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Colonial Catholicism and Jesuit Education in Ireland: Navigating Faith, Education, and Politics in the 19th Century

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Abstract: Anchored in the Ignatian ethos of spirituality and education, Jesuit education initially emerged as a vehicle for spiritual development within the Catholic sphere. In Ireland, from the early 19th century onwards, it was strategically aligned with British colonial interests, fostering a unique form of colonial Catholicism. This article examines how Jesuit education served the domestic elite during British rule, employing education strategically to bolster Catholic interests in the 19th century. It focuses on how institutions like Tullabeg and Clongowes became instrumental in merging Catholic education with colonial aims, purportedly under a divine mandate. This scrutiny reveals that the colonial drive towards a Westernized, secular approach in religion and education unexpectedly strengthened religious identities and their political sway, countering the prevalent assumption that modernization equates to secularization. The analysis of the roles played by these premier boarding schools in cultivating colonial Catholicism demonstrates that Jesuit education in Ireland was significant in reshaping the dynamics of religion, education, and politics. This case study highlights the complex outcomes of colonial religious and educational strategies, highlighting the persistent impact of colonialism on Ireland's religious character and societal conversation. It illuminates the intricate interplay between faith, education, and colonialism.

Keywords: Catholicism; European colonialism; Jesuit education; ideology



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1. Introduction

Rooted in the Ignatian spiritual and educational tradition, Jesuit education initially positioned itself as the pursuit of spirituality within the Catholic realm. This tradition, reflected in the Ratio Studiorum, focuses on elements like context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation in education, leading to a model of accompaniment that deeply engages with human existence (Michael 2022). The Jesuit educational characteristics include promoting authentic dialog, human excellence, interdisciplinary exploration, intercultural appreciation, justice, global vision, and spiritual growth (Wheatley 2023). Ignatian pedagogy, with its contemplative nature, encourages self-care, self-knowledge, compassion, and responsibility, especially in today's complex world. By integrating Ignatian principles with contemporary leadership theories, the Ignatian leader navigates adaptive challenges and disagreements effectively. The foundational literature on Jesuit education by scholars like O'Malley, Grendler, and Padberg provides a comprehensive historical context. O'Malley's work highlights the intertwined humanistic and scholastic traditions at the core of Jesuit pedagogy (Casalini and Corsi 2022). Grendler delves into the principles and evolution of Jesuit educational ministries, emphasizing the Jesuits' significant role as educators (Grendler 2014). Additionally, Padberg's contributions shed light on the early Jesuit missions and their educational endeavors, showcasing the adaptation of Jesuit educational missions to various European university settings (Padberg 1992). Together, these scholars' works offer a detailed narrative of the Jesuits' transformative vision of education, their engagement with secular Catholic leadership, and their educational enterprise's global impact.

In Ireland, Jesuit education has played a significant role in shaping the country's social and political fabric since its revival in the early 19th century. It sustained its prominence

through the politically volatile era from 1911 to 1923 and has been recognized for its prestigious status up to the current day, a status affirmed in Aline Courtois' research (Courtois 2015). For a considerable part of the 19th century, Jesuit schools were not the preferred choice for Ireland's wealthiest and most influential Catholic families. These families often chose elite boarding schools in England or France that served the global or regional Catholic elite. This preference underscores the nuanced role of Irish Jesuit education in catering to a domestic elite within the British Empire before adjusting to new social norms after Ireland gained independence in 1922. The Jesuit educational approach, characterized by political subtlety, aimed to advance Catholic interests in multiple areas, including imperial service, religious leadership, and access to prestigious professions, while fostering overall Catholic welfare.

Scholars such as Liam Chambers and Thomas O'Connor in works like "Forming Catholic Communities: Irish, Scots and English College Networks in Europe, 1564–1918" (Chambers and O'Connor 2017) have explored the educational and migratory networks that shaped Catholic identities during colonial times. Sarah Roddy, in "Population, Providence and Empire: The Churches and Emigration from Nineteenth-Century Ireland", specifically highlights the involvement of Irish Jesuits in colonization efforts, such as advocating for the establishment of colonies in Wisconsin and Iowa, backed by local priests and organizations (Roddy 2014, p. 78). Timothy G. McMahon's "Irish Jesuit Education and Imperial Ideal" examines the significant role Irish Jesuit schools played under British colonial rule, both promoting Catholic values and resisting British influence, thereby preserving Irish culture and language, often suppressed under colonial dominance (McMahon 2015).

This article recognizes the political subtlety of Irish Jesuit education, which reflects the Jesuits' skillful navigation through the complex political terrain of 19th-century Ireland. This subtlety involved striking a careful balance between promoting Catholic educational and spiritual objectives and adapting to the regulatory and cultural norms set by British colonial rule. Through such strategic maneuvering, the Jesuits were able to grow and maintain their educational institutions, deftly avoiding direct confrontations with colonial authorities and circumventing possible repression or disputes.

This article aims to contextualize Irish Jesuit education within the more specific framework of colonial scope. Following this, I will then explore two leading elite Jesuit boarding schools in Ireland, Tullabeg (1818–1886) and Clongowes (1814–), examining how these institutions have developed and propagated educational and Catholic narratives to align with the colonizer under the guise of divine mandate. This analysis will highlight the tactics these schools used to maneuver through and shape the conversation around religious and educational discourse within the context of colonization. It will also shed light on the increasingly secular Irish state in 19th century and provide deeper understanding to the debate over secularization, which some view as diminishing religion's societal role while others argue that its significance varies across societies.

2. Defining Colonization in This Context

In this context, "colonization" refers to the socio-political and educational transformations that Ireland underwent under British rule, where British colonial policies prominently influenced Irish society. This process involved not only the direct imposition of British systems but also the subtler cultural shifts that ensued within local institutions, particularly in education. Jesuit schools in Ireland, while maintaining their distinct Catholic identity, adapted to these changes by incorporating elements of British educational models. This adaptation was part of a broader colonial enterprise where education was used strategically to promote Catholic interests while aligning with British norms. Such integration played a crucial role in reshaping the Irish educational landscape, involving interactions between various social actors including the state, religious denominations, and existing educational institutions. These interactions often led to conflicts and negotiations over control and influence in the educational sector, reflecting a dynamic set of power relations within colonial Ireland.

