

# **CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS ON THE WESTERN FRONT**

**1915-1919**

## **LANCASHIRE'S PIVOTAL ROLE**

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## ABSTRACT

The central subject of this thesis is an examination of the spiritual role which Catholic chaplains ministered on the Western Front. New evidence and an extensive re-examination of existing primary sources, provides a new way to interpret their behaviour and experiences as priests at war. These personal and vocational insights are revealed within the context of both their participation in the conflict, and their formative years. All Catholic chaplains who were commissioned to the British Army on the Western Front, and left evidence, regardless of nationality or status, are examined. Their human frailties became exposed whilst conducting their sacred missions and the reasons for the occasional lapse are analysed. In the main, these men performed a set of arduous tasks with courage and commitment.

The second theme is the subsidiary role of secular episcopal ambition. Scotland and Ireland each had their own hierarchical structures and independent relationships with Rome, as did England and Wales combined.<sup>1</sup> These self-governing bodies, albeit with a common fealty to Rome, also had individual internal political, economic, and social transformations with which to contend. These factors influenced their stratagems at war, which were occasionally expressed through social prejudice and national discrimination. In the war years, and immediately after, the efficacy of both Irish and English episcopal strategies and endeavours is assessed against the differing contexts which applied to both hierarchies'.<sup>2</sup> The good name of Catholicism was enhanced through the endeavours of Catholic chaplains; consequently, any benefits derived supported the English episcopal post-war ambition to cement its position within society. Nonetheless, this was a transitory gain which was out of proportion to the treatment meted out to a few chaplains who bore the brunt of these policies at the Front. The Irish episcopacy had no such strategy. They became engulfed within Irish internal strife at home. Irish political life had changed radically after the events of 1916 in Dublin and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

Each of these subjects led to a third strand of enquiry, closely linked to the two themes above, which reveals the disparate nature of Catholicism between regions, and between

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<sup>1</sup> England and Wales were inclusive in administrative terms and treated as such by Rome. Wales was represented by the Diocese of Minervia, and henceforth, the English and Welsh episcopacies will be named the English hierarchy, in line with normal representation.

<sup>2</sup> A study of the Scottish hierarchy would have been worthwhile, but the relative size of the Scottish, compared to the Irish and English episcopacies, would cause the research and analysis to overflow the spatial boundaries of the thesis. However, as stated, this study does extend to all Catholic chaplains irrespective of nationality.

<sup>3</sup> The Dublin Rising was the catalyst and key event, but other parts of the country were in readiness and in concert with the actions of the leaders, even if practically they were far less relevant. The Rising was the precursor for the War of Independence, rekindling a rebellious spirit in many, ignited by post 1916 events and increasing military suppression.

nations. Whilst chaplains education was extensive and geographically consistent, evidence will illustrate that the same could not be claimed for Catholic soldiers. Strong regional and national differences existed between soldiers' claimed religious conviction and knowledge. Frequently Lancashire and Irish soldiers were held up as the exemplars of religious commitment and competence by many chaplains at the Front, and in the subsequent Plater enquiry. Hence, the Lancashire-Irish connection was established by chaplains in the field. Furthermore, in an era overseeing unprecedented industrial and demographic change, the human disaster of the Irish famine was added. Lancashire was at the centre of all these phenomena, subsequently, strong Lancashire-Irish communities emerged.<sup>4</sup> Bishops retained the ultimate responsibility for education, and especially religious education. Despite frequent chaplaincy observation of the inconsistency of troops' religious knowledge, bishops were not only blameless in this regard but proactive in attempting to improve the quantity and quality of religious provision for their congregations. The Catholic religion lays great store in community. Rather than lack of educational commitment, those Catholics that were geographically isolated, or without the benefits of access to a strong local tradition, would be vulnerable. For chaplains, who themselves were encouraged by public shows of Catholic fervour, the lack of zeal from Catholic soldiers, particularly from those in southern units with few Catholics, could appear to be a lack of education which it was not. Instead, it owed more to a lack of Catholic community from which these men emerged, thereby applying a damper on significant active and public demonstrations of their faith.

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<sup>4</sup> There were other strong communities with Irish influence, mainly due to settlement in industrial or agricultural jobs well before the deluge of migrants generated by the famine 1845-52. Other communities developed from a long rural recusant tradition. Parts of Cumbria, West Yorkshire, South Wales, London (and Scotland alas outside of this study), and elsewhere had strong Catholic communities but Lancashire will be shown to be the numerically dominant area hence, its pivotal role in the sub-title. By contrast, remote areas of Wales, East Anglia, and other parts where the Irish were few in number, or recusancy had never taken hold, were unable to establish a strong public presence. See Bishop Ward's analysis on page 85.

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Libraries: at the Universities of Liverpool, Preston, and Lancaster. Damien Brett at Kilkenny Library: and Librarians at Thurles Library, Tipperary, and The British Library, Colindale, North London, for newspapers.

### Abbreviations – Research Facilities

BAA	Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives
Dub AA	Dublin Archdiocesan Archives
DAA	Downside Abbey Archive (Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Bath) [Rawlinson Papers]
JAD	Jesuit Archives Dublin
JAL	Jesuit Archives London
LAA	Liverpool Archdiocesan Archives
LDL	Lancashire Diocesan Library (Talbot, Preston – now closed)
NAM	National Army Museum (London)
NDA	Nottingham Diocesan Archives
PRO	Public Record Office (London)
RACD	Royal Army Chaplain Department Amport (Amport)
RCBFA	Roman Catholic Bishop to the Forces Archives (Farnborough)
SDA	Salford Diocesan Archives (Manchester)
SCA	Stonyhurst College Archives (Hurst Green, Clitheroe)
UCA	Ushaw College Archives (Durham)

### Other Abbreviations

APC	Assistant Principal Chaplain
BRM	Birmingham Archdiocese
CF	Chaplain to the Forces
CCS	Casualty Clearing Station
CO	Commanding Officer
C of E	Church of England
CSSR	Order of Redemptorists
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission
DAPC	Deputy Assistant Principal Chaplain
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
DLI	Durham Light Infantry
EFICAS	European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies
GCO	General Commanding Officer
GHQ	General Headquarters [Relates to Rawlinson within Army headquarters]
HEX	Hexham Diocese
KOYLI	Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
KLR	Kings Liverpool Regiment
LIV	Liverpool Archdiocese
MO	Medical Officer
NDA	Nottingham Diocese
OMI	Oblates of Mary Immaculate
OP	Order of Preachers [Dominican Order]
OSB	Order of St Benedict
OTC	Officer Training Corps
PC	Principal Chaplain
RC	Roman Catholic
SAL	Salford Diocese
SCF	Senior Chaplain to the Forces

SJ	Society of Jesus
STK	Southwark Archdiocese
WSM	Westminster Archdiocese
YLI	Yorkshire Light Infantry

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## INTRODUCTION

Newsreels have captured forever, the images of khaki soldiers clambering awkwardly over tangled barbed-wire as they venture into no-man's-land in the Great War. They are on a military mission. Soon many fall to their deaths or are torn and mutilated. Their sacrifice in Christian terms of a just war, *jus ad bellum*, now becomes sacred, and the Western Front by extension becomes holy ground.<sup>1</sup> A hundred years later, multitudes of immaculately manicured cemeteries stand testimony to their sacrifices. Nonetheless, comprehension of the gravity and scale of their sacrifice remains elusive and almost beyond adequate intellectual and emotional grasp.

Men and women who volunteered for humanitarian or sacred mission are often forgotten. These people provided spiritual, compassionate, and practical assistance in support of the military. Among those who suffered and died were nurses, doctors, veterinarians, labourers, and the clergy. They should also be remembered. This study concentrates on Catholic chaplains and their own particular mission to deliver spiritual comfort to Catholics in this theatre of war. Catholics were a minority in a British Army which represented the largely Protestant configuration of Britain as a whole, and yet the mutilations and killings took place predominantly in traditionally Catholic Belgium, and Catholic France. Churches, crucifixes, and roadside shrines, were a constant reminder of the connection between Christ and his sacrifice on Calvary, which was also manifest in the sacrifices of soldiers and civilians. In this geographical and religious anomaly, it was Catholic chaplains to whom we can look towards to provide a unique spiritual and pastoral interpretation of events on the Western Front, thereby enhancing comprehension of part of the conflict.

To engage in the killing fields of France and Belgium armed with a set of Rosary beads, a captain's uniform, and little else, raises questions over and above the courage of the military. The motivations of these men and how they went about their duties formed the initial research planning. These personal and human explorations revealed a range of attitudes which

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<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of the Catholic Church's long-standing and contemporary attitude to a just war, or more accurately a justifiable war, read Frederick William Keating, Bishop of Northampton's Pastoral Letters throughout the war. Keating's Lenten Pastoral Letter 1916, on "The Priest and Military Service" developed this theme and is a concise, historical, legal, and unambiguous statement that Catholic priests are not immune to fighting in their own way, but that does not include bearing arms, and extends the simple idea of a just war to chaplains in the field. Copies can be found at Salford Diocesan Archives up to 1916, and occasional later year copies. Other bishops expressed similar views. Whiteside of Liverpool wrote in the 'Report of the Liverpool Diocesan Mission Fund 1915 LAA': 'The teaching of Christianity on the lawfulness of war is clear and unmistakable [...] not only is it lawful for a nation to enter into a defensive war and resist the unjust aggression of another nation, but it may also with a clear conscience undertake an offensive war, provided certain conditions are met.'

were both encouraging and perplexing, demanding a wider selection of historiographical treatments to establish their derivations. Social history explained the modernisation of society with the inherent tensions which fed through to Catholics at large and chaplains in particular. Catholic history teased out the fissures, commonalities, and ambitions, of a religion undergoing a revival in Europe from the nineteenth century and particularly in Britain from 1850. Regional and national enquiry explicated the non-linearity of Catholic development in England, and with the Irish variance, dissected the erroneous conception of a British Catholicism, which was further exacerbated by migration and resistance to modernist forces. These tensions will be examined and their effects on the human responses of chaplains assessed.

There were also constructive forces at play. Rome created binding influences through enhanced discipline and new devotional practices, both of which were important for the conduct and spiritual involvement of both chaplains and soldiers at war. The aims of a Pilgrim Church created its own missionary ethos, and provided a model adapted by Catholic chaplains to assist their endeavours, despite the secular oppositional forces present at war and in society. Catholicism invested heavily in priestly education which not only helped to produce a force of learned young men, but also created a platform for future post-war Catholic development. An unforeseen outcome from studying chaplains as people was episcopal ambition. Senior English prelates never lost sight of their responsibility to protect and develop the Catholic Church in England and these intuitive ambitions affected chaplaincy behaviour, although not always in a positive way. Ancient anti-Irish prejudice posing as the 'Irish Question' is briefly described in the colonial construct, where the difficulties of the coloniser are expressed as the problem caused by the colonised. This will be analysed at length as its manifestations were apparent in the attitudes and actions of some chaplains and military at the Front. Their deeds and motivations will be explored, whether initiated from institutional or personal determinations. Some bishops, such as Bishop Goss of Liverpool, demonstrated institutional anti-Irish prejudice in the later years of the nineteenth century. It will be shown that these seemingly negative policies, involving local and immigrant Catholics in Lancashire and Liverpool in particular, would be largely reconciled before the commencement of hostilities. This was not necessarily the case throughout English Catholicism, and some bishops' inability to engage with Irish Catholics in a positive manner, influenced policy decisions taken at the Front. The bifurcation of spiritual and secular responsibilities within Catholicism globally, is illuminated in the differing positions between the Irish and English hierarchies'. The former was universal and consistent, the latter decided by each country. The

Irish hierarchy was independent from the rest of Britain in religious affairs, if precariously integrated in political terms.

All of these factors and more are examined in detail. In the final analysis, the study is returned to the chaplains as individuals, for despite the challenges this group encountered, they responded with courage, dignity, and compassion. This study aspires to go some way to enhancing our knowledge of their endeavours and experiences both as men and priests.

