1964 (NAI, DFA/439/45).

whose own daughter was a doctor in the MMM, was completely unwilling to make any concessions on the matter.¹²³

Whilst such rebuffs could certainly be cited as evidence of an underlying cynicism on the part of state in its approach to the nation's missionaries, this interpretation is arguably too simplistic. The modern Catholic missionary movement had after all thrived for more than four decades in independent Ireland. Existing in much the same religious and cultural context as the rest of Catholic Ireland, numerous individual political leaders undoubtedly did have a sympathy for the cause. Moreover, records of the Department External Affairs indicate that the diplomatic supports provided by the Irish embassy in Nigeria went far beyond the basic consular assistance. In addition to rolling out the red carpet to host events such as tea parties for missionary sisters and dinners for the Nigerian Hierarchy, who were 'almost all Irish', close attention was paid to the evolving position of Irish missionaries in the newly decolonised state.¹²⁴

Irish diplomatic machinations over the course of the Biafran War (also known as the Nigerian Civil War) further demonstrate this genuine concern. The conflict, comprehensively documented from the Irish perspective by Kevin O'Sullivan and others, broke out in July 1967 and lasted until January 1970.¹²⁵ The ethnic tensions that precipitated hostilities had, however, been simmering long before war was officially declared. After gaining independence from Britain in 1960 a federal government took up power in Nigeria. Controlled by the nation's three major ethnic groups, both the Igbo who dominated in the east and the Yoruba who dominated in the west were largely Christian. The Hausa/Falani of the north were overwhelmingly Muslim. This precarious power sharing arrangement broke down when, in May 1967, the Igbo declared that the

¹²³ Private secretary to the Taoiseach to Aiken, 8 Dec. 1964 (NAI, DFA/439/45); *Irish Press* 1 Aug. 1960.

¹²⁴ See, for examples, documents discussing occasions held in the Irish embassy in Lagos, 1962-71 (NAI, DFA/433/26); document discussing dinner for Nigerian Catholic hierarchy with accompanying photograph, 4 Nov. 1961 (NAI, DFA/313/38A); confidential reports from Lagos (NAI, Taois/93/3/218).

¹²⁵ O'Sullivan, 'Biafra to Lomé: the evolution of Irish government policy on official development assistance, 1969-75' in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, xviii (2007), pp 91-107; O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*; O'Sullivan, "'Ah, Ireland, the caring nation': foreign aid and Irish state identity in the long 1970s" in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii, no. 151 (2013), pp 476-91; O'Sullivan, 'Humanitarian encounters: Biafra, NGOs and the imaginings of the Third World in Britain and Ireland, 1967-70' in *Journal of Genocide Research*, xvi, no. 2-3 (2014), pp 299-315; Fiona Bateman, 'Ireland and the Nigeria Biafra War (1967-1970): Local connections to a distant conflict' in *New Hibernia Review*, xvi, No.1 (2012), pp 48-67; Bateman, 'Biafra in the Irish imagination: war and famine in Banville's *An End to Flight* and Forristal's *Black Man's Country*' in Ogechukwu Ezekwem and Toyin Falola (eds), *Writing the Nigerian-Biafra war* (Suffolk, 2016), pp 284-313.

Eastern Region would secede from Nigeria. This new state was to be named Biafra. Hostilities between the Biafrans and Federal Nigeria quickly erupted.¹²⁶ As is typical in both contemporary and historical accounts of such conflicts, numerous and often competing narratives emerged.

At the outbreak of war 1,449 Irish Catholic missionaries were estimated to be working in Nigeria. Members of the Holy Ghosts, the MMM, the Holy Rosary Sisters, the Kiltigans and Society of African Missions (SMA) made up the majority of this figure. Owing to the legacy of Bishop Shanahan, almost half of this missionary workforce was stationed in the Biafran territory.¹²⁷ Ireland's Catholic missionary movement had a long established affinity with the Nigerian Igbo, many of whom had embraced the opportunities afforded by an education in Catholic missionary schools run by Irish personnel. Fiona Bateman contends that secessionists were also buoyed by tales of the Irish struggle for independence, asserting that 'After secession, Biafran Radio broadcast readings from Irish patriots supplied from the missionaries own library'.¹²⁸ Following the evacuations organised by the Irish embassy in Lagos, by early November 1967 264 Irish missionaries remained, resolute in their determination to stay with their Biafran parishioners.¹²⁹ A political minefield, many of the Holy Ghosts who had remained were highly vocal in their support for the secessionists. Providing humanitarian aid to the Biafran population who, in an act of war, had been cut off from food supplies, the Federal government was suspicious of the Holy Ghosts' intentions believing that some may be working in collaboration with the Biafran leaders. Arguably indicative of the air of rebellion that blew through the Catholic Church in the latter half of the 1960s, the Holy Ghost priests on the ground were often acting in violation of the orders of their religious superiors. Fearing that this show of support for Biafra could lead to reprisals being inflicted on missionaries working in federal Nigeria, Irish missionary authorities were certainly not wholly supportive of the Holy Ghosts' efforts. There was also concern that in the increasingly likely event of Biafra succumbing to the superior military might of their opponents, missionaries in that region would also pay a heavy

¹²⁶ O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, pp 84-6.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 86.

¹²⁸ Bateman, 'Biafra in the Irish imagination', p 286.