3. Catholic Irish Education in the 19th Century

For a significant portion of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Irish Catholics faced systematic discrimination from a state with Protestant sectarian biases. This situation began to change in the latter half of the eighteenth century, though the discrimination was neither absolute nor uniformly applied (Bartlett 2014). Despite these barriers, Catholics with substantial wealth or those who strategically converted could maintain significant, albeit localized, power. Elite Catholic families often sent their children to prestigious schools across Europe (O'Connor and Lyons 2006). In the late eighteenth century, domestic educational opportunities began to emerge for these families, such as at Carlow College. After the French Revolution, the market for Catholic elite education in Ireland expanded significantly, leading to an increased demand that was soon met by new English Catholic foundations and later with the re-establishment of Irish Jesuit education by Sicilian-trained Irish Jesuits (Morrissey 1999).

In the 19th century, for the Catholic Irish aiming to capitalize on the opportunities that the Union with Great Britain opened up within the expanding British Empire, assimilating the appearance and customs of the English upper class became essential. This endeavor entailed a concerted effort to minimize the cultural and social distinctions between the English elite, closely associated with the prestige of English public schools, and the Irish Catholic elite, who navigated varying degrees of systemic discrimination both before and after the Union. Therefore, the pursuit of elite Catholic education in Ireland emerged as a strategy for gradual assimilation into a societal structure that otherwise restricted Catholic advancement. This context was further complicated due to the international prestige of British (and Swiss) boarding schools as the epitome of social exclusivity and excellence in education (Sandgren 2017). Irish educational institutions responded by creating a mimetic educational experience, influenced by the proximity and allure of British education, but also as a strategic move to attract the children of socially ambitious parents. This process of cultural assimilation hinged on adopting specific accents, manners of expression, fashion sensibilities, and proficiency in particular sports, facilitated naturally within the confines of boarding school education. Such an education not only bridged cultural differences but also accentuated them, marking the graduates as distinctly different from the broader Irish Catholic populace. This distinction was crucial in a time when the expansion of the middle class and the opening of the Indian and Home Civil Service to competition in the mid-19th century created unprecedented opportunities for social mobility among wealthy and middle-class Irish Catholics. The education sector in Ireland adapted to meet the demand for an education that could enhance one's social and professional prospects.

Vivian Ogilvie outlined the specific criteria defining a "public school education", including boarding facilities, catering to affluent students, high fees, geographical exclusivity, and financial independence from state support (Ogilvie 1957). Jesuit institutions like Clongowes Wood and Tullabeg met these criteria, with both schools commanding high fees and enjoying reputations as leading establishments within what could be considered to be an informal Catholic public-school system in Ireland. While Tullabeg no longer operates, its legacy and that of the remaining schools continue to influence Ireland's educational landscape, underscoring the enduring appeal and social significance of these institutions. The 19th century also witnessed a significant impact on Jesuit education due to the rise of elite and middle-class education. Jesuits aimed to harmonize religion and science through their focus on education and overseas missions (Rizzi 2023). Jesuit schools like Tullabeg and Clongowes in Ireland also exemplified elite boarding schools, catering to regional elites and sub-elites (O'Neill 2019).

In mid-19th century Ireland, women were largely excluded from schools, especially higher education. This exclusion was initially challenged by Protestant activists, which led to the creation of Protestant women's colleges in Dublin and Belfast. In response, Catholic religious orders, supported by the church, established Catholic women's colleges. However, the Royal University permitted women to sit for exams but barred them from endowments and positions (Joel 2022). This disparity motivated the Irish Association of Women Grad-

uates (IAWG) to campaign successfully in the early 1900s for equal university access for women, utilizing a broad, inter-confessional feminist organization to overcome opposition.

Concurrently, Irish Catholic women, particularly from religious institutes like the Irish Dominicans and the Irish Mercy Institute, significantly contributed to spreading education in colonial settings such as South Australia. These institutes represent the confluence of various imperial influences: the British Empire, the Irish church acting as a 'Second Empire,' and a 'Woman's Empire' defined by women-led educational efforts (Stephanie 2012). The operations of these institutes, like the Irish Dominicans from Cabra, Dublin, and the Irish Mercy Institute from Baggot Street, Dublin, in colonial South Australia, illustrate the transmission of education and its adaptation to local social and geographic conditions. Their activities not only expanded educational curricula but also preserved their spiritual focus and cultural heritage within the imperial educational structure.

4. Jesuit Schools and the Colonization of Irish Society

Clongowes Wood College, established in 1814, and St Stanislaus College, Tullabeg, founded in 1818, marked the resurgence of the Society of Jesus in Ireland, serving as its pioneering colleges. Their emergence preceded other significant institutions, such as Castleknock College founded by the Vincentians in 1835 and Blackrock College inaugurated by the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1860, granting the Jesuits a competitive edge in Irish elite education. This advantage was maintained until Glenstal Abbey School was founded in 1927, solidifying the Jesuits' premier position in the educational hierarchy. By 1914, Clongowes had adopted various English public-school traditions, including rugby and cricket, and the wearing of caps and blazers, mirroring the Anglocentric ethos increasingly prevalent among Ireland's elite schools. This move towards an English-style public-school model in North Kildare prompts an investigation into the motives for such emulation, the evolution of its sister school Tullabeg into a similar model, and the establishment of Clongowes Wood as an exemplar of the Irish public-school system.

Originally envisioned as a novitiate, Tullabeg's direction shifted under its first Rector, Robert St Leger, who transformed it into a preparatory college in 1818 (McRedmond 1991). This change did not position Tullabeg as a competitor to Clongowes Wood; in fact, its aim was to prepare students for eventual enrollment there. An early prospectus highlighted the school's focus on providing a foundational education in subjects like surveying, book-keeping, and classical languages, catering to the educational demands of the Catholic elite within the socio-political context of the United Kingdom, which was slowly becoming more open to Catholic participation. Priced at 25 guineas a year, Tullabeg's fees were more accessible than those of Clongowes Wood yet still represented a considerable investment for the era's leading Catholic families. In 1832, the Jesuits also established a day school in Dublin, offering education at a significantly lower cost, broadening their educational outreach (McRedmond 1991). This move underscored Tullabeg's role as a prestigious feeder institution, preparing affluent Catholic students for further education at Clongowes Wood or possibly Stonyhurst in England, illustrating its function as a preparatory step in the educational journey of the Irish Catholic elite.