There is a need to briefly clarify the boundaries and terminology used in this thesis, further clarifications will be given as the study progresses. In political terms, Britain in the Great War included Ireland, England, Wales, and Scotland. The Irish Catholic Church which had never been dis-established was independent of the amalgamation of England and Wales Catholic Churches. The England and Wales hierarchy, henceforth termed the English hierarchy, was restored in 1850. The Catholic Church in Scotland, which was also independent of the English hierarchy, had its status restored in 1878. The chaplaincy war effort was overseen by Cardinal Bourne of Westminster, so that all chaplains from the four countries came under his *de facto* control until 1918, at which time Keatinge, after Rome's insistence, became *Episcopus Castrensis* or Army Bishop. All chaplains will be studied, but limitations of space have meant that the Scottish Church hierarchy has been omitted. When the terms English Catholics, or English Catholicism, are used, they are shorthand for all Catholics in Britain minus the Irish. Recognising that omitting the Scottish episcopacy is not an ideal solution, exclusions have had to be made, but this only affects the bishops and not Scottish chaplains. Furthermore, it will be strongly argued that any reference to British Catholicism is not only inappropriate but misleading. Lancashire and Ireland, as dominant Catholic forces within Britain, will be examined against their southern counterparts at chaplain, episcopal, and soldier levels, with the emphasis firmly on the former. There were pockets of strong Catholicism elsewhere and are noted when relevant, but the main thrust is the influence that Irish Catholics had on the rest of Britain and particularly Lancashire, which in Catholic terms comprised the Archdiocese of Liverpool and the Diocese of Salford.

The period from 1850 to the start of the Great War in 1914, provided the background in which social inequalities and political and religious changes which formed these young men, took place. In essence, all these strands and more were interwoven, so that by comprehending their inter-relationships many of the attitudes and behaviours experienced by Catholics at war can be explained. This study acknowledges these influences and explains their derivation in society, particularly Catholic society. New ground is broken in explaining how these mechanisms and levers actually operated at the Front. Social, religious, geographical, political,

and military motifs will be tested in the furnace of the Great War against the chaplains' own evidence.

This thesis is split into three sections each containing two chapters. The first section concentrates on those formative pre-war underlying forces which generated the context for chaplaincy attitudes and actions. The second section illuminates and explains the spiritual, devotional, and pastoral activities at the Front. Chaplaincy roles are elucidated and Catholic soldiers' involvement in Catholic worship is examined. The final section surveys the racial and political prejudice suffered by certain Irish chaplains, and the social and regional prejudice faced by a number of English chaplains. Pre-war English Catholic society and ambition will be shown to be at the root of these prejudices. This conduct is explored and an assessment of the efficacy of their policies assessed in the conclusion.

Catholic chaplains serving on the Western Front are, to all intents and purposes, an invisible spiritual army whose specific story has largely been ignored. This study launches all of these men, and not simply the well-known, into the public arena as the centenary of the Great War is reached. Their lives were shaped by their formative years, hence, an understanding of those underlying forces is integral to this project. Resultant tensions played out in the theatre of the Great War have teased out many other aspects. The centralised English Catholic hierarchy will also be examined through spiritual, class, and political perspectives. Other aspects of Catholic life will be probed such as the role that Catholic chaplaincy played in aligning the political ambitions of the English Catholic hierarchy in preparation for post-war Britain. Another being the pivotal role Catholic seminary education enjoyed in preparing priests for their missions, whilst developing the resources to satisfy the spiritual and practical requirements of an expanding religious and universal organisation. The study would not be complete without examining chaplains' perceptions of soldiers' religious adherence and knowledge. Both chaplains and their bishops will be scrutinised to see what parts they played in the religious education of these mostly working class troops.

Michael Snape has noted: 'The history of British Catholic involvement in the First World War is a curiously neglected subject'.<sup>2</sup> This study addresses this neglect through a singularly Catholic treatment of chaplaincy. Debates between protagonists over the roles and relevance of one denomination in contrast to another, inevitably jettison depth.<sup>3</sup> This is a comparative review within Catholicism in the sense of distinction rather than unsophisticated

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Snape, 'British Catholicism and the British Army in the First World War', *Recusant History*, 26, (2002), 314-58.

<sup>3</sup> RACD Conference, (June 2009). For example Stephen Loudon from a non-Anglican perspective (critique of Studdert-Kennedy), and Linda Parker, (critique of Tubby Clayton) from an Anglican perspective.

reductionist opposition. This study embraces both differences and distinctions across all Catholics in Britain, demanding a rigorous and wide-ranging scrutiny.<sup>4</sup>

The spiritual contribution of Catholic chaplains is the keystone of this project. Catholic services for Catholic troops were urgent and vital requirements. Chaplains were generally viewed with great respect by Catholic soldiers at the Front. They were also valued highly by desperate parents and family anxious to have their sons spiritually prepared, as the risk of death was perpetually before them. To be prepared and in a state of spiritual well-being, before, during, and after battle, was a vital Catholic necessity. Mrs Katharine Leslie illustrated this as she pleaded with Monsignor Keatinge: 'I am begging you as a mother to look after my son. He has always had religion and I have never heard a Leslie with all their faults say a word against religion, or listen to a word. Begging you kindest officer, my son Captain Alan Leslie is in the 8<sup>th</sup> Gordon Highlanders'.<sup>5</sup> Chaplains will be defined by their own Catholic beliefs and assumptions and judged on how successful they were through practice at the Front. The standard for Catholic chaplains in the First World War was high, matching both Catholic ecclesiastical and lay expectations. Stephen Loudon stated: 'Catholic chaplains went to war for a greater victory than a military victory'.<sup>6</sup> As a retired Catholic Monsignor and former Principal Army Chaplain, he understood the particularly high standards expected of Catholic chaplains. Chaplains set adrift in a world which in many ways was an alien one, will be studied by balancing these high Catholic spiritual ideals and achievements with the inevitable human disappointments.

Catholic chaplains generally celebrated their priesthood with aplomb. The maxim of St Thomas Aquinas seems apt: '*Quantum potes aude*', or: 'Dare to do all that you are able to'.<sup>7</sup> Any deviancy, real or imagined, which impinged on the greater and purely Catholic political ambition, was challenged and eradicated by senior Catholic clergy in the field. Religion and politics were not mutually exclusive when considering the episcopal ambitions of English Catholicism. In the main, chaplains were unaware of any episcopal intent, save the constant need to promote Catholicism by good example and deed. The dedication of Catholic chaplains to provide sacramental and pastoral care for all Catholics on the Western Front remained paramount and unhindered, provided that the conventions of life in the Army and orthodox

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<sup>4</sup> In as much as both personal and foundational influences, and the primary data collected, shaped the enquiry rather than support pre-existing assumptions. As most of the sources are original, the methodology has been adapted to respond to primary evidence which determines a fresh approach to the study of chaplains.

<sup>5</sup> DAA, Bishops correspondence, Mrs Leslie to Keatinge, (12<sup>th</sup> May 1915).

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Loudon, RACD Conference, (July 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Radcliffe, *Why Go To Church?* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 199. Thomas Aquinas circa 1260, origins from the Sequence Lauda Sion Salvatorem, for the New Mass for the Feast of Corpus Christi, (Body of Christ). [http://www.hymnary.org/text/lauda\\_sion\\_salvatorem\\_lauda\\_ducem\\_et\\_pas](http://www.hymnary.org/text/lauda_sion_salvatorem_lauda_ducem_et_pas), accessed 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012.

Catholic teaching were adhered to.<sup>8</sup> At war, Catholic chaplains were practically detached from the world at home.<sup>9</sup> If, however, they trespassed into the secular world of the British Army, they had to ensure that their behaviour was not only impeachable as priest practitioners, but also within the bounds of officer expectation. This potential conflict between military and spiritual imperatives caused a dilemma for some Catholic chaplains, as did the mechanisms that were employed to deal with any indiscretions, whether social, military, or political in character. Contemporary analysis within the larger Catholic model was sometimes subtle, undefined, and operated intuitively. At others, it was patently obvious.

Distinctions within the Catholic priesthood at home define both the human experience and Catholicism in Britain, creating the basis for comparisons at the Front. It will be argued that chaplains were eminent practitioners as priests at home, but the same men sometimes incurred difficulties when in khaki. This apparent abstruseness will be explained both within the context of late-Victorian pre-war experience, the realities faced within Catholicism, and external factors at war. The Catholic chaplaincy mission was quite different to that of other denominations. This resulted in some early friction between Catholic chaplains and the military and Anglican religious authorities, although not to the point of institutional impasse. As the war continued these earlier difficulties evaporated to permit remarkably good relations between the authorities and Catholic chaplaincy, albeit with occasional blemishes.

The person-centred approach implemented throughout this thesis, develops the priestly experience and locates the clergy within the higher political designs of the episcopacy. This in turn requires an examination of both the differing political ambitions and sentiments which are starkly askew between the English and Irish equivalents. It will be shown that Westminster, as the centre of English Catholic ambition, was blatantly nourished at the expense of Irish chaplains. After the 1916 Rising in Dublin and future political developments, a threat to Army relationships had potential repercussions for some individual Irish chaplains who were removed without compunction by Principal Chaplain Rawlinson and his senior chaplains. This was an opportunity to cement post-war English Catholic aspirations that was simply too good to go unheeded. The protection and development of the Catholic good name was pursued through the auspices of Rawlinson at GHQ in France and increased in intensity

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<sup>8</sup> There were no instances of religious or spiritual lapses recorded.

<sup>9</sup> This is true of most priests from both Diocesan and Religious orders, with the notable exception of the Society of Jesus who fostered and maintained active bidirectional communications. The data provided was cared for in archives in Dublin and London. Any distortion in resource material is balanced to a degree in the Rawlinson Papers and three diaries, one of which was unearthed during research, one in common usage and another rarely accessed.

as the war developed. Identifying this type of temporal activity breaks new ground, and whilst still secondary to spiritual delivery, its presence should be acknowledged. Irish Catholic episcopal political aspirations were reactive and driven by turmoil at home, rather than being shaped by planned self-interested ambition.

### Sources

When Britain declared war on Germany on August 4th 1914, as a consequence of the German invasion of Belgium, Britain was remarkably ill-prepared. Instead, leaders had depended on the Royal Navy and the diplomacy of *entente cordiale* for national security.<sup>10</sup> Few Catholic chaplains left for war in 1914, Snape claims 17, James Hagarty 10.<sup>11</sup> This figure rose to about 700 who would eventually play some part on the Western Front, with approximately 300-400 *per annum* at its peak.<sup>12</sup> This account gains momentum in 1915 for three reasons.<sup>13</sup> Firstly, the massive influx of new volunteers in 1915, followed by conscription introduced in early 1916, created the need to provide religious services for the troops on a grand scale.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, by early 1916 as the war continued to accelerate its demands for matériel and men, a significant change in the leadership of Catholics on the Western Front took place. Fr Rawlinson OSB took the reins from Fr Keatinge OSB, and more importantly for historians, he assiduously recorded all correspondence between himself at GHQ and his chaplains in the line. This is an erratic, incomplete, yet crucial source of genuine evidence. Thirdly, in May 1915, Fr Francis Drinkwater from the Birmingham Diocese embarked for France and kept a daily diary. He was joined by a Jesuit, Fr Lesley Walker who painted what he saw, with church destruction and the lampooning of the officer class high on his list of priorities. Walker's paintings and sketches permit an insight into a chaplain's thoughts by a different media to the tight format of a diary. Colour and tone are literally and emblematically bonuses to add to, but not replace, the written word. The Transit of our late GOC is an example.

<sup>10</sup> The *Entente Cordiale* was a series of agreements signed on 8 April 1904, between the United Kingdom and France, marking the start of the alliance against Germany and Austria-Hungary.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Soldier in the First and Second World Wars* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), p. 89; and James Hagarty, 'Priests in Uniform: Military Chaplains of the First World War', *The English Catholic History Society*. Accessed November 19<sup>th</sup> 2014, <http://echa.org.uk/2014/11/11/priest-in-uniform-military-chaplains-of-the-first-world-war-by-dr-james-hagarty-ksg/>. This is probably a typing error as Hagarty also states 17 in Tom Johnstone and James Hagarty, *The Cross on the Sword: Catholic Chaplains in the Forces* (London: Chapman, 1996), p. 174.