¹²⁹ O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, p. 88; Lasse Heerten, *The Biafran War and postcolonial humanitarianism: spectacles of suffering* (Cambridge, 2017), p 96.

price.¹³⁰ As observed by O’Sullivan, ‘In Dublin the Irish Government’s approach to the war as heavily influenced by the need to safeguard the missionaries’ interests. Despite coming under pressure from Biafran leaders to give recognition to the secessionist state, with concerns for Irish missionaries to the fore ‘It steadfastly refused’.¹³¹

The Biafran War marked a watershed in shaping western perceptions of post-colonial Africa and the interconnected development of the field of humanitarian aid.¹³² Whilst the internal complexities of the conflict were very much influenced by myriad Cold War era interests, for the masses in Ireland, Britain, France, Canada, the Netherlands and beyond the image of starving Biafran children dominated popular perception.¹³³ Initially overlooked in the media, the summer of 1968 witnessed the beginnings of what would quickly become an enormous public reaction.¹³⁴ Widely identified as the first ever televised disaster, the appearance of harrowing footage of sick and emaciated children starving to death on screens in homes across much of the western world was crucial in creating this response. This was reinforced by extensive coverage of unfolding events in the press.¹³⁵ The Irish Holy Ghosts played a major role in generating and framing this international interest.¹³⁶

In Ireland, their role and to a lesser extent that of the Holy Rosary Sisters who had also remained in Biafra was to the fore of the Irish response. The Holy Ghost involvement in the extensive relief efforts most notably the ongoing dangerous airlifts that flew supplies into the besieged region under the cover of darkness added a further element of captivating drama. ‘Night Flight to Uli’ was the title of just one of the numerous documentary films which captured these aid operations.¹³⁷ Distilled into a simple formula “‘ the need to feed starving children’”, public donations to fundraising appeals far surpassed expectations.¹³⁸ With the ongoing media attention focused on the plight of the Biafrans, public pressure mounted and the Irish government came under fire for its

¹³⁰ O’Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, pp 88-92.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 88.

¹³² Heerten, *The Biafran War*, pp 2-4; O’Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, p. 126.

¹³³ O’Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, p 107.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 109, p. 117.

¹³⁵ Heerten, *The Biafran War*, pp 2-4.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp 84-5.

¹³⁷ *Irish Independent*, 16 Dec. 1969.

¹³⁸ Laurie Wiseberg, ‘The international politics of relief: a case study of the relief operations mounted during the Nigerian Civil War ,1967-1970’ (PhD thesis, University of California, 1973), p. 550 as cited in O’Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, p. 115.

refusal to recognise the secessionist state. However, remaining in line with most other countries, the Irish state refused to change its position. In terms of protecting Irish missionaries it would seem that this stance paid off. By the end of the conflict only one Irish missionary had been killed.¹³⁹

The subject of intense media coverage, much of the rhetoric surrounding the conflict fell back on the same colonial era tropes which had long underpinned understandings of black Africa. With an emphasis on solidarity and 'common humanity', discursive representations of the Biafran relief efforts were an expression of what was deemed to be the west's now far more enlightened understanding of the non-western world. However, to a large degree moulded by the same paternalistic attitudes of noble white heroes riding in to the rescue of their less fortunate African brethren, these narratives further perpetuated many of the same conceptualisations of race and world order which they had often intended to eschew. The rhetoric of humanitarianism had replaced the rhetoric of civilising, and yet, much of the underlying old imperial dynamic remained intact.¹⁴⁰

Although Catholic missionaries had been especially influential in shaping and co-ordinating Irish responses to the conflict, perhaps ironically, the Biafran War marked a key moment in the decline of Catholic missionary movement. Whilst already falling circulations of Catholic missionary magazines revealed that a downward trend in support was already in motion by the mid-1960s, as with many of the broader political, social and cultural upheavals of that decade, 1968 marked a turning point.¹⁴¹ The explosion of media interest in Biafra acted as a stimulus for the emergent NGO sector. Ireland's first major NGO Africa Concern (later renamed Concern to reflect its expanding remit) was founded for the specific purpose of bringing aid to Biafrans suffering the consequences of the war. Founded under the impetus of a Holy Ghost missionary, Fr Raymond Kennedy, the establishment of Africa Concern heralded a major change to the culture of aid-giving in Ireland.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, pp 91-2.

¹⁴⁰ O'Sullivan, 'Humanitarian encounters', p. 307.

¹⁴¹ See chapter two for discussion of the declining circulations of missionary magazines.

¹⁴² O'Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa*, pp 110-15.

No longer seeking pennies to save the ‘black babies’ from the horrors of the afterlife, NGOs like Concern made appeals based on the premise of saving ‘black babies’ from the horrors of this life. Of course, by 1968 the term ‘black babies’, along with much of the rest of the pre-Vatican II missionary lexicon, was deemed archaic by many. However, as noted above, the basis for this new call to action was not wholly divorced from that of which had gone before. Although the relay of footage and photographs of children starving to death was certainly more visually shocking than earlier missionary propaganda, the concept and image of the black African child in need of a white saviour was in many respects nothing new. The addition of the famine into the discursive mix in Ireland was, however, an imaginative development. As the self-proclaimed natural sympathisers of formerly colonised African nations, the historical experience of famine in Ireland was held up as another point of commonality between the Biafrans and the Irish.¹⁴³

The Nigerian Civil War also had a considerable impact on the Irish state’s approach to foreign aid. Whilst the Catholic missionary movement had by and large come to expect little in terms of financial contributions for their work on the mission-field, the plight of the Biafrans and the rise of the NGO sector shone a spotlight on the Irish state’s failings in the foreign aid arena. Heavily influenced by the weight of public pressure, the government made sizeable contributions to the humanitarian relief projects through the International Red Cross. However, the deficiencies of the state’s aid policies had been clearly exposed. In the years following the conclusion of the conflict the Irish government began to take steps towards increasing expenditure on foreign aid thus bringing Ireland more in step with its western peers.¹⁴⁴ With contemporary conceptualisations of development and solidarity informing both the rhetoric of NGOs as well as that of official foreign-aid, the discourses of both camps often merged.