Under the leadership of William Delany SJ in the 1860s, Tullabeg underwent significant transformation, mirroring the impact already seen with entrepreneurial headmasters in British public schools. Delany's tenure was marked with both a physical expansion of the school, including the construction of a new north wing, and a broadening of its educational goals. Arriving from Clongowes in 1860, Delany became a driving force at Tullabeg for nearly two decades, steering the school through a period of substantial development that coincided with major reforms in the British public-school system. The criticisms highlighted in the Clarendon and Taunton commissions in the 1860s spurred reforms in England and had a subsequent ripple effect, increasing the number and influence of public schools (Whyte 2003; Mack 1973).

Delany's contributions to Tullabeg, and to Irish education more broadly, were profound. He advanced the idea of university-level education within the school to underscore

the need for a prestigious Catholic university in Ireland. More critically, Delany played a pivotal role in advocating for the Intermediate Education Act of 1878, which sought increased support and visibility for Catholic schools in Ireland. This legislation introduced a funding model based on examination results, benefiting a wide range of Catholic educational institutions and cementing the elite status of Jesuit schools through their dominance in the results of national competitions (Bodkin 2010). Delany's efforts not only elevated Catholic education in Ireland but also ensured that the Jesuit order remained at the forefront of educational excellence, bolstering its reputation annually with significant public and financial rewards.

Prior to the founding of the Royal University in 1879, Catholic access to tertiary education in Ireland was significantly constrained. Catholics were discouraged from attending the predominantly Protestant Trinity College Dublin and the non-denominational Queen's Colleges established in 1845, as deemed by the clergy. An attempt was made to address this gap with the establishment of a Catholic University in 1854, with John Henry Newman at its helm, but it struggled to achieve recognition for its degrees from the state. In the 1840s, some Irish colleges had sought accreditation through London University's external program, which offered a recognized degree pathway, an option even William Delany, during his time at Carlow College in the 1850s, had explored.

With the fading prominence of Newman's College, Delany seized the chance to enhance his school's prestige by preparing select students for the London University exams in 1875, achieving remarkable success with all candidates passing and two securing high honors. Over the following five years, Tullabeg celebrated the achievements of 25 boys who passed London University's matriculation exams, with nine completing the first B.A. exams and two attaining full B.A. degrees. These accomplishments significantly elevated Tullabeg's standing in the educational community. The college's yearbook from 1875 to 1876 records expressions of congratulations from many prominent Catholics, and notes a generous donation from Lady Londonderry, who established an annual literature prize, highlighting the community's recognition and support of the college's academic successes (Morrissey 1983).

Prior to their official recognition, Lady Londonderry and her husband, who later became the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1886–1889), had been among the distinguished guests at Tullabeg. Delany, known for his flair in hosting, drew some internal criticism for his lavish receptions but maintained strong connections with notable figures such as Lord Portarlington, Lord Londonderry, and the Duke of Marlborough. His knack for entertaining was evident in the grand receptions for his guests, with visits from Lord Portarlington particularly anticipated by the students for the potential half-holidays they signified. As Bamford notes, "to any boy, the headmaster is a great man, for he wields immense power and is the ultimate authority of his little world" (Bamford 1967, p. 162). The visit of Lord Randolph Churchill and Lady Londonderry, on 17 October 1878, was celebrated with great fanfare, though it paled in comparison to the festivities arranged for the Lord Lieutenant and the Duchess of Marlborough. These elaborate events undoubtedly left an impression on Delany's students, likely diminishing the distinctions between Protestant and Catholic, English and Irish identities in their eyes, through the regular showcasing of their rector mingling with high-ranking officials.

Delany's strategy of integrating high society visits aimed to familiarize the students with influential figures, a practice also seen in English Catholic colleges to elevate their status and draw parallels with esteemed public schools. For instance, Cardinal Newman's recruitment of Thomas Arnold Jr. at the Oratory School in Birmingham for a substantial salary was a move to bolster the school's prestige. A significant part of Tullabeg's "public relations" effort was the emphasis on sports, particularly cricket, mirroring its importance in both the British Empire and public schools. Delany introduced cricket to Tullabeg, even bringing in a German Jesuit to properly prepare the cricket pitch, despite initial resistance from the students. Over time, cricket gained popularity at the school, hosting matches with prominent clubs and facilitating post-match networking events that often

included overnight stays for visiting teams. On one occasion, a visitor compared the students' experiences at Tullabeg favorably to those at Eton, highlighting the successful reduction in perceived differences between the Irish Jesuit school and its prestigious English counterparts. During Delany's leadership, Tullabeg embraced association football, a sport gaining traction in England, and notably introduced boating, securing access to a canal stretch after negotiations with the local canal company. Echoing Eton College's safety standards, Tullabeg mandated that students must be proficient swimmers before participating in boating. Despite Delany's personal disinterest in sports due to health issues, he recognized the importance of incorporating "appropriate" sports that would benefit the students in their future endeavors.

Delany's vision for education extended beyond just academic excellence to include character development and leveraging the school as a networking platform. In 1898, he presented his views on elite education to the Royal Commission on Intermediate Education, emphasizing the role of educational experiences and social interactions in shaping capable and well-rounded individuals. This philosophy mirrored the sentiments of Victorian public-school leaders like Arnold and Thring, highlighting the importance of a broad educational approach that cultivates social skills and character alongside academic preparedness. Just before the introduction of the Intermediate Education system in Ireland, an 1878 advertisement for Tullabeg in the *Freeman's Journal* highlighted the school's comprehensive preparation for prestigious exams and careers writing of, "its ability to prepare pupils for the Degrees of the London University, for the Indian Civil Service, for Woolwich, for the army, and the higher class of public examinations" (*The Freeman's Journal*, 10 August 1878). Tullabeg clearly positioned itself within the elite educational sphere, underscoring an educational mission that prioritized high standards and societal advancement over broader accessibility.