<sup>12</sup> These figures are vague because although diligently researched over a number of years, they will always be incomplete, new doubts and new claims still occur. Others who quote statistics do so without primary evidence to support their claims, apparently satisfied with listed figures.

<sup>13</sup> This is why the title claims 1915 as the start date.

<sup>14</sup> Conscription or more formally the Military Service Act 1916 became law in March 1916. It did not apply to Ireland.



Illustration 1.<sup>15</sup>



This sketch was accompanied by the following verse:

Daily to the trenches went  
 Mid gases shot and shell  
 Yet ne'er a man e'er saw him there  
 He did disguise so well  
 Thus oft exposed by night and day  
 He very soon fell ill  
 And home to Blighty went his way  
 With everyone's good will

Fr Fred Gillett, a Liverpool Diocesan priest arrived in France in June 1916 and Fr Robert Steuart, a Jesuit, in October 1916. Both Gillett and Steuart continued until late 1919 and were conscientious diarists.<sup>16</sup> Both these diary contributions, Gillett's in the public domain for the first time, and Steuart's in the Jesuit Archives but rarely if ever utilised, are essential primary sources. Fr Drinkwater's diary, which has been widely available for some time, comprises a control group with the other two diarists.

<sup>15</sup> JAL, Walker Paintings. 'The Transit of our late GOC'. (January 1916). Verse not accredited.

<sup>16</sup> Hence the thesis title end-date of 1919. Their specific experiences in 1919 are only mentioned when relevant to the main chaplaincy effort during open hostilities. When the guns fell silent on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918, for many the Great War was over. For others, including many Catholic chaplains, the end of war was not formally concluded until 28<sup>th</sup> June 1919, when the Peace Treaty was signed in Versailles. Many still awaited demobilisation. The British Army of the Rhine was established so that any Peace Treaty would be honoured by force if necessary. Another rump of the British Army stayed on in France to build cemeteries, clear ordnance, and generally to help achieve something like civil order. Catholic chaplains went with both sets of soldiers and one of the key sets of data used, chaplains everyday diaries, capture the events and concerns throughout the war and into peace-keeping.

The interpretation of primary sources is vital to this project. As described, diaries and the Rawlinson Papers are the two major research sources employed, which when taken together provide a trustworthy running commentary of chaplains in this theatre of war, as their anxieties, attitudes, and behaviours, become exposed to their new and frightening circumstances. Fr Rawlinson, as Principal Chaplain at Army Headquarters in France, maintained an archive which is a depository of a succession of gripes, reports, questions, comments, and a myriad of routine matters which demanded his attention.<sup>17</sup> The Rawlinson archive contains evidence from individual priests often in extreme or stressed circumstances, but mainly records the mundane and routine nature of much of the war.

There are many difficulties facing researchers in Catholic chaplaincy which are caused by two core problems. The first area of difficulty is identification. Cardinal Bourne had insisted that Catholic clerics became under the control of Catholic authorities.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the Army cooperated and had no official knowledge of which unit chaplains were in, or the theatre of war in which they were operating. For researchers examining a particular front, this means that the 'Army Lists' offered no identification. Although official figures of the numbers of chaplains, and the year they were present, were reasonably accurate, they were not one hundred percent, and have not been quoted.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, Catholic Directories show priests having been commissioned, but they also had no knowledge of chaplain whereabouts as they were now outside diocesan jurisdiction. It is unsurprising that in the chaos of war, Rawlinson's largely ad hoc method of deploying chaplains meant that research opportunities were further diminished through erratic recording of military units, which in any case may change at short notice. Sporadic identification depended on Rawlinson and his seniors. What little identification data survives is mostly obtained from correspondence to and from Rawlinson, even then letters marked 'from in the field' strengthen security but do little to assist the researcher.

The second concern is a weakness within Catholic administration. Where diocesan archives exist, they have always depended on enthusiastic archivists, indulgent clergy, and appropriate facilities for storing historical data. Unfortunately, a sense of Diocesan and Religious insularity permeates the situation with no apparent desire to create a national

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<sup>17</sup> Bernard Stephen Rawlinson OSB, CMG, OBE. Colonel and Principal Catholic Chaplain on the Western Front.

<sup>18</sup> Hagarty and Johnstone, *Cross on the Sword*, pp. 40-43.

<sup>19</sup> Names posed a problem. On occasions O' Donnell was recorded as Donnell or Donnelly; Kelly A, Kelly A.T and Kellie A, all caused confusion, and those priests using their adopted in-house names such as Aloysius Darvell instead of Leo, his common name, added to the chances of error. Additionally contract times differed and those returning mid-contract were not detected by the official lists, which were in any case composed at least six months out of date.

Catholic history project. The current picture is still random and incomplete, and shows no sign of improvement.<sup>20</sup> Fortunately, the archives utilised in this study are among the best available, whilst others failed to respond. This created the potential of archival imbalance; however, sufficient data was gathered from external sources and from the Catholic archives that flourish, to redress the balance. The Society of Jesus for example, both London and Dublin Provinces, have independently maintained archives consistently well throughout the last century. They are adequately resourced and maintained. Their ample quantity of material was generated by means of the Society encouraging two-way correspondence with its priests throughout and after the war.

This was not the case for Diocesan priests. Celibate chaplains lacked conventional correspondence with a spouse or children, although there is evidence from the diaries that some chaplains wrote to siblings, and other relatives, but even this was inconsistent and the contents have not been retained. Letters between chaplains and their bishops do exist, but are rare and apparently random, their survival seemingly dependent on the endeavours of individual chaplains and their retention by the endeavours of some bishops and archivists.<sup>21</sup> Some did communicate with parishioners from home, such as Frs Gwynn<sup>22</sup> and Drinkwater,<sup>23</sup> but these are rare documents with which to work and their contents reveal nothing more than routine correspondence as might be expected at home. What did the other two diarists' write? Fr Steuart mentioned writing to family members, usually his aunt 'Choty', but did not leave these letters, and strikingly, never appeared to communicate with his parents, presuming they were still alive.<sup>24</sup> The same applied to Fr Gillett, even though he returned home to visit his dying mother and occasionally offered Mass on behalf of his parents. Omitting familial correspondence might be a product of privacy, or perhaps forgetfulness, but these are unlikely inferences. To understand better it is useful to understand a priest's sense of vocation, mission, and disciplined training, investigated in chapter two. The celibacy of Catholic priests, in order that they can be independent to fulfil their missions for the Church, should also be considered. During ordination they freely offered themselves to God, and in the practical sense eschewed all their past familial and domestic connections. Any emotional aspects went unrecorded and remain speculative. This disconnection from family life was the inevitable

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<sup>20</sup> The Catholic Talbot library at Preston, a treasure shrove of Catholic literature which has recently been closed by the Lancaster Diocese.

<sup>21</sup> LAA, EBC S2.1.G, contains one such letter from Fr F. Gillett to Archbishop Whiteside.

<sup>22</sup> NAM, 'Letters of Fr John Gwynn'. They appear to be mundane letters written to civilians, possibly parishioners back home in Ireland. The archivist explained that they were purchased by NAM at auction because of their rarity.

<sup>23</sup> BAA, Drinkwater diaries, (27<sup>th</sup> July and 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1915), but their content and destination not known. On 30<sup>th</sup> August 1915 he wrote to his brother Julian who was serving in the Army. Later he wrote to 'Oxo' another brother who was later killed in action as a pilot with the Royal Air Force on August 24<sup>th</sup> 1918.

<sup>24</sup> His mother was alive at the start of the war as she was named on the first page of his dairy as executor.

consequence of their calling. In lay terms it is difficult to grasp this divorce from conventional family life, nevertheless, it was a real one, as the lack of any evidence of a conventional life in diaries and correspondence confirm. Priests had a wider family with which to engage, and in the war that meant soldiers, civilians, and others who sought their help. When on leave, that is on temporary return from mission, priests naturally were free to communicate and meet their families, but that source of data has not been recorded.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, a cultural communication void is created which renders the Downside Abbey Archives collection of the Rawlinson Papers, despite their inconsistent nature, a vital and unique commodity for historians of Catholic chaplaincy. This archive also attenuates the research skew towards the Society of Jesus, whose creation and retention of documentary material has been acknowledged.

Additionally, primary sources need to be treated with care especially in the well intentioned area of Catholic propaganda. Despite the integrity of *The Tablet* in the reporting of the military campaigns, its dubious claims for Catholicism, and other accounts such as Fr Williamson's 'Happy Days in France and Flanders', will be shown to be highly dubious. This type of propaganda has been carefully avoided. Its promulgation could be subtle, such as Rawlinson's attempts to strengthen internal Catholic pride, whilst retaining the potential for possible external consumption. This appeal for war material from recently demobilised chaplains was instigated by Rawlinson and subsequently advertised in *Freemans Journal* of October 6<sup>th</sup> 1924:

I propose publishing a Record of the work of the Catholic Chaplains of the British Army in the Great War. I am writing to you personally to ask if you if you would be good enough to send me something of your own experiences, which I know there were many and varied. *What I particularly want is matter which shows the difference of the RC chaplain from all other denominations, in his dealings with the men through the Sacraments or otherwise*, and stories of experiences in your sphere, that would be of general interest. I know you can do this and would be most grateful if you would do so and let me have it as soon as you conveniently can. I want the book to embrace, as far as possible, the varied works of the Chaplains in the field.<sup>26</sup>

There is nothing inherently wrong for the senior chaplain to wish to show the efforts of the men in his charge in a good light. The danger is indicated by my italics, that is, to show the difference between the performances of chaplains across the denominations. It was not Catholic triumphalism, more like euphoria, but this type of partiality has been avoided.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> With the notable exception of Fr Steuart's time on leave where families were intrinsic.

<sup>26</sup> DAA, Ephemera. Rawlinson to all chaplains writing from Trinity Square, Southwark SE1 in 1921. Submissions were made but the book was never produced.

<sup>27</sup> Rawlinson never displayed religious enmity but was probably affected by post-war enthusiasm.

## Literature Review and Methodological Theory

With a study employing a range of disciplines and methodologies, it has proven simpler to combine the literature review with the theory of methodology. Historical, geographical, social, religious, and political frameworks are set in chronological order and reflect the contemporary environment in which they occurred. How they are derived and presented will be addressed when appropriate. Further clarification will be included at the start of each chapter.

In theoretical terms this study combines both secondary and primary sources. Emmanuel Le Roi Ladurie's ideas are examined by David Cannadine and give substance to the basis of this research.<sup>28</sup> Le Roi Ladurie scrutinises history through two different but eventually converging processes and sources, which he names 'parachutists' and 'truffle hunters'. His parachutists are: 'those who survey the broad historical landscape from a great Olympian height', and his truffle hunters: 'those grubbing around in dense thickets of local detail'.<sup>29</sup> By deploying both parachutists and truffle hunters, their mutuality encourages a deeper understanding, and these methods will be extended to Catholic chaplains. Diaries and correspondence comprise the greater part of the truffle hunting, whilst literature satisfies the context delivered by the parachutists.

Snape makes the astute observation that: '...military and religious historians of modern Britain tend to inhabit separate and mutually uncomprehending worlds'.<sup>30</sup> In such a remark he does not go far enough. This study argues that the same criticism applies to the relationship between other disciplines including cultural geography, social history, and politics. These topics do not stand in splendid isolation. It will be shown that when subjected to an all-inclusive examination from the methodology proposed, this eclectic mix of disciplines adds to an improved understanding, especially when accommodation and analysis of both regional and national differences is added. History is not an exact science, and when it involves people as the central concern, even less so. A less rigid and more flexible approach to understand the nuances which exist within the staid boundaries of national and grand histories is beneficial. There is a need for truffle hunting. This thesis is an attempt to cross many of these divides whilst retaining a mandatory degree of objectivity and to try and fulfil Carr's definition of progressive history as:

[The] capacity to rise above the limited vision of his own situation in society and in history, and: [The] capacity to project his vision into the future in such a way as to give

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<sup>28</sup> Emmanuel Le Ladurie quoted in David Cannadine, *Making History Now and Then: Discoveries, Controversies and Explorations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave - Macmillan, 2008), p. 30.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 4.

him a more profound and more lasting insight into the past that can be attained by those historians whose outlook is entirely bounded by their own immediate situation.<sup>31</sup>

Constant evolution in methodology and attitude continues to open up new opportunities for others to follow. History is not a static concept as Cannadine noted: 'Much has happened to the discipline [of history] during the second half of the twentieth century, especially the widening of its scope and the proliferation of its subfields'.<sup>32</sup> A review of the literature studied, therefore, includes an interdisciplinary approach which is both regional and national in character.