In the face of falling vocations and donations, Irish missionary bodies were desperate to redefine their own role so that they could assume a position alongside this emergent modern NGO-state aid formulation. As noted in chapter two, over the course of the 1960s they, in line with similar efforts across the Catholic world, made concerted attempts to reframe their work so as to make it palatable in the postcolonial context.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁴⁴ O’Sullivan, ‘Biafra to Lomé’, pp 94-107.

Definitively marking this wholesale shift in the Church's conceptualisations of missionary endeavour, in 1967 Paul VI published *Populorum Progressio*. Imbued with the modern rhetoric of development, justice and peace, the encyclical made direct reference to missionaries. It declared that

Besides erecting sacred edifices, her missionaries have also promoted construction of hospitals, sanatoriums, schools and universities. By teaching the native population how to take full advantage of natural resources, the missionaries often protected them from the greed of foreigners.

We would certainly admit that this work was sometimes far from perfect, since it was the work of men. The missionaries sometimes intermingled the thought patterns and behaviour patterns of their native land with the authentic message of Christ. Yet, for all this, they did protect and promote indigenous institutions; many of them pioneered in promoting the country's material and cultural progress.¹⁴⁵

Written in the past tense, the official message emanating from Rome perhaps offered little comfort to Catholic missionary congregations who were furtively scrambling to rehabilitate the image of the missions. Further reinforcing the teachings of Vatican II, the encyclical went on to assert that 'In the present day, however, individual and group effort within these countries is no longer enough. The world situation requires the concerted effort of everyone, a thorough examination of every facet of the problem – social, economic, cultural and spiritual.' Once the sole preserve of the missionary, albeit with the backing of the laity on the 'home front', this was now a societal responsibility to be shared. 'Authentic development', it contended, required a new approach.¹⁴⁶ The missionaries could still play a part, but theirs was no longer to be a starring role. This was essentially a demotion not a dismissal.

Not content to accept their relegation to the footnotes of NGO and foreign policy histories, in the midst of the Biafran campaign the Columban Fathers hosted a 'National Mission Study Week' at their headquarters in Meath. Held to coincide with the society's golden jubilee in September 1968, it marked a pivotal moment for the Irish Catholic missionary movement.¹⁴⁷ Largely devoid of triumphant fanfare of the public missionary spectacles of years gone by, a sense of crisis was reflected in the sombre mood surrounding the event. Hopes of a return of the glory days had all but dissipated. Very

¹⁴⁵ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 26 Mar. 1967.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Enda McDonagh to Fr James Kielt, 13 Jan. 1968 (CFCA, IEI/50); *Irish Times*, 6 Sept. 1968.

much in line with *Popularum Progressio*, few denied that mistakes had been made. How to proceed, however, was a far more contentious matter. With an estimated five hundred people in attendance, a wide range of views from the ‘speculative and daring to the conservative’ were voiced. This extensive guestlist featured representatives from over forty congregations, numerous bishops who worked in both Ireland and on the mission-fields, theologians and missiologists.¹⁴⁸ Searching for the root of their problems some suggested that the competition between congregations and ‘the overriding desire for self-preservation’ was to blame.¹⁴⁹ Others argued that a ‘lack of specialist training’ had been the cause. Missionary magazines were singled out for particularly ‘trenchant criticisms’.¹⁵⁰ Little by way of a solution, however, was identified. Key suggestions included more media training for missionary students and increased cooperation between missionary bodies.¹⁵¹ By no means revolutionary, these ideas had been go-to responses since the earliest signs of decline.

Despite declining popular support for the missions, the political elite did not turn its back on the movement. A fundamental staple of the missionary-state relationship for more than three decades, a number of the nation’s most prominent statesmen put in an appearance at the event. Taking their usual place alongside members of the Hierarchy, President de Valera, Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken and the leader of the opposition, Liam Cosgrave attended the concelebrated Mass that marked the end of the study week. At the lunch given afterwards, Lynch made a somewhat unfortunate speech. Starting out relatively well, the Taoiseach firstly called for more than ‘casual involvement in the missionary effort, like the half-crown or the half-note on the collection plate on Mission Sunday was not enough’. He then went on to make appropriate niceties about the work of Irish missionaries and the growth of the movement since the foundation of the Columbans in 1916. However, things veered off course with Lynch declaring ‘It is only when one comes into personal contact with our missionaries in various countries around the world that the term ‘Ireland’s spiritual empire’ becomes a reality. For empire it is, when one realises the total extent of our missionary efforts in other lands.’¹⁵² With disassociation of the missionary movement

¹⁴⁸ *Irish Independent*, 6 Sept. 1968

¹⁴⁹ *Irish Times*, 4 Sept. 1968.