Key faculty members who worked alongside Fr. Delany at Tullabeg school in Ireland during the 19th century included Irish Catholic teaching sisters who played a significant role in the development of education systems globally (O'Neill 2019). These faculty members, through their dedication and efforts, contributed to the success of Tullabeg by imparting knowledge and values that aimed at Catholic advancement and excellence in various spheres of life, including religious leadership and imperial service (O'Donoghue 1988). Their commitment to education and the establishment of a viable Catholic education system in Ireland and beyond greatly influenced the success and reputation of Tullabeg school during the 19th century.

Delany and his faculty members transformed Tullabeg into a school that rivaled the prestigious public schools of Britain and Ireland, a remarkable feat considering he had deviated from the Jesuit order's initial vision of Tullabeg as merely a preparatory institution. His strategy to host influential figures highlighted the school's ability to produce graduates who could compete with England's best, both academically and in their social capabilities. This approach not only promoted a sense of parity among students and guests but also built the students' confidence, further boosted with their achievements in the University of London and later the Irish Intermediate examinations. Between 1879 and 1886, Tullabeg students won 15 gold medals in the Intermediate exams, a testament to the school's excellence.

The success of Tullabeg's alumni in various imperial and professional roles reflected the school's educational philosophy. Notably, Michael O'Dwyer, a Tullabeg graduate, made a significant impact as the lieutenant governor of Punjab, controversially known for his role in the Amritsar massacre. Other distinguished alumni included Sir Nicholas O'Connor, British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, and Sir William Francis Butler, Lord High Commissioner of South Africa. Domestically, Tullabeg produced leaders in law and medicine, such as Charles A. O'Connor, Master of the Rolls, and John E. Matson, President of the Royal College of Physicians.

The alumni of Tullabeg, which later merged with Clongowes Wood College, played significant roles in both the British Empire and in Irish society, reflecting the complex

identities and influences of their educational backgrounds. This duality in the career trajectories and philosophies of its alumni provides a rich context for examining the interplay between Irish nationalist sentiments and imperial loyalties. On the domestic front, alumni like Charles A. O'Connor and John E. Matson highlight how Tullabeg also contributed significantly to Irish society, particularly in law and medicine. These roles were crucial in the development of independent professional classes in Ireland, which were essential for the nation's governance post-independence. The divergent paths of Tullabeg alumni underscore a broader theme in Irish history: the tension between serving an imperial power and fostering a distinct Irish identity. This tension was reflective of a broader societal split that affected many aspects of Irish life, from politics to culture. The education these men received, which both connected them to and separated them from British imperial interests, played a significant role in shaping their worldviews and, by extension, their impact on Irish and imperial history.

Despite these achievements, Delany faced internal criticisms for his extravagant spending and was reassigned in 1880 (O'Neill 2014). Tullabeg was eventually merged with Clongowes Wood College in 1886, due to financial issues that stemmed from Delany's administration. Clongowes Wood, once surpassed by its preparatory counterpart, reclaimed its status as a premier educational institution. Delany's efforts at Tullabeg left an indelible mark, demonstrating that while social prestige is invaluable, the legacy of educational excellence and the success of its alumni endure.

The prestigious social standing of Clongowes Wood College was underscored when Daniel O'Connell, a notable figure from the Catholic landed gentry, chose to send his sons there shortly after its opening in 1815. This early patronage highlighted its appeal to Ireland's elite. The Jesuit educational structure at Clongowes, which meticulously guided students from foundational classes up through advanced stages of classical education, remained distinctly European in its orientation throughout the 19th century. Despite Lord Peter O'Brien's recollections of a classical curriculum during his time (1856–1958), he also noted a fondness for literature, indicating a curriculum that, while traditional, still allowed for broader interests (O'Brien 2018).

Criticism came from figures like Thomas Francis Meagher, who lamented the school's neglect of Irish history in the 1830s, yet his fondness for Clongowes spoke to the complex identity many of its alumni grappled with—a mix of allegiance and critique, particularly evident after the merger with Tullabeg. As Meagher notes, "but I can't bear to say anything against Clongowes, it is to me a dear old spot" (Meagher and Griffith 2012). The amalgamation marked a pivotal shift for Clongowes. The school underwent significant changes, abandoning its old class names for more contemporary ones, reflecting a new era of academic competition sparked by the public Intermediate examinations introduced in 1879. The lackluster performance of Clongowes students in the early years of these exams highlighted a period of academic stagnation.

However, post-amalgamation with Tullabeg, Clongowes experienced a remarkable turnaround, achieving top rankings in the Intermediate exams and reinstating itself as a leader in Catholic elite education (Costello 1989). This academic revival was coupled with an infusion of new educational philosophies from Tullabeg, suggesting a shift in approach that resonated with little opposition. This transition not only restored Clongowes's academic stature but also signaled a new chapter in its history, blending tradition with the innovations of the time to re-emerge as a premier educational institution. By 1897, Clongowes Wood College had fully embraced its role as the quintessential example of an "imitation public school", evidenced by the establishment of the Clongowes Union, an Old Boys' network that mirrored those at English institutions. This move followed the earlier initiation of *The Clongownian*, the college magazine started in 1895, promoting the virtues of careers like the Indian Civil Service to its readership. The adoption of blazers, caps, and coats of arms during this time, all hallmarks of the English public-school identity, further solidified Clongowes' status in this regard. Even hunting was briefly introduced under

Father Michael Devitt's leadership in the 1890s, although it proved controversial, veering too closely to the Protestant aristocracy's pastimes for comfort.

The transformation also brought sports into the forefront of the school's public image, with cricket initially leading as the preferred sport. However, as rugby began to gain popularity in Ireland, a shift was noticeable within the school's community. A letter from senior student Gerard More O'Ferrall in the first edition of *The Clongownian* highlighted this shift, indicating the Jesuits' keen interest in aligning with contemporary sporting preferences. This period marked a strategic effort by Clongowes to cultivate an image and traditions akin to those of its English counterparts, engaging in the "myth-making and invention of tradition" characteristic of elite schools at the time.