The first review concerns history of the Great War in general. An impressive example of macro or 'parachute' study is Hew Strachan's: 'The First World War: To Arms', which is arguably the first truly definitive history of the First World War outside the tight constraints of representing a solely English outlook<sup>33</sup>. Earlier generations of historians had access to only a limited range of mainly English sources, and their focus was primarily on military events. Instead, Strachan embraces geographic, cultural, diplomatic, economic, and social history. In this authoritative and readable account, these fresh perspectives are incorporated within the military and strategic narrative, thereby liberating the constraints of national preoccupations to embrace both global and comparative outlooks. It forms a subtext to this thesis which seeks to discern and scrutinise from many angles. The apparently static and predominantly national or self-interested agendas' are challenged, so that any preconceived notions based on national or institutional prejudices and certitudes appear anachronistic. Strachan's books demonstrate that international and Eurocentric viewpoints deliver a rounder and less myopic version of history than the previously popular British Empire approach, and although he minimises the Irish contribution, his work creates a context largely without pro-English, and specifically pro-London, bias.<sup>34</sup> Sir Martin Gilbert's account of the First World War is also impressive, engaging in all theatres of war and not simply the Western European campaign. Alas, his interpretation strongly represents the English perspective, which is disappointing but understandable, and for that reason Strachan was the more relevant historian for this thesis.<sup>35</sup>

British history of the conflict to date, therefore, broadly follows the English model, which tends to overlook or underplay the Irish contribution by subsuming Ireland within the

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<sup>31</sup> E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 117.

<sup>32</sup> Cannadine, *Making History Now and Then*, p. 27.

<sup>33</sup> Hew Strachan, *The First World War: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> It will be argued that being part of Britain, a political entity since 1801, was not the same as a shared cultural or aspirational identity. This reality still eludes many historians (even Strachan), who write as though an English viewpoint, even a hundred years ago, somehow automatically included Ireland.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The First World War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1994).

body politic of Britain.<sup>36</sup> Ireland was politically part of Britain, but had many different cultural and national aspirations. Irish efforts at best are treated as an addendum to English history, and rarely if ever viewed from an Irish perspective. Strachan in this area is no different:<sup>37</sup> neither are John Keegan, Martin Gilbert, and others.<sup>38</sup> English mainstream writers rarely grasp the cultural differences between England and Ireland, and within Catholicism, relying it would appear on stereotypical attitudes in research. Richard Holmes, for example, declared that the: ‘Church of England chaplains came from middle class backgrounds [...]. In contrast, Roman Catholic chaplains came from working class backgrounds. Father Willie Doyle was the youngest of seven children of a devout Irish Roman Catholic family [...]’.<sup>39</sup> The clear implication with such logic is that Fr Doyle was a working class man. This study will show that such assumptions about Catholic chaplains, which fall into a convenient class template, are plainly too naïve and wide of the mark.<sup>40</sup> A straightforward search of the Irish censuses reveals that Doyle’s father was a civil servant with responsibilities in the courts, employed a groom and servants, and lived in Dalkey a prosperous Dublin seaside suburb.<sup>41</sup> Further, the doyen of Doyle historians, Professor O’Rahilly, confirms that: ‘His father is an official of the High Court of Justice [...] and his second son entered the legal profession and is the present recorder of Galway’.<sup>42</sup> Given the restrictions on Catholic progress within the institutions at this time, Willie Doyle’s family were successful and living in at least comfortable, middle class circumstances.<sup>43</sup> Although the books by Strachan, Gilbert, Keegan, et al. may be lacking in cultural and regional awareness, they do provide a solid basis for understanding the political, military, economic, and strategic decisions and actions in the war.

In specific areas of historiography it is encouraging that conventional interpretations even in that taboo of all areas, the military, are being disputed and arguably demolished. Corrigan, although an Army apologist, argues in: ‘Mud, Blood and Popycock’, that technological, scientific, training, tactical, and above all logistical advances and successes, demonstrate a British Army rapidly progressing during the war.<sup>44</sup> He emphatically counters

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<sup>36</sup> This was a political fact yet ignores cultural aspects and the political schism represented by Irish independence in 1922. The British model also usually ignores the Scottish and Welsh individual contributions.

<sup>37</sup> An annoying indication of this, probably an editing defect, is that in the books quoted, Strachan referenced Ireland on a number of occasions, but not one of the references tallied with the books content. They usually referred to Italy.

<sup>38</sup> John Keegan, *The First World War* (London: Pimlico, 1999).

<sup>39</sup> Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front 1914-18* (London: Harper-Collins, 2005), p506.

<sup>40</sup> Refer Appendix 7 for a sample census.

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Dublin/Dalkey/Dalkey\\_Avenue/1317100/](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Dublin/Dalkey/Dalkey_Avenue/1317100/) accessed 12.07.2103.

<sup>42</sup> Alfred O’Rahilly, *Father William Doyle SJ*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Longmans - Green, 1920), pp. 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Holmes did correct this error in a subsequent book, *Soldiers: Army Lives and Loyalties from Redcoats to Dusty Warriors* (New York: Harper, 2012) pp. 57-8.

<sup>44</sup> Gordon Corrigan, *Mud, Blood, and Popycock: Britain in the Great War* (London: Cassell, 2004).

previous versions which attribute incompetency solely on class, as in 'Oh What A Lovely War'.<sup>45</sup> Corrigan's revision of past outdated versions of the history of the British Army is part of a development which includes, for example, the essays which create the content of Gary Sheffield and Daniel Todman's book, 'Command and Control on the Western Front'.<sup>46</sup> Todman contributed a chapter on the evolution at GHQ, whilst Sheffield wrote about the 5<sup>th</sup> Army and General Gough in particular. All the titles in this book probe and reassess previous histories, to one extent or another. They are useful, each in their own right. However, compilations of essays, even those sharing a theme, do have weaknesses. By their very nature they are only loosely collaborative, elevating Corrigan's single study in stature within the design of this treatise. In the main, all of these histories provided the general information by which to gain context for the chaplaincy experience.

A chronological context, from priestly formation to chaplaincy, helps explain the behaviours and attitudes of these times which can defy modern evaluation. It is, therefore, profitable to retreat a hundred years and thereby create an environment which represents the actual lives of these men. Providing historical data of proven chronological validity is vital to this aim. The dangers can be seen when time is allowed to potentially, and actually, distort facts. Fr Henry Gill SJ and Jane Leonard for example, both refute that 1916 had much effect at the Front. They use sources that were written many years after the events. In Fr Gill's case, he blatantly altered his 1922 diary account: 'the whole event [1916 Rising] caused very little comment, at the time', [at the time was a strikethrough in pencil].<sup>47</sup> In 1933 he revised his diary and omitted: 'at the time'.<sup>48</sup> Compare that to 1916, whilst awaiting the battles on the Somme, he wrote shortly after the Easter Rising: 'We can't think of anything else but the terrible things that have been going on in Dublin [...]. Nothing has affected Irishmen out here more than this [...].'<sup>49</sup> This is discussed in more detail when the effects of the 1916 Rising are considered. Leonard also exposed her work to revision as she used material from aged ex-officers thereby introducing the doubts of memory recollection: 'In some Irish battalions, news of the Rising had little impact', but significantly the evidence was based on: 'Irish officers being interviewed long after the war'.<sup>50</sup> The primary evidence used in this thesis has been validated as written at the time. Visits to France assured that distance, names, sights and

<sup>45</sup> Joan Littlewood, *Oh What a Lovely War* (London: Penguin Classics, 1967).

<sup>46</sup> *Command and Control on the Western Front: The British Army's experience, 1914-1918*, Sheffield, Gary and Todman, Daniel eds., (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1994).

<sup>47</sup> JAD, CHP1/27. Gill Diaries, 1922.

<sup>48</sup> JAD, CHP1/28. Gill Diaries, 1933.

<sup>49</sup> DAA, Gill to Rawlinson, (3<sup>rd</sup> May 1916), 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Irish Rifles.

<sup>50</sup> Jane Leonard, 'The Reaction of Irish Officers in the British Army to the Dublin Rising 1916' in, *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experience*, ed. by Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle, (London: Lee-Cooper, 2003) p. 262.



more, furnished verification. Additionally, daily comparisons of dairies are mutually supportive of their individual authenticity, as was the detailed mapping of the diarists' travels. These all show the same repetitive patterns that simply were too mundane to fabricate, and effectively reflect actual military movements. These diaries were not written to excite but for personal consumption, there is no motivation for falsification. The handwriting is constant and real, with inadvertent marks and corrected errors on the originals, and the pencils breaking or ink running out.<sup>51</sup> They were written on a daily basis and cover the entire period of their active service. These are crucial verifications that eliminate the sort of errors or misconceptions above, and particularly errors induced by historians which are then compounded by successive generations. The Great War 1914-18 is the most obvious example of historical torpor as the war did not end until 1919. Steuart's diaries of 1919 will later prove that the fear of a continuation of hostilities in May 1919 was perceived as a very real one, the British Army of the Rhine were not stationed there for mere recuperation.<sup>52</sup> Generations continue to follow blindly past misinterpretations which do little to enhance the reputation of history.

Most historians are 'parachutists'. 'Truffle hunters' are not troubled by too many historians wishing to join their company. The coverage of Catholic chaplaincy organisation and history, such as that by Hagarty and Johnstone in 'The Cross and the Sword', is a case in point. Employing a widespread agenda covering two centuries offers a useful general insight into the organisation of Catholic chaplains and some of their deeds, and was at the time groundbreaking, but it cannot offer more than a passing knowledge of chaplains themselves.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, there was the occasional error which caused some doubts to arise.<sup>54</sup> There is little else covering English Catholic chaplains. Peter Howson has written an account of the chaplaincy organisation across the denominations and does seek to establish the differences between them. Understandably he draws most of his deductions from the Established Church and its position within the Army. His summation is in the title of his book 'Muddling Through', and as will be shown in the Catholic experience, a degree of sympathy with his

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<sup>51</sup> Fr Gillett's Diaries were written onto four 1921 diaries, with 1921 crossed out and replaced by the actual date. In that sense they were written after the war, however, close, detailed, and thorough investigation confirms that they were verbatim accounts written at the time, and simply tidied up in late 1921 or 1922, presumably having bought a job lot of out of date 1921 diaries. He would not have put the boring details down unless he was reproducing word for word his initial writings. Neither would he have admitted to the occasional 'clerical tea'. Additionally, every route he mapped out has been personally visited and verified and the same with churches, monuments, and places of worship. I am 100% convinced that his diaries are exact facsimiles of the originals.

<sup>52</sup> For brief accounts of Steuart and Gillett's post 1919 life refer Appendices 14 and 12 respectively.

<sup>53</sup> Tom Johnstone and James Hagerty, *The Cross on the Sword*.

<sup>54</sup> For example, *The Cross on the Sword*, Roll of Honour, p315. Fr C. L. Bedale WSM was mentioned as Killed in Action, Died of Wounds and Died on Service. Rev. Bedale died of influenza on leave in Cambridge; however, in fact he was not a Catholic but a Wesleyan Minister and left a widow. PRO WO 374/5270.

views is in order.<sup>55</sup> However, his emphasis is on the structure of the organisation, and that structure in itself does not adequately reflect specific Catholic difficulties, many of which were generated by Cardinal Bourne himself. Although well-researched, his over-reliance on *The Tablet* for Catholic sentiments, limits his sources to that of the Catholic establishment. It will be shown that this newspaper falsified claims on conversions by chaplains and distorted the Irish bishops' support for recruitment in the later stages of the war. An understandable source to employ but it has to be treated with care. Nevertheless, his time as an active chaplain provided a valuable and pragmatic insight into the workings of part of the chaplaincy organisation.