¹⁵⁰ *Irish Independent*, 5 Sept. 1968

¹⁵¹ *Irish Independent*, 7 Sept. 1968.

¹⁵² *Irish Press*, 7 Sept. 1968.

from colonial world order a central component of the battle to rebrand the missions, Lynch's invocation of Ireland's 'spiritual empire' likely made many in the audience wince. It had been more than a decade since former Superior General of the Columbans had given a lecture series in Dublin imploring the abandonment of the phrase.

Lynch's speech epitomised the struggle faced by the missionary movement. Despite all efforts to adapt, the concept of missions remained firmly linked to the past. Neither the Irish laity nor the Irish state had explicitly set out to cast aside missionaries. Vague references to the nation's missionary tradition were still used by the political elite and NGOs as a means of proving Ireland's credentials in the arena of foreign aid and inherent understanding of the plight of developing nations.¹⁵³ However, in the post-colonial context of the growing prominence of disaster relief, development and humanitarian aid, missionaries increasingly faded from public view. Even the Irish Catholic Church redirected their efforts. In 1973 Trócaire became Ireland's second major NGO. Meaning compassion in Irish, it was set up as 'the official development agency of the Irish Catholic hierarchy'.¹⁵⁴ Much in the same way that missionary bodies had a long history of unabashedly imitating and adapting fundraising schemes conceived of by others to serve their own ends, NGOs did not have far to look in terms of dreaming up ways to channel public support. The missionary collection box, for example, once so ubiquitous in schools, pubs and shops up and down the country were increasingly replaced by the Trócaire box. The widely used NGO sponsor a child schemes, the ethical implications of which have come under scrutiny in recent years, are perhaps not as far removed from the 'buy a black baby' tactic of the missionary golden era as once imagined. No longer the supreme arbiters in shaping Irish understandings of the non-western world, the weight of the legacy left by the colonial era missionary propagandist was, and arguably still is, hugely influential in informing Irish popular and state identity.

Echoing the nature of the relationship between the two entities over the course of the missionary golden era, when consigned to the realm of historical narrative, the state's approach to the missions still remained limited. Whilst efforts of the Irish state on the world stage – including membership of the UN and peacekeeping missions to the

¹⁵³ O'Sullivan, "'Ah, Ireland, the caring nation'", pp 479-81.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 479.

Congo – quickly found their way into the curricula of Irish history, the modern Irish missionary movement continued to be overlooked. It featured for the first time on the history Leaving Certificate syllabus for 2020, with ‘The Holy Ghost mission to Nigeria, 1945-1966’ a case study for topic four: The Irish diaspora, 1840-1966. Inclusion would not have entailed additional financial burden for previous administrations. This was not solely about money. It was also indicative of the wider unwillingness of successive governments to officially attach themselves to the missions. Neither lip service nor genuine sympathy, respect and concern on the part of notable members of the political elite were readily translated into formal commitment.

Conclusion

This thesis could be read as the tale of two Catholic Irelands. Anchored in the understanding of Irish Catholic exceptionalism, the first is one with which most readers will be at least partly familiar. Reinforcing many of the well-established tenets of twentieth-century Irish historiography, it tells of a nation ‘steeped in the Faith’, of a god fearing laity captivated by the concept of heaven and hell, of a seemingly self-satisfied people constantly assured of their own moral superiority by leaders of both Church and state.¹ Although when compared with continental counterparts Catholic Ireland was somewhat late to the missionary party, its rapid catchup in terms of missionary output fortify both contemporary and retrospective claims of a uniquely Irish brand of fervent Catholicism. Moreover, the rise, boom and decline of the movement fits neatly with the trajectory of what could be labelled ‘traditional’ Irish Catholic culture. Rooted in the nineteenth century and heavily influenced by what Emmet Larkin has famously dubbed the ‘devotional revolution’, it is widely accepted that this culture gathered increasing momentum across the first decades of Irish independence reaching its peak in the 1950s and early 1960s and then, owing to the shift in attitudes brought forth by the spirit and teachings of the Second Vatican Council, fell into rapid decline.² Characterised by authoritarian and censorial impulses merged with a labyrinthine complex of rules, devotional practices and the cult of indulgences, the pervasive nature of this pre-conciliar Catholicism is often noted as a matter of course in all manner of academic and non-academic discussions of Ireland during this period.

Working within this axiomatic framework, this thesis stakes out the place of ‘the missions’. Although on one level popular engagement with the missionary cause could be viewed as just another of the myriad paraliturgical expressions of faith akin to acts such as saying the Rosary, joining a sodality or wearing a Miraculous Medal, this study contends that such a reading wholly fails to capture the enormity of the missionary influence on twentieth-century Ireland. Establishing the hitherto unrecognised scale of this impact, it further emphasises the limited nature of the existing scholarship. By now

¹ For a discussion of the intensity of this religious culture see Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: the undoing of a culture* (Dublin, 2002).

² Emmet Larkin, ‘The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875’ in *American Historical Review*, lxxvii, no. 3 (1972), pp 625-52.

it has become something of a truism to state that the historiography of twentieth-century Ireland and more specifically that of Irish Catholicism suffers for its preoccupation with high politics. This thesis, however, stands as testament to the pertinence of this assertion. Whilst it would seem few relevant survey histories are considered complete without at least an overview of the debacle surrounding the Mother and Child scheme of the early 1950s, when mentioned, the entirety of the modern missionary movement is routinely summed up in a few cursory remarks.³ As borne out in chapter four, whilst relations between Church and state certainly played a significant part in shaping this ‘traditional’ Irish Catholic culture, it remains just that – a part. Examinations of the accord and discord between the two entities can only go so far in advancing our understandings of life in newly independent Ireland.