"Dear Sir, It seems to me, a lover of the Socker [sic] code, that our game hardly gets fair play just now . . . Is there is a long play-hour, rugby gets it. Is there an improvement in any of the football grounds, it is meant to meet the requirements of rugby. Are prizes given to encourage either game, it is for rugby they are offered. How many sets of beautiful rugby goalposts ornament the spacious football fields of the various lines, whilst, I grieve to say, there is not a single set of association goalposts on the entire expanse of the College grounds" (*The Clongownian*, Issue No.1, 1895, p. 43).

Following the merger with Tullabeg, Clongowes Wood College made the strategic decision to focus on rugby over association football, reflecting a broader trend among the elite educational institutions to emphasize certain sports. This emphasis on games mirrored the practices of prestigious English schools like Harrow, which invested significantly in its athletic facilities, expanding their playing fields dramatically. Similarly, Castleknock College expanded its playing fields and integrated rugby and cricket as core components of school life, marking a shift from earlier times when such games were less emphasized. Cricket, in particular, held a significant place at Clongowes. Arthur Clery noted how cricket connections played a crucial role in the early career of his friend Tom Kettle, a Clongowes alumnus, demonstrating the impact of school sports' networks beyond academic achievements. Kettle, who attended Clongowes from 1894 to 1897, was known for his nationalist views and later for his advocacy for Home Rule, highlighting the complex relationship between Irish identity and the influence of English culture and institutions. His publication, *The Open Secret of Ireland*, underscores the intertwined history of Ireland and England, reflecting the dual consciousness experienced by many Irish Catholics of the era. Kettle's eventual enlistment in the British Army during World War I, along with over 600 other Clongownians, 94 of whom lost their lives, epitomizes the intricate and often contradictory loyalties that characterized the Irish Catholic elite's identity. This duality—navigating between Irish nationalism and participation in British institutions—captures a poignant aspect of the legacy of schools like Clongowes, where the educational environment and extracurricular activities like cricket played a pivotal role in shaping the attitudes and trajectories of its students.

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* offers an insightful glimpse into the environment of Clongowes Wood College during its transition into an institution mirroring the public schools of England. Joyce, who began his education there at the tender age of six in 1888, incorporates into his semi-autobiographical character, Stephen Dedalus, the experiences that reflect the school's ethos and educational methods. An early episode in the novel illustrates a competitive academic exercise led by Father Arnall, who divides the class into teams named after the factions in the War of the Roses, emphasizing the school's adoption of British public-school traditions, despite the geographical and historical distance from the events referenced. "It was the hour for sums. Father Arnall wrote a hard sum on the board and said; Now then, who will win? Go ahead York! Go ahead Lancaster! Stephen tried his best but the sum was too hard and he felt confused" (Joyce and Johnson 2000, p. 9). The novel also touches upon the socio-economic distinctions prevalent in Irish society at the time, as seen in the disdain of Stephen's father for the prospect of Stephen being educated alongside the lower classes in a Christian Brothers school (Joyce and Johnson 2000, p. 59). This reaction highlights the aspirations of the Irish Catholic elite to align

themselves with their British counterparts, a theme Joyce subtly critiques throughout his work. Joyce's own brief tenure at a Christian Brothers institution, which he chose not to mention in his fictional portrayals, further underscores the nuanced exploration of class and identity within the context of Irish education during this period.

In the late 19th century, the Catholic middle class's burgeoning nationalist sentiment began to clash with the more established, conservative loyalties of the Catholic elite, creating tensions that were particularly noticeable in environments like Clongowes Wood College. This divergence of views led to a blend of content in *The Clongownian*, the college magazine, which at times seemed almost paradoxical. Articles praising nationalist figures such as Wolfe Tone and Hugh Roe O'Donnell were juxtaposed with discussions on the merits of attending Cambridge University and accolades regarding the school's success in sending graduates into the British Army and the Indian Civil Service. Such content reflects the coexistence of, and conflict between, nationalist aspirations and imperial loyalties within the school community.

These contradictions were not lost on contemporary observers. D. P. Moran, reviewing a 1901 issue of *The Clongownian* in his nationalist publication *The Leader*, focused on a seemingly minor report of a former student's injury while serving in the British Army, highlighting the stark divide between the nationalist middle class and the empire-sympathetic Catholic elite. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Ireland's social and political landscapes were complex and often contradictory. The rise of the middle class was occurring simultaneously with a resurgence in Irish nationalism, partly inspired by cultural revival movements and political entities like the Irish Parliamentary Party and later Sinn Féin. However, many in the middle class, including business owners and professionals, benefitted from the stability and economic opportunities provided by the British connection, leading to a spectrum of political opinions within this class. The Catholic elite, often educated in institutions like Clongowes, sometimes harbored imperial sympathies primarily due to their education and economic interests tied closely to the British establishment. These ties made them stakeholders in the continuation of the Union in many ways. However, this group was not monolithic. Some members became staunch nationalists, using their resources and influence to support movements for Irish independence, reflecting a diverse range of political ideologies even within the elite. Moran's episode and others like it underscored the complex identity struggles within institutions like Clongowes, where allegiance to both Irish nationalism and British imperial values could coexist, often leading to confusion and contradiction in the college's public expressions and the sensibilities of its students and alumni.

"What a grim commentary it is on green nationality to find the squireen's son and the son of a huxter sneaking into the British Army and the college that misguided them standing before the public as an Irish College and John Redmond MP, Vice President to the College Union! . . . It is evidently a mistake to call this production *The Clongownian*: it should be called *The Squireen Recruiter* or the *Tommy Atkins Gazette*" (*The Clongownian*, Issue No.4, 1897).