Howson's next book about the World War experiences of the Reverend Benjamin O'Rorke is a completely different type of chaplaincy history and more in line with the aims of this thesis. Interestingly he too recognises the need for a: '...wider perspective than the single denominational approach that has been favoured by many writers [Anglican]'. But I take issue with his next statement that: 'The notable exceptions are Smythe and Snape. Even they favour the experiences of Anglicans and Catholics at the expense of Presbyterians, Wesleyans and members of the United Board'.<sup>56</sup> His point that all chaplains need representing, is a good one, and as a Methodist minister an essential one, but I disagree with his suggestion that Smythe and Snape actually represent Catholic chaplains, except as an addendum to their Anglican colleagues.<sup>57</sup> The design to opt for a single Catholic approach in this study implies that all the other denominations need the same singular methodology, in order to deliver a truly comparative history of all chaplains, instead of the fudges that piecemeal comparisons deliver.

O'Rorke had an interesting life as a Church of England chaplain, and as the title suggests, his experiences varied from captivity in Germany to GHQ. His largely administrative role might be comparable with Rawlinson, who was alas never a diarist. The inclusion of theology is sprinkled throughout O'Rorke's account, and is in sharp contrast to the almost complete absence of theology in all the Front Line Catholic testimonies.<sup>58</sup> His diaries, therefore, differ to the three employed here, as their roles and activities were very different. Their ministries amplify differences between these chaplains, as did their rank, personalities and traditions. Sermons are a case in point. It will be argued that Catholic chaplains preferred

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<sup>55</sup> Peter Howson, *Muddling Through: The Organisation of British Army Chaplaincy in World War One* (Solihull: Helion, 2013). Chaos in Army Chaplain Departments is the central theme throughout.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Howson, *Padre, Prisoner and Pen-Pusher: The World War Experiences of Reverend Benjamin O'Rorke* (Solihull: Helion 2015), p 16. Smythe

<sup>57</sup> J. Smythe, *In This Sign Conquer*, (London: Mowbray 1968). This work was read but considered too Anglican in its outlook to have any bearing on a singularly Catholic thesis.

<sup>58</sup> This would be an interesting area for comparative study but only if it is part of the whole experience for all chaplains. Howson hints at the need for more diaries to be brought to light with such comparisons implicit.

homilies to sermons, and even those have not been recorded or retained. Conversely, in the Anglican tradition Reverend O'Rorke was a regular preacher: 'The sermons noted here are only a small fraction of those which Benjamin O'Rorke would have preached'.<sup>59</sup> It is tempting to make impulsive comparisons between denominations, but without the full contextual background they would have little real value. The Catholic vision to emerge, will explain this position further.

Some historians prefer comparative chaplaincy histories between denominations. Comparative history is an essential component of this type of historiography, perhaps its *raison d'être*. Understandably, the Established Anglican Church attracts most attention using Anglican chaplains as the yardstick by which their main critique is applied, whilst other denominations are covered as an addendum or comparator to the main body. For example, in a chapter by Snape called: 'Diffusive Christianity', he considers: 'Calvaries and Leaning Virgins', in France and Belgium.<sup>60</sup> Both countries had strong Catholic presences and yet Catholic soldiers, chaplains, or civilians, are not represented in Snape's interpretations of these objects. He interestingly observed a succession of non-Catholic reactions; nevertheless, he fails to acknowledge what might be considered, given the geography, the 'official' version. He remarks that: 'Protestant Britons encountered a Catholic landscape... but there was little or no animosity towards a symbol [crucifix] that was historically alien to the landscape of Protestant Britain'.<sup>61</sup> These Catholic objects are interpreted solely from a Protestant perspective without acknowledging their particular spiritual symbolic relevance to Catholics. This is the perspective of the dominant religion and retold for a majority, if partial, audience. Snape is trying to show Protestant troops in a positive light and suggests that tolerance towards Catholic symbols, or even a spirit of generosity, was the *modus operandi* of British Protestant soldiers.<sup>62</sup> Evidence will suggest the opposite, adding doubt to these optimistic claims of open-mindedness. Anti-Catholicism continued to be endured as evinced by the desecration of Catholic religious symbols and churches by British and other troops. Melvin does not suggest tolerance between Anglican and Catholic soldiers either, rather absorption: 'For combatants residing within the Catholic countries of the Western Front, the material culture of Catholic rituals that surrounded them soon infiltrated their Anglican practices [...] eliminating some of the foreign character of the Catholic religion for Anglican Soldiers'.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Howson, Padre, *Prisoner and Pen-Pusher*, p. 84.

<sup>60</sup> Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>62</sup> Protestant here does not imply active religious participation, rather a default collective description.

<sup>63</sup> Amport Armed Forces Chaplaincy Conference 2011, Ashleigh Melvin, Birbeck College, University of London, produced an insightful paper: 'Fluid Faith: Religious Rituals and Their Emotional Effect'.

Separating the Protestant understanding of Catholic rituals and religious objects as superstition and/or idolatry, from the Catholic dogmata of symbolism, forms a fundamental chasm between the two belief systems, any comparisons are hence, disingenuous.<sup>64</sup> However, in later claims of desecration by chaplains, other factors will be explored and there is no evidence that troops who practised the Anglican religion would be any more responsible for these actions than their Catholic counterparts. This should be extended to those practising members of the non-Anglican religion such as Methodists, Presbyterians, Calvinists, Jews and others. For those with no religion, and particularly those who were decidedly anti-religion, their actions would be more open to question. Unfortunately the term Protestant does not differentiate between active participants in those denominations, and those simply adopting the nomenclature for bureaucratic expediency.

The same observations of Snape can be made about Edward Madigan's book, 'Faith Under Fire: Anglican Army Chaplains and the Great War', although the title does make it clear that his study of Anglican chaplains is central.<sup>65</sup> He, nonetheless, compares religions on occasions, one section being named: 'Catholics versus Protestants' but fails to continue this momentum throughout, merely interjecting piecemeal when necessary.<sup>66</sup> This is an interesting and selective use of data as Madigan has trodden the Catholic route of research, his name recorded in some of the research establishments declared in this study. He has argued that he is a positive believer of comparative study.<sup>67</sup> Is he basing comparisons on relative religious populations, or relative chaplaincy numbers? If that is the case, it is difficult to sustain when considering all the variables between denominations, which would need to be jettisoned to fit into a structure merely based on numbers. This approach would be reasonable if based on audience probabilities, with the non-established churches all having lesser potential readership than the Anglican Church, or on the availability of more research material from the numerically dominant establishment.

These are unlikely motivations as Madigan and Snape are both committed to widening chaplaincy histories; a distinct disagreement exists between these scholars and my own lines of enquiry which necessitates more explanation from my quarter. Both Madigan and Snape follow the orthodoxy of comparative history. Although their accounts are researched and

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., Melvin's main argument was the familiarity with which religious objects from home could bring comfort to the troops. Her paper was well received but a response from the audience was relevant: 'Do you recognise that it is important for historians to make clear the distinction between the Catholic interpretations of these items as symbolic rather than iconographic?' Melvin agreed but her paper had not reflected this distinction.

<sup>65</sup> Edward Madigan, *Faith Under Fire: Anglican Army Chaplains and the Great War* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>67</sup> RACD Conference 2011 in a private discussion.

reasoned, the inclusion of other religious denominations is invariably minor to the main body of their studies, and hence not truly comparative. Such comparisons minimise nuance, transition, and contextual width and depth. Interpretation is as a result, predictable. The adoption of a myriad of cultural and religious understandings as attempted here, and the scope and scale of such a study across all the denominations would be daunting. It is no surprise given the scope of such a project, that in the English context, the majority Church is the preferred vehicle for most historians. Nonetheless, there are limitations with employing comparisons which are essentially based on opposites. Nietzsche<sup>68</sup> is scathing of the: 'habit of seeing opposites' in history. Eriksen quotes him thus:

The general imprecise way of observing sees everywhere in nature as opposites, as for example, warm and cold, where there are no opposites, but differences in degree. This bad habit has led us into wanting to comprehend and analyse the inner world, too, the spiritual-moral world, in terms of such opposites. An unspeakable amount of pain, arrogance, harshness, estrangement, frigidity has entered into human feelings because we think we see opposites instead of transitions.<sup>69</sup>

Comparisons between different denominations are, therefore, lacking. For example, education and training assumes a far greater significance in the Catholic ministry which cannot, to any extent, be directly compared to other denominations in range, depth, length, or tradition.<sup>70</sup> Hence these external quasi-comparisons lose much value. This will be demonstrated throughout, as the role of Catholic education within Catholic progress in general, and the role of Catholic priests developing into chaplains in particular, is explored. The examination of distinctions, rather than blunt opposites within Catholicism in Ireland and England, creates an opportunity for valid internal comparative study. A method has been utilised which rigorously explores the differences within Catholic traditions and history, seeking to navigate the various temperatures between Nietzsche's hot and cold. It is not comparative studies *per se* that are the issue here, rather the need to compare within the same boundaries and release the nuances which make up true comparisons.

To demonstrate the limitations of 'parachutists' and the advantages of 'truffle hunters', the following analysis based on the former is illuminating. Snape in his study of Catholic soldiers in the war provides an eclectic mix of secondary and primary sources. It will, nonetheless, be argued that generalisations which were derived from McLeod make no accommodation for the transitions which Nietzsche warns about. Hence the claim that: 'Catholicism in England and Scotland at the beginning of the twentieth century was still to a

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<sup>68</sup> An unlikely yet relevant source, in a Catholic study.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (Chicago: Pluto, 1993), p. 147. Here Eriksen is quoting Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* ([n.p.], [n.pub.], 1880) p67.

<sup>70</sup> Chapter 2, Education, Mission, Training.

large extent: *a religion of the slums*<sup>71</sup> will be challenged and demonstrate that the social situation was more fluid than he assumed. Snape was correct to a point, yet not wholly representative. McLeod's observations were too simplistic, too geographically broad, and too static, ignoring the trend that will show that Irish and Lancashire Catholics had begun to assimilate and had been upwardly mobile by the end of the nineteenth century. Grander historical representations tend towards generalities by distancing themselves away from reality, and as a consequence, obscure the undercurrents that regional studies may detect. This argument will be expanded in the first chapter.

The study of Catholicism in England can be followed through the works of Hilton,<sup>72</sup> Doyle,<sup>73</sup> Beck,<sup>74</sup> McLelland and Hodgetts,<sup>75</sup> Norman,<sup>76</sup> Hastings<sup>77</sup> and Hales.<sup>78</sup> These provide grounded Catholic histories from both regional and national perspectives. Doyle's scholarly account of the Liverpool Diocese is an invaluable contribution to the social and episcopal intent of the time, and marks a crucial development from Old Catholicism to a fusion with the Irish variety which became a dominant factor in subsequent Catholic events at home and at war. Hilton examines Lancashire generally, and his contribution to understanding long-standing tensions between Religious [priests from Religious orders] versus Secular [priests from a diocese which will be henceforth be termed Diocesan], was important. Beck, and McLelland and Hodgetts, also made significant general contributions, however, unreservedly it was Denis Gwynn in Beck's compilation of essays that was particularly enlightening.<sup>79</sup> He dramatically provided the first insight into the religious life which illuminated the differences and similarities between strands of Catholic priesthood, and their functions. His inspired synopsis of seminarians from Maynooth illuminated the respective roles of Diocesan and Religious priests which opened up the door to understand, not only conflict, but positive diversity.<sup>80</sup> After which, the thorny subject of class could be understood within the wider Catholic design, whose increasing demands for personnel were satisfied from within. The inclusion of Norman, Hastings, and Hales widened the knowledge of Catholicism from the

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<sup>71</sup> Snape, *British Catholicism and the British Army*, pp. 314-58.

<sup>72</sup> John A. Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire From Reformation to Renewal* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1994).