Anne Dolan illuminates further shortcomings of this historiography in her authoritative contribution to the 2018 *Cambridge History of Ireland*. Going beyond pronouncements on the dominance of high politics, she challenges the wisdom of remaining so narrowly focused on all that was forbidden. Arguing the case for broadening the historiographical lens to embrace not just that which was not experienced, or at least not supposed to have been experienced, Dolan asks the question – ‘What did Irish people actually do?’⁴ Without suggesting that this thesis provides some sort of straightforward and all-encompassing answer, it does contend that ‘the missions’ are a noteworthy part of the response.

With a combined circulation which, even before the peak of their popularity, was second only to that of newspapers, the sheer scale of consumption of Catholic missionary literature in Ireland must count for something. A powerhouse within the wider genre of popular Catholic reading material, this thesis argues that the missionary periodical has been all too readily ignored. Bar a brief chapter in Edmund Hogan’s pioneering monograph published almost thirty years ago and Fiona Bateman’s more recent scholarship exploring Irish missionary discourse surrounding Africa, as with the wider missionary phenomenon, the missionary magazine has attracted little attention in

³ See, for example, John Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989).

⁴ Anne Dolan, ‘Politics, Economy and Society in the Irish Free State’ in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge history of Ireland, volume iv, 1880 to the present* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 336.

Irish historiography.⁵ Although content was not exactly of the literary calibre nor acclaim of the works which incurred the wrath of the censorship board, this does not nullify the influence of missionary publications. After pouring over edition after edition of these periodicals, it is easy to understand the modern-day propensity to dismiss popular missionary literature as predictable, repetitive and mawkish. However, in doing so, we lose sight of its power, we lose sight of its nuances and we lose sight of what vast swathes of Irish people were actually consuming. Focusing on what was read as opposed to not read, this thesis asserts the importance of the missionary magazines in shaping the Irish Catholic vision of the self and the world.

Exploring the complexities of popular engagement with the Catholic missionary movement, it also further elucidates understandings of the oft-noted pervasiveness of ‘traditional’ Irish Catholic culture.⁶ Without disregarding the weight of authoritarian influences, the role of that which was sanctioned, encouraged and celebrated also played a fundamental role in creating this environment. Whilst the pre-conciliar moral imperative to ‘save souls’ was central to the entire concept of Catholic missionary endeavour, the ways in which this was fused with the social, cultural and economic was integral to its success. A product of the increasingly competitive quest to secure donations and vocations, ‘the missions’ became an ingrained feature of life in Catholic Ireland. Appealing to both the pious and the not so pious, missionary propagandists found ways to transform widespread general support for the cause into tangible gains for their own respective societies. Where the plain old plight of the ‘poor pagans’ failed to loosen purse strings, the thrill of the missionary raffle, missionary sale of work, missionary film etc., added further layers of incentive. Where it failed to wholly win over potential recruits, extra inducements were routinely offered. The prospect of a ‘career’, for example, was commonly used to attract missionary sisters. The opportunity

⁵ Fiona Bateman, ‘Ireland's Spiritual Empire: The African Mission Field in the Twentieth Century’, in Hilary Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion* (London, 2008), pp 267-88; Bateman, ‘Ireland and the Nigeria Biafra War (1967-1970): Local connections to a distant conflict’ in *New Hibernia Review*, xvi, No.1 (2012), pp 48-67; Bateman, ‘The ‘battlefield of the schoolroom’: Irish children and Ireland’s spiritual empire’ in David Dickson, Justyna Pyz and Christopher Shepard (eds), *Irish Classrooms and British Empire: Imperial contexts in the origins of modern education* (Dublin, 2012), pp 157-71; Bateman, ‘Biafra in the Irish imagination: war and famine in Banville’s *An End to Flight* and Forristal’s *Black Man’s Country*’ in Ogechukwu Ezekwem and Toyin Falola (eds), *Writing the Nigerian-Biafra war* (Suffolk, 2016), pp 284-313; Edmund Hogan, *The Irish missionary movement: a historical survey, 1830–1980* (Dublin, 1990).

⁶ See, for example, Tom Inglis, *Moral monopoly: the rise and fall of the Catholic church in modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1987), p. 2.

to join the ranks of the prestigious priesthood free of charge was similarly dangled in front of boys. Faith was not the sole driving force behind the success of Ireland's 'pagan' missions nor can it wholly explain the potency of the wider Catholic culture in which it thrived. Building on the pioneering work of Louise Fuller and the more recent offerings of scholars including Cara Delay, this thesis contributes to broadening conceptualisations of how 'traditional' Catholic Ireland came about.⁷

The second Catholic Ireland examined in this thesis is notably less familiar than the first. Located beyond the well-established parameters of Irish Catholic exceptionalism, it tells of a nation that was not quite as unique and contemporary as modern-day rhetoric often proclaims it to have been. Challenging oft-made assumptions about the insularity of existence in newly-independent Ireland, it tells of a nation very much in step with the world around it. Although certainly late to the missionary party when compared to its European neighbours, the emergence of mass enthusiasm for the cause in the late 1910s closely mirrored the rise of Catholic missionary zeal in other English-speaking countries, most notably America. Part of a much broader international phenomenon, the Irish Catholic experience of 'pagan' missionary endeavour was in many respects extremely similar to that of co-religionists in other western countries. Moreover, with huge levels of cross-fertilisation across denominational divides, many parallels can also be drawn with the Protestant missionary movement.