Like its counterpart Tullabeg, Clongowes Wood College highlighted the distinguished careers of its alumni as evidence of its effectiveness in navigating the British imperial system. This period saw Clongowes not just passively participating in the system but actively engaging in what has been described as the "gradual infiltration of the system by highly educated Irish Catholics" (Bradley et al. 1982). This strategic approach is evidenced by the success of former students like Christopher Palles, Lord O'Brien, and John Naish, who all ascended to prominent legal positions within the British legal system as the Chief Baron of the Exchequer, Lord Chief Justice, and Lord Chancellor, respectively (Ball 2005). Moreover, Clongowes's influence extended into the Empire's administrative heart, the Indian Civil Service, where its students' achievements were highlighted as equaling those from prestigious English schools such as Rugby, Winchester, and Merchant-Taylor's in 1897. *The Clongownian* magazine proudly reported on alumni like Lieut. Colonel Edmund Cotter and Lieut. Colonel William Reed Murphy, DSO, who had distinguished themselves in

military service in Burma and Afghanistan, reinforcing the school's function in preparing its pupils for significant roles within the British Empire.

The success of Clongowes Wood College in promoting its graduates to positions of influence and power within the British Empire and the legal system at home underscores the institution's fulfillment of its mission to facilitate the integration of highly educated Irish Catholics into high-status positions. This achievement demonstrated that, despite the complex dynamics of identity and allegiance during the period, elite Catholics could indeed attain equality of status within the Union, albeit at significant personal and collective cost.

5. Catholicity and Colonization in Jesuit Schools

Understanding the dual role of Ireland as both colonizer and colonized is crucial to exploring the interplay of Catholicity and colonization in schools like Clongowes Wood College. This section examines how Jesuit education in Ireland, deeply influenced by European classical traditions, navigated Ireland's complex colonial context. It promoted a form of Catholic education that aligned with broader imperial culture while also fostering a distinct Irish identity. Clongowes's curriculum, with its strong emphasis on Greco-Roman classics and devout Catholicism, exemplifies this. Thomas Francis Meagher's critique of the school's neglect of Irish history in favor of a European-focused education highlights a form of intellectual colonization, where Irish identity was subsumed under European narratives. Yet, the strategic adoption of a politically neutral curriculum post-Catholic Emancipation allowed these institutions to thrive amidst Ireland's socio-political complexities. The involvement of Clongowes students in global Catholic networks and its alignment with ultramontane spirituality further illustrate the transnational nature of Catholic devotion. This section will explore how Jesuit schools balanced their educational roles within both the British Empire and Irish nationalism, reflecting the broader societal influences and shaping students who navigated multiple identities—Catholic, Irish, and imperial.

The educational framework at Jesuit institutions such as Clongowes Wood College was emblematic of a European and transnational approach deeply ingrained within their curriculum, mirroring the educational practices of English public schools with a strong emphasis on classical studies. This curriculum focused on the rich legacies of the ancient Greco-Roman world, essential for understanding the universal and enduring influence of Jesuit education. For instance, in 1841, Clongowes's curriculum for the senior class (Rhetoric) and middle classes (Grammar I and II) heavily emphasized classical literature and languages, featuring seminal works by Horace, Homer, Virgil, and Cicero. This classical education was complemented by other subjects such as geography, catechism, and natural sciences, crafting a well-rounded educational experience. This adherence to a classical curriculum can be directly traced back to the Jesuit educational blueprint, the *Ratio Studiorum*, established in 1599. The *Ratio Studiorum* provided a systematic approach to education for Jesuit schools globally, emphasizing grammar, rhetoric, and humane letters, which were intended to produce well-formed individuals equipped for public life and service. The curriculum at Clongowes and other Jesuit schools was not merely a reflection of contemporary educational trends but a continuation of a centuries-old tradition that emphasized intellectual rigor and moral education.

In addition to its European origins, a distinctive feature of Clongowes was its strong emphasis on devout Catholicism, sometimes at the expense of broader academic subjects. This prioritization of faith over other disciplines was a point of contention for figures like Thomas Francis Meagher, a prominent separatist and Young Irelander who experienced Jesuit education firsthand at Clongowes and later at Stonyhurst. Meagher's reflections on his education revealed a complex relationship with the curriculum, balancing his affection for the school with criticisms of its educational focus. "That's the fault I find with Clongowes. They talked to us about Mount Olympus and the Vale of Tempe: they birched us into a flippant acquaintance with the disreputable gods and goddesses of the golden and heroic ages; they entangled us in Euclid; turned our brains with the terrestrial globe. But, as far as Ireland was concerned, they left us, like blind and crippled children, in the dark.

They never spoke of Ireland. Never gave us, even what is left of it, her history to read. In that beautiful grand castle of theirs, circled by their fruitful gardens and grain-fields, walled in by their stately dense woods of beech-trees, walnut and firs, they lived and taught—so it seems to me now—rather as hostages and aliens, than freemen and citizens. But I can't bear to say anything against Clongowes, it is to me a dear old spot. Long may that old tree, on which I've carved my name, put forth its fragrant blossoms, multiply its fruit, lift its aged head to Heaven, and receive thereon the dews which fertilize, and the golden beams that propagate" (Meagher and Griffith 2012, p. 271).

This political neutrality or conservatism adopted by these institutions can be seen as a pragmatic approach, considering the historical context in which they operated. Catholic Emancipation, which allowed Catholics greater civil rights and freedoms, including the right to education, was a relatively recent development. Clongowes Wood College, established in 1814 during a period of gradual Catholic Emancipation in Ireland, strategically adopted a politically neutral curriculum to navigate the complex socio-political landscape. Starting with the Catholic Relief Act of 1778, which began to restore civil rights to Catholics, including property ownership and practicing law, and culminating in the significant Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 allowing Catholics parliamentary participation, the school's approach was pragmatic. By maintaining political neutrality, Clongowes avoided controversy and antagonism from potentially hostile Protestant and unionist factions, securing its survival and growth. This stance enabled it to attract a diverse student body and establish itself as a reputable center of learning rather than a bastion of political activism, thus facilitating broader acceptance and contributing to the empowerment of Catholics in Ireland through education. Memories of a time when the existence of schools like Clongowes was outright illegal were still fresh. Hence, the schools' emphasis on a politically neutral curriculum was not only a reflection of their educational philosophy but also a strategic adaptation to the socio-political realities of the time, ensuring their survival and growth in a period of significant change for Catholics in Ireland.