<sup>73</sup> Peter Doyle, *Mitres and Missions in Lancashire: The Roman Catholic Diocese of Liverpool 1850-2000* (Liverpool: Bluecoat Publishing, 2005).

<sup>74</sup> *The English Catholics: 1850-1950*, ed. George A. Beck (Glasgow: Burns and Oates, 1950).

<sup>75</sup> *Without the Flaminian Gate: 150 years of Roman Catholicism in England and Wales 1850-2000*, eds., Alan V. McLelland, and Michael Hodgetts (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1999).

<sup>76</sup> Edward R. Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

<sup>77</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-2000* (London: SCM, 2001).

<sup>78</sup> Edward Hales, *The Catholic Church in the Modern World – A Survey from the French Revolution to the Present* (New York: Image Publishers, 1960).

<sup>79</sup> Denis Gwynn, 'The Irish Immigration', in Beck ed., *The English Catholics*, p. 290.

<sup>80</sup> These relationships between clergy seem to be part of their DNA and perhaps did not occupy their minds, they are, therefore, difficult to establish from the outside. Gwynn overcame this problem. See page 96.

parochial. Norman in particular provided a thorough insight into English Catholicism of the southern variety, and despite his history being written very much from a Westminster perspective, he was impartial and well informed especially on the internal modernist fissures. Hastings also provided a national picture but his contribution was more direct, demonstrating the ability to separate the real power from the symbolic within English Catholicism, hence enriching and supporting evidence from the Front, particularly the variable strength of public Catholic commitment by geographical axes. Hales was less relevant here although he provided a reminder that the Catholic Church was universal, thereby facilitating criticism of the introversion or chauvinism of the English Catholic Church.

National newspapers were examined but rarely utilised, instead a mix of local provincial newspapers revealed what Catholics in Ireland and England were experiencing. Richard Grayson's 'Belfast Boys', employing data from local newspapers, brought to life the relationships and thoughts of men who had previously been simply and lazily categorised in green and orange sectarian terms, and for whom national newspapers with their own specific and competing agendas, sought to marginalise. Grayson's use of newspaper evidence to support his arguments provided assurance that local newspapers projected particular human values.<sup>81</sup> It endorsed the use of local research as not only valid but essential to a deeper understanding of people, their motivations, and actions. Those national newspapers and periodicals with a Catholic audience attracted the dominant Catholic fraternity in England, whilst the local newspapers represented very different regional audiences reflecting the pulse of the times.<sup>82</sup>

How is it possible to understand these men intimately as if in their own shoes, a technique promoted by transcribing Gillett's daily accounts? Cultural geography points the way and provides another strand of enquiry and examination. As the study of chaplains' formative years started in their childhood, visits to the towns and sometimes the houses where they had lived, gave a flavour of what it was like in their locale at that time, and the best source for this was the local newspaper. These techniques, partly influenced by the

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<sup>81</sup> Richard S. Grayson, *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War* (London: Continuum, 2009).

<sup>82</sup> *The Universe* and *The Tablet* convey conventional Catholic orthodoxy and construct a centralised London perspective. *The Liverpool Catholic Herald* by comparison is enthusiastically and overtly Catholic and more so Irish-Catholic in both coverage and rhetoric. All need caution in interpretation. There is a distinction to be made, *The Liverpool Catholic Herald*, had Irish Catholics as its main audience and adapted an Irish nationalist approach to reporting. Its base was urban and strongly sectarian within a Protestant *milieu*, which was entirely different to the rural Irish local newspapers whose focus was on the everyday, which were usually a-political events. Yet both share an insight into the ground level lives of the readership, something unavailable from nationals.

ethnographic methods of Arensburg and Kimball,<sup>83</sup> and Kockel,<sup>84</sup> gave a personal and individual stimulus to the research findings.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, Kilkenny and Tipperary newspapers encouraged the close probing of social, political, and ecclesiastical aspects of Irish life.<sup>86</sup> To visit where some chaplains were born, grew up, were educated, and finally where they served and died as priests and chaplains in France or Belgium, provided a salutary backdrop to the study.<sup>87</sup> In a study of this nature which unashamedly embraces the concept of Aquinas's visceral influence: '*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*'<sup>88</sup> or 'Nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses', then what may be termed a quasi-ethnographic approach was crucial to the feel of the chaplains as people, which transpired through initial transcription of the diaries of Frs Steuart and Gillett. These long-winded and mundane processes became transformed by the immersion in each individual's experiences duly recorded. This created an intense and edifying experience and signposted the way forward by employing an essence of ethnography as a suitable methodology.

The discipline of ethnography, vaguely distilled as to see from another's shoes, was modified to recreate and interpret the chaplains' own accounts. This is not classical ethnography but its sub-techniques assist in interpretation, for without this elucidation understanding is too static and unidimensional. The diaries invite engagement with these essential elements of their narrative. The ethnographer Eriksen warns of the dangers of asking the wrong question which he determines as: 'what are these people really like?' He prefers the formal ethnographic interpretation: 'how are ethnic identifications created, and what purposes do they serve?'<sup>89</sup> Eriksen's warning is not ignored but this thesis will ask both questions. It is important to interpret what chaplains were like, at least where evidence survives. Equally his second question, about the causes of division and distinction are answered by defining the ethnic nuances, peculiarities, transitions, and identities within Catholicism. Probing the underlying tensions and attitudes is significant in developing an

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<sup>83</sup> Solon T. Arensburg, and Conrad M. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948). A totally ground-breaking way of studying a local community, whose lessons are relevant to all truffle hunters.

<sup>84</sup> Ullrich Kockel, *The Gentle Subversion: Informal Economy and Regional Development in the West of Ireland* (Bremen: European Society for Irish Studies Publisher, 1993).

<sup>85</sup> These ethnographers lived and observed within Irish communities and interpreted from the participants perspectives.

<sup>86</sup> Tipperary was chosen because of Frs Looby and Shine who were born and lived three miles apart in Cahir, and for its provincial and rural, as opposed to urban, (Cork or Dublin, for example) context. Kilkenny city was selected because of its different societal and economic composition to Tipperary, yet within an Irish rural and commercial, midlands context: somewhere between Cahir and Dublin in size. Facilities in Kilkenny and Thurles libraries were excellent.

<sup>87</sup> This was repeated at the Front where the diarists' routes were followed and chapels etc. photographed.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Concerning the Truth: Questiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q. 2 a. 3 arg. 19.

<http://www.corpusthomicum.org/qdvo2.html>, accessed June 10<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>89</sup> Eriksen, 'Ethnicity and Nationalism', p. 85.



understanding of the historical and formative dimensions of these young men, and their resultant actions. Thomas Aquinas might have understood.

Visits to France allowed a connection between the diarists and the places visited, albeit at a time and distance. Walks and motorcycle journeys followed the details recorded and churches where these men celebrated Mass were photographed.<sup>90</sup> In that sense proximity to a reconstructed ethnographic approach was formulated. History was becoming real and not only theoretical. The value of this thesis was enhanced by Natalie Davis's: 'The Return of Martin Guerre'. Her research into ancient documents, enriched by her own personal visits to France, richly enhanced her academic credentials and was notable for the way she challenged the judgements which had been derived for sectional interest and had been tediously repeated over time. Her preface starts with: 'This book grew out of a historian's adventure with a different way of telling about the past'.<sup>91</sup> By this she meant revisiting old court testimonies and reinterpreting through the shoes of the participants at the time. She acknowledged both the distortion that may originate from an original incorrect interpretation which is retold over the centuries, and the value of personal testimony properly analysed. As she remarked: 'I would have the rare opportunity to show an event from peasant life being reshaped into a story by men of letters'.<sup>92</sup> The control group of diaries employed here are genuine testimonies and do not suffer 'being reshaped into a story by men of letters', as many of the alternative sources available do.

One of the characteristics of many historians is to select the good and the great. This is repeated in chaplaincy history; the opposite applies to this thesis. The focus on well-known individuals has been eschewed, so that all chaplains who left evidence of their work in this theatre of war have been studied and included when appropriate. Selecting only known individuals has been deliberately avoided to distance this paper from a plethora of existing literature. Over-emphasis on specific and better known chaplains, such as Willie Doyle and to a lesser extent Fr Francis Gleeson, to the denial of others, has created cult personalities which are not representative of all chaplains and diminishes their contribution in Catholic history.<sup>93</sup> Paradoxically, it could be argued that this style also weakens the hero himself, a hero totally unaware of the liberties taken with his own life.<sup>94</sup> A recently published work, Carole Hope's:

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<sup>90</sup> Because Gillett and Steuart rode motorbikes (sic) on occasion.

<sup>91</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard, 1983), preface, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. ix.

<sup>93</sup> A critical assessment of both Irish and English Catholic propagandas awaits research and publication. Effort in this area is often duplicated. Fr Willie Doyle is such an example, whilst the deeper political, religious, and ethical questions remain unchallenged, Doyle as the doyen of Irish chaplaincy is published *ad nauseum*.

<sup>94</sup> Doyle gave express instruction to burn his letters unpublished, but was ignored by his brother, a fellow Jesuit, and also his Provincial, Fr Nolan.

*Worshipper and Worshipped*, is the latest and she admits that: 'Fr Willie Doyle's life story has been told before. I started writing this new biography for reasons that I don't understand myself: only that Willie Doyle had *'got under my skin'*'.<sup>95</sup> Despite these reservations, Hope's book has merit. Despite the same repetitive topic it employs new sources including original family material, which sets it apart from the monotonous repetition of O'Rahilly's well-written, though much copied or plagiarised first biography.<sup>96</sup> As early as 1920 the Society of Jesus in London published 'Soldier of Christ' which was effectively a literary review of Doyle's biography.<sup>97</sup>

Fr Willie Doyle is, in the Catholic recollection, a seemingly magnetic attraction thus creating a void where the majority of chaplains become marginalised or ignored. As Bertrand Russell noted: 'The fact that an opinion has been widely held is no evidence whatever that it is not utterly absurd; indeed in view of the silliness of the majority of mankind, a widespread belief is more likely to be foolish than sensible'.<sup>98</sup> Testimonies from a myriad of sources confirm that he was an extremely brave, devoted, religious, respected, and cherished chaplain who could be held up as an example of both Irish and Catholic courage. For these reasons alone, irrespective of the sad lack of originality and adventure from chaplaincy historians, he became an obvious cult hero. Less complimentary aspects of Doyle's life are often omitted and secular analysis of Fr Doyle raises questions about his state of mind which shows that he was at the extreme edge of ascetic Catholicism.<sup>99</sup> A mild example of many, is his Act of Immolation where he offered his sacrifice up to God with great passion, fervour and utter honesty: '....I offer myself to You and to the adorable Trinity, upon all the altars of the world, as a most pure oblation, uniting in myself every sacrifice and act of homage'.<sup>100</sup> Such profound religious beliefs were not confined to Fr Doyle but his ascetic disposition was outside the norm. He was an extreme follower of that ancient tradition, and therefore not truly representative of the main body of his colleagues, either in the Society of Jesus or in the Catholic priesthood at large.<sup>101</sup> In 1938 in response to a questionnaire which called for perceptions of Fr Doyle from fellow Jesuits and others, to consider his suitability for further religious recognition at the Sacred Congregation in Rome, a mixed response was received. Those working with him at war

<sup>95</sup> Carole Hope, *Worshipper and Worshipped: Across the Divide: An Irish Padre of the Great War Fr Willie Doyle Chaplain to the Forces 1915-1917*, (Reveille, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>96</sup> O'Rahilly, *Father William Doyle SJ*.

<sup>97</sup> JAL, 'A Soldier of Christ', in *The Month*, 45, Jan-July 1920.

<sup>98</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Marriage and Morals* (Originally London: Allen and Unwin, 1929, now available through Abingdon: Routledge Classics 2009.) p.36.

<sup>99</sup> This does not imply mental illness but a man operating at the very fringe of conventional mental normality but within his own deeply religious beliefs.

<sup>100</sup> O'Rahilly, *Father William Doyle SJ*, pp. 193-4.