As explored in chapters one and two, the worldview crafted by Irish missionary propagandists was far from original. Predicated on the same basic assumptions that underpinned popular western perceptions of empire, the highly racialised Us and Them ordering of the world presented to Irish Catholics was just another variation of an already widely accepted vision. However much Irish missionaries, politicians and social commentators of the post-Biafran era sought to reimagine the history of Irish Catholic missionary endeavour in Africa as a sort of covert anti-imperialist crusade, this was not borne out in the contemporary domestic discourses. Standing in contrast to this tale of glory, the reality of the missionary influence on the popular worldview in Ireland was far less remarkable. Refracted through the lens of the missionary propagandists, Irish people by and large encountered the same stereotyped rendering of the 'uncivilised'

⁷ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950*; Cara Delay, *Irish women and the creation of modern Catholicism, 1850-1950* (Manchester, 2019).

‘savage’ ‘Dark Continent’ and the ‘civilised’ yet ‘mysterious Orient’ as most other westerners. Just like millions of their contemporaries in France, Britain and beyond, through the medium of the missionary periodical the Irish laity learned of the ‘pagan’ in need of rescue and of their moral obligation to take up the role of rescuer. By no means lone rangers in this quest to save ‘pagandom’, this thesis contends that Ireland’s Catholic missionary movement was not only part of a much broader international phenomenon but that recognition of this wider context also played a significant role in shaping Irish perceptions of self and the world.

Whilst boasts of a distinctively Irish missionary pedigree dominated Irish Catholic missionary discourse, they did not constitute its totality. Even within the home-produced periodicals, which as the propaganda organs of individual congregations were far more narrow in outlook than the popular literature produced by international mission aid bodies, this wider frame of reference was clearly evident. Situating Catholic Ireland into a global system that is far more comprehensive than often assumed, the missionary ordering of the world was not solely concentrated on the relationship between the Irish Catholics and the ‘pagan’ other. Constant reference to the authority of Rome and the importance of the French-founded Association for the Propagation of the Faith, for example, served to reinforce the concept of an international Catholic movement. Acknowledgement of the missionary activities undertaken by Catholics of other western nations similarly asserted this wider sense of context.

Although primarily intended to create a sense a rivalry, regular discussion of the Protestant missionary movement also expanded Irish horizons. Not simply presented as one dimensional competitors, Protestant missionaries and their supporters were also held up as an example for Catholics to follow. Whilst deemed impotent when it came to actually ‘saving souls’, Protestant missioning methods and zeal were an ongoing source of envy. According to the magazines, despite all Protestant failings in terms of doctrine, unlike the much denigrated Muslim, they were at least Christian and white and could therefore periodically be accommodated into a more elastic sense of Us. A fundamental factor in structuring this overall world order, the centrality of race was similarly demonstrated in projections of empire. With missionary enterprise set both explicitly and implicitly against the backdrop of colonial rule, empire was a near omnipresent feature of Irish Catholic missionary discourse. Despite trumpeting the concept of a

‘spiritual empire’ as the ideal antidote to all the ills of secular imperialism, missionary magazines simultaneously reinforced the belief that the ‘pagan’ world was indeed in need of such intervention. Although periodically sounding notes of dissent, which in line with western conceptualisations of a racial hierarchy were particularly muted when it came to Africa and black Africans, Catholic Ireland’s missionary propagandists were certainly not wholly adverse to the secular ‘civilising mission’.

Whilst the complexities of relations between imperial and missionary enterprises have only begun to be unpicked, Claude Prudhomme’s thesis on the European ‘appropriation of the world’ in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries provides a framework in which to contextualise the modern Irish Catholic missionary movement.⁸ For all the self-made proclamations of Irish missionary exceptionalism, in their support of missionary expansion Irish Catholics took up a role in the much wider process whereby the western world sought to refashion the non-western world in the likeness of its own idealised image. As often noted by historians of empire, there was no one all-encompassing vision as to what constituted this ideal model nor a singular plan as to how best to go about remoulding the non-western world.⁹ And yet despite such variances, incongruities and even disagreements, this process was, as we know, profoundly effective. Irish Catholic missionary endeavour was in many respects just another expression of the ‘white man’s burden’.

Declaring oneself to be special is of course not the same as actually being special. Whilst exploring the ways in which Catholic Ireland conceived of itself as exceptional can certainly illuminate contemporary understandings of self and identity, it does little by way of actually proving exceptionalism. As highlighted in this study, fixing a spotlight on the boastful pronouncements made by prominent figures such as de Valera will only ever reveal one facet of the Irish Catholic experience. Extending the scope of analysis to encompass not just that which reinforces understandings of Irish exceptionalism, this thesis contends that the portrayal of Ireland as a singular haven of Catholicity did not automatically equate to an insular Ireland. Challenging notions of Catholic Ireland as an isolated outpost too busy luxuriating in its own sense of moral

⁸ Claude Prudhomme (ed.), *Une appropriation du monde: missions et missions, XIXe-XX siècle* (Paris, 2004).