Catholic doctrine and practices were integral to the education at elite Irish Catholic schools, deeply influencing the students' spiritual and daily lives. The level of religious engagement varied across institutions, but involvement in religious activities was both highly encouraged and also rewarded. For instance, upon joining Castleknock College, students became members of the Sacred Heart Sodality, a group devoted to out-of-hours prayer and religious observance. This devotion was part of a broader, transnational Catholic movement, emphasizing a traditional, ultramontane approach to faith that contrasted sharply with the secular or liberal currents in society. The Sacred Heart devotion, emblematic of a certain vision of Catholic nationhood, was especially potent in France and had taken root in Ireland, reflecting the widespread societal engagement with this form of piety. The influence and breadth of the cult find their most remarkable manifestation in the Sacré-Coeur at Montmartre, a neo-Byzantine cathedral that stands out prominently against the Paris skyline (McMillan 2003).

At Clongowes Wood College, new students were expected to commit to the practices of the Arch-Confraternity of Paris, underscoring the transnational nature of Catholic devotion. James Joyce, who attended Clongowes and later Belvedere College, experienced this firsthand. His literary work, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, captures the intense religious atmosphere of these institutions, illustrating how deeply embedded Catholic practices were in the fabric of the schools. A conversation in the novel between Fr Conmee, SJ, and the protagonist Stephen Dedalus highlights the expectation placed on students to exemplify Catholic virtue and possibly even consider a religious vocation. "In a college like this, he said at length, there is perhaps one boy or two or three boys whom God calls to the religious life. Such a boy is marked off from his companions by his piety, by the good example he shows to others. He is looked up to by them; he is chosen perhaps as prefect by his fellow sodalists. And you Stephen, have been such a boy in this college, prefect of Our Blessed Lady's sodality. Perhaps you are the boy in this college whom God designs to call upon himself. A strong note of pride reinforcing the gravity of the priest's voice made Stephen's

heart quicken in response" (Joyce and Johnson 2000, pp. 132–33). This narrative reflects the real pressures and influences those students faced, navigating their personal and spiritual identities within the context of a highly religious educational environment.

Devotional Catholicism was portrayed by the clergy as the zenith of a student's education within these elite Irish Catholic schools, a perspective that deeply influenced students like Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's narrative. This emphasis not only aimed to encourage vocations among the students but was also a natural extension of Catholic doctrinal teachings. The widespread presence of sodalities across Ireland, reaching 450 by 1954, underscored the ubiquity of such devotional groups beyond the confines of elite educational institutions.

The intensity of religious instruction and practices, including sodalities and spiritual retreats, distinguished the experience at these schools from that of their English public-school counterparts, infusing every aspect of school life with spirituality. This pervasive religious atmosphere was exemplified by the response to a student's illness at Blackrock College in 1871, where prayer and devotion were immediately turned to as sources of hope and intervention. The religious devotion even influenced the colors of the Blackrock College rugby team's uniforms, reflecting the Virgin Mary's traditional blue and white.

In this context, the curriculum offered was not just academically rigorous but also steeped in Catholic values, presenting a politically neutral, conservative education with a strong emphasis on classical studies. This education aimed to prepare students for the demands of a secular, increasingly credential-driven society, while maintaining a firm grounding in Catholic doctrine.

Towards the end of the 19th century, there was also a noticeable shift in the curriculum of Jesuit schools, including those in Ireland, which saw an increased integration of natural science lessons. This adaptation was in response to the broader societal shifts, particularly the growing importance of science and technology during the industrialization period (Agustín 2019). However, the curriculum changes in Irish Jesuit schools were not made in isolation. While they had some autonomy, these schools were influenced by the global network of Jesuit education, which had a longstanding tradition of contributing to the natural sciences. This connection helped standardize a high level of scientific education across their schools but maintained a core focus on classical education, ensuring that their curricula still aligned with their religious and philosophical ethos (Enda 2005).

The school journals from Clongowes Wood and Castleknock offer insights into how these institutions navigated the balance between nationalism and imperialism, reflecting the broader societal influences and labor market demands. These publications, which began in the late 19th century, were noted for their literary and historical contributions, providing a window into the schools' daily operations and the broader world views being imparted to the students. Stories from alumni, such as Alfred J. McNally's account of his time in South Africa, illustrate the global consciousness and adventurous spirit fostered within these schools, albeit through a lens that blended both colonial perspectives and a sense of global connectivity beyond the Irish context.

These journals from the elite Irish Catholic schools also often featured articles that shed light on the aspirations and achievements of their alumni, illustrating the kind of prestigious careers that students were encouraged to pursue. Articles such as H.C. Kane's narrative of his experiences as a midshipman, detailing his travels from Malta to Beirut and Bermuda, and a Tullabeg past pupil's account of a career in the Indian Civil Service, exemplified the global scope and imperial involvement expected of graduates. These publications proudly chronicled the advancements and accolades of former students, celebrating achievements in the military and civil service, and highlighting the international influence and contributions of their alumni.

Alongside the focus on imperial and military careers, the journals also reflected a nuanced approach to patriotism and nationalism. The reverence for leaders of the 1798 rebellion and the celebration of Gaelic clans pointed to a moderated form of nationalism that resonated with the schools' audiences. Notably, Thomas Kettle, a Castleknock alumnus

who later became a prominent Home Rule MP and nationalist thinker, contributed an essay on Owen Roe O'Neill, underscoring the school's engagement with Irish historical figures who symbolized resistance and national pride. However, this form of patriotism was carefully curated, focusing on historical figures and events that were safely distanced in time and aligned with the social standings of the celebrated patriots. More contentious or populist nationalist movements, such as land agitation or Fenianism, were conspicuously absent from these publications, reflecting a cautious approach to contemporary political issues. Even discussions on Home Rule were notably absent, indicating a deliberate avoidance of divisive or controversial topics within these school journals. This editorial choice highlights the schools' emphasis on a conservative, elite form of nationalism that championed historical figures and events while steering clear of the era's more radical or contentious political movements.