<sup>101</sup> Stephen Bellis, 'From the Saintly Willie Doyle to the Unlucky Fr Looby', presentation to the Royal Army Chaplaincy Conference, June 2012,

such as Fr Browne were very supportive but others less so. One agreed with my own observations that O’Rahilly’s judgement was: ‘clouded by hero-worship’.<sup>102</sup> Perhaps the most telling comments came from O’Rahilly, his biographer to the same enquiry: ‘I admit that there were many peculiarities and idiosyncrasies in Fr Doyle, he was very imprudent and at times sentimental....but the great test of Fr Doyle was his life as a chaplain at the Front. We there find the great vindication’.<sup>103</sup> Willie Doyle was a great and unique man, *among other great and unique men*.

It is now prudent to explain the value of a regional approach further. National paradigms are too broad to adequately interrogate internal fissures, and particularly so within Catholicism. This is relevant when unravelling the term ‘British Catholicism’ whose name suggests only one strain of Catholicism.<sup>104</sup> The term British Catholicism in this context excludes Scotland for the reasons of space stated. Wales was in episcopal terms included in the England hierarchy. Therefore, the exploration will be between Ireland and differing parts of England, where differences can be detected. With these definitions which will be expanded later, it can be shown that the term, ‘British Catholicism’, is a superficial catch-all phrase belying a complex phenomenon that contains both harmony, yet distinctiveness, between sections of Catholics in Britain.<sup>105</sup> The term British Catholicism is essentially a misnomer and demands the scrutiny of the whole complexity of Catholics in Britain to include Irish and various English Catholic traditions.<sup>106</sup> This reveals differences and similarities which are subject to social, political, ecclesiastical, and historical tensions and cannot be adequately described by one simple term. A regional and national framework which recognises and demonstrates that Lancashire was the pivot between Catholic Ireland and Catholic England, has instead been embraced. As explained, a study of Scotland would complete the picture but awaits research. Many Welsh people also migrated to Liverpool, but their Catholic numbers are unknown but unlikely to be significant.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Bernard J. McGuckian SJ, ‘Willie Doyle’, in Damien Burke, ed., *Irish Jesuit Chaplains In the First World War* (Dublin: Messenger, 2014) p. 46.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>104</sup> Commentators, including Snape, have mentioned Irish, Lancashire, and other British chaplains, but no concerted attempt has been made to investigate the inter-connectivity between these groupings or their distinctions. Those chaplains born in Ireland for example, and living in England, have been lamentably ignored by both Irish and English historians, see Literature Review. They accounted for 18% of deaths on Western Front. Appendices 3-6.

<sup>105</sup> Ireland being within the British body politic until 1922.

<sup>106</sup> Stephen Bellis, ‘Re-Assessing Irish and British Historiography Approaching 1916: What can a Study of Lancashire Catholic Chaplains in WW1 add?’ EFICAS Conference, Galway, June 2013.

<sup>107</sup> In 1813, 10 per cent of Liverpool’s population was Welsh, leading to the city becoming known as “the capital of North Wales”. Chambré Hardman Trust. Retrieved 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010. There was no evidence of the Catholic religion from their buildings, institutions, or preferred public church attendance, many were Wesleyan Methodists. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/religion\\_wales\\_19th\\_20th\\_centuries](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/religion_wales_19th_20th_centuries). , accessed September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015.

Lancashire's pivotal role in Catholic history is explored in Chapter One but can be condensed here. The concept of fusing strands of Catholicism in the years immediately before the outbreak of war, that is Lancashire and Irish, is in stark contrast to the experiences throughout much of England and is at the heart of this study. The distance between Ireland and Lancashire had encouraged a traditional bilateral arrangement of trade and labour. The extraordinary added impulse of Famine evacuation in the years 1845-1852, created a religious and social imbalance in the Lancashire population and created tensions between the dominant Protestant society and Catholics. Moreover, Irish Catholicism threatened the indigenous Old Lancashire Catholic dominant position. The years before the war led to social mobility, assimilation of sorts, and against all probability the fusion of the two derivations of Catholicism. The ability of Lancashire Catholicism to integrate and develop was a distinctive feature in that county's development.

These differences were at the root of much of the chaplaincy experience but can the fusion between Irish and Lancashire Catholics be demonstrated? Yes, if one examines the 8<sup>th</sup> Kings Liverpool Regiment, the Liverpool-Irish, it would be expected that there would be a strong degree of Irish-Catholic influence as their civilian lives were inhabited within a confined Liverpool-Irish ghetto. At war they were subjected to traditional Lancashire influences as part of the 55<sup>th</sup> West Lancashire Division, a unit comprising troops from remote areas of Old English Catholicism. However, the earlier Lancashire hostility to the Irish simply did not happen, or at least went unrecorded, confirming the belief that by 1914 Lancashire and Irish Catholicism were as one, and stronger collectively as a result. Catholics from Ireland but residing in Lancashire had achieved fusion. Fr Fred Gillett confirmed the synergy between Lancastrians and the Irish. Born in Lytham on the estate of Lord Clifton, one of the best-known Lancashire recusants, he was ordained in Lytham but worked in Liverpool. In the Princes Park district he had many Irish Catholics in his congregations. Careful scrutiny of his accounts of the war shows no inclination to separate these two strands. He simply sees Catholic soldiers as his 'poor boys' from Chorley, Preston, and Liverpool or wherever in Lancashire: 'Mass at Proven - at 8:30. Military Mass at 11am, few of my troops allowed to attend. Lots of Preston lads and Chorley and Bolton boys there from another Division and they attended Vespers'.<sup>108</sup> He recognised the contribution that Irishmen made in their religious duties in the Irish national context: 'Many Munster boys there. Rosary at 5pm in RC chapel. Dubliners turn up strong'.<sup>109</sup> This demonstrates that for him at least, the tensions of

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<sup>108</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (1<sup>st</sup> November 1917).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., (1<sup>st</sup> November 1918).

the late nineteenth century are no longer worthy of note. Lancashire and Irish Catholicism was based on a fusion forged over sixty years and had by the Great War become one.

### **Methodological Practice**

The theory above was adapted and developed out of the necessity and desire to acquire proven, and as far as possible, original material. The starting point was the creation and maintenance of a database to record priests': names, dates, places of birth, education and ordination, and the Diocesan or Religious house to which they belonged. This was undertaken by checking over 3,500 priests listed in Lombard-Fitzgerald's compilation covering the years 1801-1914.<sup>110</sup> The obvious weakness is that Scottish and Irish priests were not initially included, however, the English template was able to accommodate these men through other sources which were added when brought to light.<sup>111</sup> 1850 was the starting point as priests before that time would have been too old by the outbreak of war. A second database captured general categories such as: conditions, relationships, attitudes, military, health, death, personal data and many more, over seventy in total. These databases were thus constructed through a long process of elimination and revision from all the sources mentioned below. This has been extremely time consuming but has led to an almost instant ability to recall any chaplain who left data, or to select any subject for close scrutiny. These methodologies remain constant processes. It has also confirmed that statistics, no matter how conscientiously handled still retain elements of error and doubt.

The database was further enriched and extended by substantial research in the National Archive at Kew, the Jesuit Archives in London and Dublin, and the many diocesan archives particularly the Salford Diocesan Archives. These were complemented by the essential Rawlinson Papers at the Downside Abbey Archives. Extended research was effected in these archives supplemented by additional visits to the other institutions mentioned in the bibliography. The requisite data was collated and maintained as described. The Talbot Library in Preston was an important fulcrum for this study because the range of primary data on deposit was extraordinarily useful, and included the lives of priests attached to the library at St Walburge's church, some of whom became chaplains. It also contained (as Salford and Liverpool Diocesan Archives still have) a full set of English Catholic Directories (and one very useful 1917 Irish Catholic Directory) which helped confirm that a priest from a particular diocese had in fact joined the British Army as chaplain. Added to the British Army Lists 1914-

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<sup>110</sup> Charles Lombard-Fitzgerald, *English and Welsh Priests 1801-1914* (Stratton-on-the-Fosse: Downside Abbey Publisher, 1993)

<sup>111</sup> For example the 1917 Catholic Directory was available at the Talbot Library.

1919, a picture was slowly built up representing accurate information, although no guarantees of completeness can ever be offered.<sup>112</sup>

Another aspect of field research should be noted as it provided not only stimulus and focus for the author, but it also positioned much of the research in the very habitats where chaplains lived, worked, and sometimes died. For example the case of Fr Looby CF, visits to Cahir, Tipperary, revealed his early life. The local papers and a visit to his house generated much background 'feel'. However, his death went unreported at the time which was very unusual in the local press, especially as his father was the local auctioneer in a market town of regional importance. A letter from Fr Looby's father, held in the National Archive begs: 'After his death in 1917, (26<sup>th</sup> October, at Third battle of Ypres) [...] his mother died shortly afterwards owing to the effects of his death. *I lost a great deal of money by the above son* and I would be very grateful for some remuneration'.<sup>113</sup> This seemingly hard-headed response may simply be the very attitude of a man of his time and place, but it sits awkwardly with his son's role as provider for others at the expense of himself. Visits to France to his grave and walks around the surrounding countryside, were helpful to understand the commitment he made and raised his chaplaincy life above the mundanity of home life. These visits all contributed to enhancing an understanding of both a chaplain's role and personality.

The theme of getting as close as is possible to some of these men is heightened through the study of the diaries of Frs Gillett, Drinkwater, and Steuart. These diaries not only bring fresh evidence to bear, they allow a deeper understanding of the differences and similarities between priests from dioceses and those from religious orders, and their human and flawed personalities. Geographic and social distinctions, together with personal idiosyncracies, reveal much about the breadth of Catholicism, albeit within a singular and consistent religious calling. These journals have been studied and verified for authenticity and recognised as being genuine.<sup>114</sup> They contain elements of both routine and excitement. Gillett's diaries were recently discovered and provide new insights into the day-to day routine of a diocesan priest at war. Steuart's diaries have also been recently brought to light and also show the daily routine of a priest, but this time from a religious order, the Society of Jesus. Both men share vocational backgrounds but are from diametrically opposed ends of the social scale. This allows comparisons to be made not only on a chronological basis, but also a geographical

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<sup>112</sup> There are simply too many inaccuracies and omissions in all the sets of data available. The database compiled above will continue to develop as more data periodically appears from a variety of sources.

<sup>113</sup> PRO, WO 339/45506.

<sup>114</sup> On five subsequent visits to France and Belgium supported by photographic and cartographic evidence, the author validated the diaries by closely scrutinising the texts and by matching their accounts of events to the places where they took place.

and social one. Drinkwater's diary, which has been available for some time, adds a third dimension and extends an understanding of the intellectual differences between these very different men doing the same job at war. They provide vital clues in making sense of the myriad of Rawlinson's scattered and fragmentary evidence at the Downside Abbey archives. A letter on its own can mean several things but gains context when compared to three diary entries written at the same time as the letter. Fr Walker's paintings are an interesting addendum to the diaries, and also remain virtually unknown.<sup>115</sup>

Diaries and paintings, together with the Rawlinson Papers, provide reliable and frequently unique contributions to historical evidence. Rawlinson's papers were sometimes insightful and revealing, yet they existed in isolation, thus it was the diaries which held the whole together. Previous historians have used these papers but tend to recover a small amount of selective material for their purposes. By comparison, in this study every single document has been retrieved, assessed, collated, and categorised, and the databases described earlier populated, thus enabling the wider picture to be developed.<sup>116</sup> This data and the diaries combined, represent actual everyday life as experienced by Catholic chaplains who shared the same Catholic faith but were from differing social, geographical, and cultural backgrounds. These invaluable sources show both the extraordinary and humdrum lives of chaplains.