⁹ Daniel Gorman, *Imperial citizenship: empire and the question of belonging* (Manchester, 2006), p. 1.

superiority to engage with the world, it tells of a nation informed of and invested in life far beyond its own four shores and traditional diasporic sphere of influence.

The decline of the missionary movement in the 1960s further uncovers a nation in-sync with the wider world. No armour of insularity was able to protect the nation's missionary bodies from the sweeping cultural shifts of the era. The Irish masses began to fall out of the love with the concept of missions much at the same time as their counterparts in France, Canada, the Netherlands and beyond. This was accompanied by the emergence of the NGO sector and the rise of what was considered a far more enlightened vision of the non-western world, both in Ireland and across the global north. Whilst from the modern-day perspective the Catholic missionary enterprise is easily dismissed as backward, such an interpretation belies the reality of the contemporary experience. In step with the world around, Catholic Ireland relegated 'the missions' to the realm of 'backwardness' at the same time as its international neighbours.

The two Catholic Irelands discussed here are of course not two separate or even incongruent entities. No such stark artificial division between that which was exceptionally Irish and that which was not permeated the contemporary experience of 'the missions'. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, popular engagement with Ireland's modern Catholic mission movement could be a complex, nuanced and even contradictory affair. Although part of a much broader international phenomenon, the Irish Catholic missionary movement was still distinct. As indicated by the numbers of recruits to the cause and the Irish appetite for missionary literature, the intensity with which Catholic Ireland embraced the 'pagan' missions certainly appears to have been unparalleled. However, given the current state of the wider historiography of the modern Christian missionary movement, it would be injudicious to make such sweeping and definitive conclusions. Whilst in recent years there has been a notable surge in academic study of missionary endeavour of the nineteenth century, there remains a dearth of research on that of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Despite both the Protestant and Catholic movements reaching their high-water mark during this period, this historiography remains at a nascent stage. Within this sparsely populated field, exploration of 'the missions' from a domestic perspective is especially thin on the ground. Francophone

¹⁰ On nineteenth century see, for example, J. P. Daughton, *An empire divided: religion, republicanism and the making of French colonialism* (Oxford, 2006).

scholars, most notably Jean Pirotte and Claude Prudhomme, have led the charge in filling this historiographical lacuna.¹¹ Recognising the enormous cultural influence of the ‘pagan’ missionary not only on the countries to which they travelled but also on the countries whence they came, their pioneering work paved the way for the inclusion of a comparative component within this thesis. A very recent trend within wider missionary history, Pirotte and Prudhomme, amongst other continental European scholars, have been at the forefront of a very recent push for international comparative missionary research.¹² As this body of work expands it will become increasingly possible to uncover further regional, national and denominational similarities and variances in the popular experience of ‘the missions’.

In addition to contributing to this newly-emergent comparative field, this thesis also lays a solid foundation on which further work on the Irish Catholic missionary movement may be built. Asserting the value of incorporating not just that which reinforces understandings of Irish Catholic exceptionalism, it is hoped that this future research may in turn benefit from and also advance this body of comparative research. By virtue of the way in which missionary institutions organised and conceived of themselves, the nation will most likely prove the basic unit of analysis on which much of this work will be based. Reflecting the wider general swell of interest in missionary history, the 2017 *Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* includes a contribution from Sarah Roddy on the subject of Irish missions. Providing a succinct overview of modern Irish missionary endeavour, not only from the Catholic perspective, she also considers the future development of this historiography. Echoing the argument put forth by Roddy, academic historians must be wary of narrowly focusing on one particular congregation. In order for the Irish missions to transcend the limitations of the

¹¹ See Jean Pirotte, *Périodiques missionnaires belges d'expression française, reflets de cinquante années d'évolution d'une mentalité, 1889-1940* (Louvain, 1973); Pirotte, ‘Aux sources des propagandes modernes, l’appel à la mission’ in Gilles Routhier and Frédéric Laugrand, *L’espace missionnaire: lieu de innovations et de rencontres interculturelle* (Paris, 2002), pp 115-39; Prudhomme, ‘De l’aide aux missions à l’action pour le tiers monde: quelle continuité?’ In *Le mouvement social: bulletin trimestriel de l’institut français d’histoire sociale*, iv, no. 6 (1996), pp 9-28; Prudhomme, ‘Les missions chrétiennes dans les sociétés coloniales’ in Dominique Barjot and Jacques Frémeaux (eds), *Les sociétés coloniales à l’âge des empires: des années 1850 aux années 1950* (Paris, 2012); Prudhomme, ‘Mission religieuse et action humanitaire: quelle continuité?’ in *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l’Ouest*, cxii, no. 2 (2005), pp 11-29; Prudhomme, ‘L’argent des missions et les enjeux de pouvoir’ in M. Aubrun, G. Ardiso, B. Dompnier and A. Gueslin (eds), *Entre idéal et réalité: actes du colloque international d’histoire de finances et religion* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1993); Prudhomme, *Missions chrétiennes et colonisation*.

¹² See especially essays in Carine Dujardin and Claude Prudhomme (eds), *Mission and science: missiology revised/missiologie revisitée 1850-1940* (Leuven, 2015).

hagiographical missionary histories, a far wider lens of interrogation is required.¹³ As demonstrated by this thesis, ‘the missions’ were not the sole preserve of one organisation. Even Catholic missionary bodies, which all ultimately came under the umbrella of Roman authority, were by no means a monolithic group. As in the realm of healthcare, education and institutional confinement, studies based on research conducted in multiple organisations allow for much greater illumination of the contemporary reality.