6. Discussion

Secularization, as discussed by Bryan Wilson, suggests a modern phenomenon where religion's societal role is diminished, shifting towards a more secular public sphere (Wilson 2002). David Martin counters this by proposing that the significance of religion varies across societies and warns against assuming its decline in pre-modern contexts (Martin 1978). This debate is central to understanding Jesuit educational strategies, which, while operating within an increasingly secular Irish state, maintained a robust religious ethos. Jesuit schools like Clongowes Wood College and Tullabeg navigated this secularization by integrating rigorous academic programs with strong Catholic teachings, thus fostering a dual identity that resonated with both Irish nationalism and Catholic values.

The concept of colonial Christianity involves the adaptation of Christian teachings and institutions within the colonial framework to advance both religious and colonial goals. Irish Jesuit schools, situated in a predominantly Catholic context but under British colonial rule, faced the challenge of aligning their educational missions with the colonial administration's secular policies. However, instead of fully secularizing, these schools used their religious foundation as a means of subtly resisting complete assimilation into the colonial educational model. They crafted a unique blend of education that promoted Irish cultural and religious identity, while also incorporating elements beneficial for integration into the broader British system.

During the 19th century in Ireland, the concept of nationalism began to assimilate various religious identities, creating a unified national ethos that transcended individual faiths. This phenomenon echoed Durkheim's observation of a societal shift from venerating monarchs to idealizing the collective citizenry. Within this context, nationalism started to function almost as a secular religion, with its own rituals and ethos binding the nation together. Religious institutions and leaders found themselves in a position where demonstrating their faith's alignment with national values became imperative. This was crucial not only for maintaining their congregation's loyalty but also for navigating the complexities of a nation-state that, while secular in appearance, still deeply valued the interconnection between religious faith and national identity. This blending of religious identity with nationalistic fervor underscores the intricate relationship between the two, especially in a context where the struggle for independence and self-determination was often intertwined with religious sentiment. The demand for religious leaders to affirm their national loyalty highlights the ongoing negotiation between faith and patriotism, illustrating the ways in which religious and national identities can coalesce to form a cohesive social and political force. The intertwining of religion and state affairs prompted a significant transformation in the conceptualization of the political community, leading to a more pronounced politicization of religious identities. This evolution highlights the challenge in attempting to delineate a clear boundary between the state and the broader society, given their deeply intertwined nature within the framework of the nation-state. Despite formal efforts to segregate religious considerations from state functions, the state invariably plays a crucial role in defining and influencing the role of religion in society.

This dynamic relationship suggests that the state's influence on religion extends beyond mere separation, shaping the ways in which religious practices and beliefs are integrated into the national identity and public life. In this adjusted landscape, the state's engagement with religious matters becomes a critical factor in understanding the complex interplay between governance, societal values, and religious expression in the modern era.

In Ireland, Jesuit education was already deeply imbued with religious teachings, but the British presence introduced an additional layer of religious complexity. Despite efforts by the British to distance themselves from missionary activities and Christianity, resulting in the pronounced secular stance of the British state in Ireland—arguably more so than in Britain itself—a stark division between Jesuit schools and the state was maintained. This separation was deemed vital by the British for effective governance in Ireland. Nonetheless, the colonial endeavor to modernize education in Ireland carried distinct Western and British educational ideals, emphasizing development, progress, and evolution in a framework intended to be secular.

Irish Jesuit schools employed strategic educational reforms to balance their religious missions with the secular expectations of the colonial state. This included the introduction of modern scientific and linguistic studies alongside traditional religious education, which allowed them to produce graduates who were not only spiritually grounded but also competitive in the secular, colonial society. The schools became venues for cultural and intellectual resistance, where Irish nationalism and Catholicism could be promoted under the guise of conforming to colonial educational standards.

The strategies employed by Irish Jesuit schools had significant long-term effects on both the religious landscape and the colonial educational policies in Ireland. By maintaining a strong Catholic identity, these schools ensured the continuation of a religious tradition that was deeply intertwined with Irish national identity. At the same time, their ability to adapt to and incorporate secular educational norms helped reshape the colonial narrative, promoting a form of education that was both modern and deeply Irish.

7. Conclusions

The interplay between education and colonial power in Ireland, particularly examined through the lens of Jesuit educational institutions, reveals a complex scenario where spiritual and educational systems are deeply intertwined with the socio-political framework. Despite the absence of a formal separation between church and state, the Irish state has historically managed both to marginalize and depoliticize religious institutions through a process of secularization. This secularization, paradoxically, has not stripped education of its religious undertones but rather infused it with a form of colonialism that carries distinctly Christian influences.

Irish Jesuit schools, such as Tullabeg and Clongowes, have navigated this complex landscape by using political tools under the guise of secular education to promote Christian values without overtly supporting missionary endeavors. This strategy has contributed to what can be termed “colonial Christianity”, where religious education subtly aligns with and reinforces colonial objectives.

The modernizing agenda within the Irish education system, driven by both Jesuit initiatives and colonial influences, has paradoxically reinforced rather than diluted religious identities. This dynamic has made religion a more potent political and social force within Ireland. Jesuit schools, in their efforts to adapt to these colonial pressures, have inadvertently amplified the political significance of religion, demonstrating the complex and often unintended consequences of colonial influence on education and religion.

This historical narrative reveals how the colonial legacy has indelibly marked the intersection of education, religion, and politics in Ireland, transforming the societal landscape in ways that underscore the enduring and intricate relationship between faith and public life. The strategies employed by Irish Jesuit schools, particularly their ability to form a Catholic elite while maintaining their Jesuit identity and adapting to the British educational model, demonstrate a profound balancing act. These institutions have managed to integrate

elements of British educational norms with the traditional Jesuit educational principles outlined in the Ratio Studiorum, enriching their educational offerings and ensuring their relevance and resilience in a changing world.

Overall, the case of Irish Jesuit education provides a compelling example of how educational institutions can navigate and influence broader socio-political landscapes, adapting to external pressures while steadfastly maintaining core values and objectives. This resilience and adaptability of Jesuit education underscore its significant role in shaping not only the educational but also the socio-political fabric of Ireland.

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