This thesis also opens up multiple avenues for future research beyond the popular realm. Perhaps one of the most obvious is that of the experience of those who became missionaries, those who tried and failed to make the grade, those who left and those who were expelled. There exists a multitude of records on who was ultimately admitted to a missionary congregation and who was not, often accompanied with detailed reasoning as to why. The many codes of conduct drawn up by each society for each stage of missionary life are similarly voluminous and revealing. Within this, the missionary framework offers a unique opportunity in which the role of the priest and Brother may be compared with that of the religious sister. As indicated in the records found in missionary archives across the country, whilst many were seemingly content in pursuing their vocation, many who joined the cause struggled with life in a missionary congregation and on the mission-field. The way in which the everyday reality diverged from the idealised image painted in the Irish missionary magazine was perhaps the root cause of much of this discontent. Perhaps it was not.

The archives of mission-sending bodies remain a largely untapped wealth of material not strictly related to missionary matters. Whilst wading through records seeking out information on the missionary magazine, it was, for example, not unusual to encounter letters sent in from readers seeking advice on all manner of problems encountered in their lives. Primarily found in the archives of male congregations and usually addressed directly to the editor, those who wrote in were very much aware that they were communicating with a priest. For many it would seem that this was the point. The missionary magazine editor could provide a source of priestly contact that was not too close to home. Some of these letters were surprisingly frank, addressing issues related

¹³ Sarah Roddy, ‘Missionary Empires and the Worlds that Made Them’ in Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 545.

to sex, relationships and gender identity. A significantly underutilised resource, missionary archives have much to contribute to the religious, social and cultural history of Ireland and beyond.

It must be restated that this thesis makes no claims to represent the experiences of those who were the intended subjects of missionary enterprise. How those who were converted, those who refused to convert or those who engaged with and encountered missionary influence conceived of and were affected by the interaction is far beyond the scope of the domestic popular perspective examined here. Whilst missionary archives hold relevant material that will help to shed light on this process, records created by those who had grown up with the racist stereotypes perpetuated in missionary literature can only ever provide a limited vantage point on this experience. It requires a far more diverse source base. With the global south now the heartland of Christianity, adherents to the faith likely take a different view of the missionary movement than non-adherents. Perhaps for those who credit missionaries with bringing them their religion, the trajectory of rise, boom and decline presented in this thesis holds little to no relevance in their experience of 'the missions'. This side of the missionary movement presents a potentially expansive field for future academic enquiry.

Whilst this thesis follows the rise, boom and decline of the modern Irish Catholic missionary movement, it does not chart its death. With the archival research on which this study is based conducted almost fifty years after the Columbans convened the National Study Week to address the missionary crisis, this thesis stands as testament to the survival of the movement. Although manned by a vastly diminished and long since greyed workforce, 'the missions' have not ceased to exist. To some extent what remains of Catholic Ireland's once vast missionary infrastructure survives on the resources accumulated during the golden era of the movement. Profits made from selling off land and properties, for example, are often channelled into providing nursing care facilities for ageing and infirm members. This, however, is only one part of a much broader picture. Perhaps still reaping the dividends of a loyalty planted in the pre-Vatican II era or perhaps proof that not all efforts to rebrand the image of missionary endeavour have been in vain, donations to the cause have not completely dried up. Collection boxes for missionary causes are not a wholly unusual sight in shops and pubs up and down the country. The modern take on a number of missionary magazines can now be accessed

online. Moreover, many of the returned missionaries whom one encounters in or en route to a Catholic missionary archive joined the cause long after ‘the missions’ fell from favour. This post-1960s history of the Irish Catholic missionary movement also offers a wide range of opportunities for research.¹⁴

As Ireland continues to grapple with and redefine its relationship with Catholicism and Catholic institutions, this study of ‘the missions’ serves as a pertinent reminder that the Catholic Church was not and is not a monolithic entity. Without suggesting that we abandon the umbrella terms of the Church or Catholic Church, in seeking to comprehend its historical and modern-day influence in Irish society, it is essential to recognise that Catholicism derives at least part of its power from the fact that it is made up of a nexus of separate components. As demonstrated in this thesis, the success of Ireland’s Catholic missionary movement was in part facilitated by the rivalries created between the numerous individual missionary congregations as they vied to ensure the survival and expansion of their own organisation. As debates over Catholic influence in the provision of education, health and maternity care in Ireland continue to rumble on, this same instinct for individual institutional survival often plays a role in what is commonly construed as a straightforward ideological battle between secularists and Catholics. Advancing understandings of what constituted Catholic Ireland of the past, this thesis also contributes to understandings of what constitutes Catholic Ireland today.

¹⁴ See, for example, Kevin O’Sullivan, ‘Biafra to Lomé: the evolution of Irish government policy on official development assistance, 1969-75’ in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, xviii (2007), pp 91-107; O’Sullivan, *Ireland, Africa and the end of empire: small state identity in the Cold War, 1955-75* (Manchester, 2012); O’Sullivan, “‘Ah, Ireland, the caring nation’: foreign aid and Irish state identity in the long 1970s’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii, no. 151 (2013), pp 476-91; O’Sullivan, ‘Humanitarian encounters: Biafra, NGOs and the imaginings of the Third World in Britain and Ireland, 1967-70’ in *Journal of Genocide Research*, xvi, no. 2-3 (2014), pp 299-315.

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