The diaries not only reveal the distinctions between Catholics and within Catholicism, but also the consistencies. They effectively become barometers of Catholic practice in Lancashire, Birmingham, and London, and importantly the piety of troops from these areas.<sup>117</sup> As the thesis develops, so does the inescapable conclusion that the correlation between diarist and the geographical area from which he emanated, represents a remarkable, if somewhat fortunate microcosm of English Catholicism at home. They cannot be claimed to be wholly representative, but certainly illustrative. Human beings do not fall into convenient categories *en masse*; nonetheless, the associations between the diarists' conduct and the claimed levels of Catholic knowledge and commitment with whom they are associated, remains striking. A much larger sample of diarists, (which if they exist would need to come within the parameters of this work as explained), would be preferable for without these discoveries these accounts are necessarily subjected to a degree of interpretation. Yet the connections between chaplain and regional identity are interesting as they tell part of the real story of their time as chaplains, through their own words. Each chapter will include the attitudes and actions of all three

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<sup>115</sup> Just before publication his work was made public: <http://www.jesuit.org.uk/profile/leslie-walker-sj>, accessed 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

<sup>116</sup> From over 11,000 digital images taken from two extended visits to Downside Abbey.

<sup>117</sup> Reflecting their areas of birth and working experience pre-war.

chaplains from diary entries. These comparisons are deliberately employed to tease out the differences of the three men who uncannily correspond to geographical variations within Catholicism in England, even if such a hypothesis must remain conjecture.

Fr Drinkwater's diaries consist of a transcription accompanied by the originals which allows verification. He provided some additional material by way of explanation in 1979. Fr Steuart's diaries are hand written and kept at the Jesuit Archive in London. For this study they were digitised and transcribed. Fr Gillett's diaries provided a greater challenge. They consist of four books covering the period 25<sup>th</sup> June 1916 to 19<sup>th</sup> September 1919, which were hand copied in pencil and then transcribed from the four annual diaries into a single digital document.<sup>118</sup> This process, although time-consuming, was extremely valuable and introduced the idea of 'walking in a chaplain's shoes' to the process, thus shaping the methodology. Recalling Aquinas's visceral influence, subsequent visits to France and Belgium have in consequence, been highly significant in cultivating profound personal and motivational awareness. Both transcriptions have been offered to the respective archives.

The diaries confirm that the real reason chaplains went to war was to deliver sacramental and devotional care. The passion, energy, and commitment of Catholic chaplains are instantly recognisable through their daily accounts. Frequency of religious services can be measured, but equally importantly so can the revelation of their relative pre-war influences. These indicate that Fr Gillett reflected pragmatic Lancashire Catholicism. Fused with Irish influences it is evident in his passion for the Virgin Mary, his love of the ordinary 'Tommy', and his difficulties with upper class Army officers. Fr Drinkwater had no class disputes, led an orderly and functional life as a chaplain, and set his mind to improving post-war religious education for midlands Catholics, and solutions to social and political dilemmas. He is less emotionally yet more intellectually involved than Fr Gillett. Fr Steuart was southern-based and born, his family were Scottish and he returned to his aristocratic tradition and roots whenever possible.<sup>119</sup> He performed his role as chaplain methodically and professionally, although without any apparent warmth or personal involvement. He had problems communicating and relating with ordinary soldiers which were the bulk of his remit, and less than successful collaborations with Army officers from a similar social echelon, but from a

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<sup>118</sup> Fr Gillett's four diaries were discovered by accident after a family funeral generated a casual discussion about chaplains. Martin Purdy borrowed them from the priest in question and included a comment or two in his Masters dissertation which was archived at the Talbot Library Preston. Pursuing these diaries led to a priest's house in Rochdale where they lay dormant. After enquiries Fr Lannon the archivist for Salford Diocesan Archives arranged for their collection and deposit at the Salford Diocesan Archive. The author then transcribed the same, initially handwritten [copyright concerns see bibliography] and then in a Word document, deposited in the Salford Diocesan Archives.

<sup>119</sup> He spent the majority of leave in his 'home' in Perthshire, for example.



different Protestant world. Fr Steuart's class advantages might be expected to be a bonus but were in fact largely nullified, or at times acted as a deadweight frustrating his ambitions. Senior Army officers, embedded within the Protestant State and Army tradition could hardly be expected to easily accommodate a Catholic chaplain, irrespective of class. Sadly Fr Steuart failed to realise this and remained in a somewhat delusional state throughout.<sup>120</sup>

When cross-referenced against the bulk of priests encountered in the Rawlinson Papers, these diaries suggest that the control group were representative of the bulk of Catholic chaplaincy and a fair cross-section of Catholic social and geographical difference. They allow a revaluation to be made which allows the priests to be understood within the complete war experience, thereby adding validity to appraising the behaviours of chaplains operating at the extremes. This dual approach offers a degree of consistency not available to historians from the macro tradition, and one that is only utilised by others in piecemeal fashion. Establishing the value of comparing individual papers with diaries can be demonstrated. To ascertain the security of any evidence they can be cross-referencing to the same day, in the same theatre of war, and often the comparable conditions with which they would all most likely be experiencing, even to the extent of the weather. Fr Oddie, for instance, complained bitterly about having his horse withdrawn by the Army through shortages. Fr Steuart on the same day borrowed his Adjutant's horse, Fr Drinkwater for an extended period borrowed his COs horse, and Fr Gillett preferred to provide his own alternative transport, with some effort: 'Bicycled all over the place to arrange Masses some job, considering how scattered we all are'.<sup>121</sup>

This technique of cross-checking using the diaries can also be applied to memoirs and allows scrutiny of erroneously accepted, but flawed literature.<sup>122</sup> A book sometimes quoted by historians, for example Hagarty and Johnston,<sup>123</sup> is Fr Benedict Williamson 'Happy Days in France and Flanders'. This is an interesting and enjoyable read with plenty of detail but unreliable. He was slightly gassed at Nieuport in early August 1917, but on the 22nd of the same month confessed to Rawlinson: 'I am quite well and fit and ready to go again as the effects of the gas seem to have quite passed off',<sup>124</sup> yet he claimed in his book: 'I had not been able to see a yard in front of me since I got gas at Nieuport, in fact I had to feel in front of me to lay hold of the hot mug of tea held out to me'.<sup>125</sup> This was January 1918 and it is

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<sup>120</sup> Appendix 14.

<sup>121</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (17<sup>th</sup> July 1917).

<sup>122</sup> Fr Benedict Williamson, *Happy Days in France and Flanders with the 47<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> Divisions* (London: Harding and More, 1921).

<sup>123</sup> Johnstone and Hagerty, *The Cross on the Sword*, pp. 102 and 161.

<sup>124</sup> DAA 3825 Williamson to Rawlinson, (22<sup>nd</sup> August 1917).

<sup>125</sup> Williamson, *Happy Days*, p. 83/4.

inconceivable that he could have continued working in that condition for at least 5 months. Fr Williamson, who wrote to Rawlinson throughout the period August 1917 to January 1918, appeared to have a full work-load which required his complete faculties. Williamson had either become muddled or never recorded a diary as such, perhaps relying on memory, and his account is, therefore, prone to error. His DSO Rowland Fielding claimed in the introduction: 'A diary which was printed practically as it was written',<sup>126</sup> may be correct but it certainly was not written as it happened, unless it was a deliberate attempt at well-meaning Catholic propaganda. He made reference throughout the book of the sacred qualities attached to St. Theresa of Lisieux, referring to the blindness he claims: 'That night one of the most wonderful instances of the intervention of St Theresa of Lisieux.... Sister you will have to be my eyes tonight. You know I can't see and so it's for you to help me.... From that moment a light shone from above my head showing everything on the road quite clearly for 100 yards'.<sup>127</sup> Fr Williamson made other such miraculous claims. The point is not if these events happened or did not, but that this type of literature which was embraced avidly during and immediately after the war, is not considered safe in scholarship terms in this study. Clearly Fr Williamson is appealing to religious sensitivities for his miracle of sight, when the reality was more prosaic. After the long retreat in March and April 1918 he wrote: 'Slightly gassed on the day [his second slight gassing]....it has not stopped me working, the eyes are better, they gave me some medicine at the Ambulance'.<sup>128</sup> The Rawlinson papers can be used, like the diaries, to double-check post-war recollections in an attempt to clarify the reality.

The accounts employed in this thesis were written at the time. Some sources, such as 'War Stories', or retrospectively recalled accounts of the war or blatant propaganda, have been eschewed as capricious. Diaries used here are determinedly more trustworthy than the gung-ho versions which purport to be diaries, but owe more to boys stories popular at the time, reaching a crescendo in the early 1920s.<sup>129</sup> The obituarist of Fr Francis Devas SJ described the reasons why he, as a Front line chaplain, never wrote a diary: 'Probably he was put-off by the deluge of war-books. Even more probably because he disliked any semblance of self-glorification'.<sup>130</sup> The latter point does arise in many unused accounts but is difficult to prove.

Paintings, utilising a different method of historical representation, have some value but arguably less than the written word. Nonetheless, Fr Walker's paintings also tally with the

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pxi.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p84.

<sup>128</sup> DAA 3825 Williamson to Rawlinson April 4<sup>th</sup> 1918.

<sup>129</sup> *The Month* magazine has vivid war stories, many from Fr Steuart at this time, an example is provided on p. 230, 'Shot at Dawn'. Fr Steuart published a book *March Kind Comrade* in 1931 in this vein and has not been utilised.

<sup>130</sup> JAL, 'Obituary of Fr Francis Devas' in, *Our Dead*, 53 (1938) p. 199.

diarists' observations. Fr Gillett: 'Mass and cemetery. Strolled into the station to find a long train packed with lads for 'up to the line'; carriages too luxurious, so the men are packed into the vans and travel much like cattle'.<sup>131</sup> Walker strikingly encapsulates Gillett's observations.

**Illustration 2**<sup>132</sup>



Charles Plater SJ made two significant contributions to this study. His strong opinions on the snobbish nature of the English Catholic Church will be examined, as will the publication of *Catholic Soldiers* which was a summation of chaplains' attitudes taken towards the end of the war.<sup>133</sup> *Catholic Soldiers* took the manner of a voluntary enquiry. His main concern was to gauge the effectiveness of Catholic chaplains through their anonymous testimonies focussing on the strength of soldiers' religion. The results fed into the other data gathered and provided useful corroboration. It is an inexplicably neglected enquiry, which although subjective in nature, when examined at source does not suffer from later attempts at propaganda, and is the antithesis to 'selected' primary data such as *The Tablet's* falsification of conversion figures for home consumption, discussed later.

The need to capture and represent ordinary as well as exceptional data separates this study from the norm. There is a tendency in the scholarship of chaplains to converge on the commonly known, famous, and often repeated shibboleths or personalities. Fr Willie Doyle SJ,

<sup>131</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (10<sup>th</sup> August 1916).

<sup>132</sup> JAL, Fr Walker's file including his war paintings, as in illustration 2, 'The Locon Express, bringing rations to the troops'. (January 1916).

<sup>133</sup> Charles Plater, *Catholic Soldiers* (London: Longman Green, 1919).

has been discussed, whilst he and the Anglican padre G. Studdert-Kennedy, the infamous 'Woodbine Willie', for examples, have undisputed merit they do not have exclusive rights to be sole representatives of their respective traditions. The dangers for the historian are clear; such unbalanced reporting may demean the other equally meritorious contributions of other chaplains and appoint the historian to a sinecure.<sup>134</sup> The attitudes and evidence supplied by the chaplains requires the support of a deeper exploration of historical, political, ecclesiastical, and cultural matters, not to mention personal complexities and idiosyncrasies, in order to fulfil the potential of their evidence. A pan-class analysis is accommodated which redefines class in the context of educated men with similar missionary philosophies. The research tools created for this thesis support and encourage both comprehension and analysis, without the need to repeat or reinterpret previous versions.

### Contents

The first two chapters establish section one which deals with the formative processes of young chaplains. The first chapter is an essential statement of all the pre-war events which may have influenced the development and formation of Catholic priests and then chaplains. It describes pre-war Catholic society in terms which were likely to affect chaplains at the Front, dealing with changes that were intra-Catholic in the main. It also recognises the effects of the general modernisation of British society and the implications thereof. It deals with the English Catholic Church's modernisation through the restoration of the hierarchy, new intellectual challenges and the rise of Ultramontaniam. The accommodation of various Catholic identities and problems caused by demographic and societal change contributed significantly to Catholic upheaval and disparate regional development models. The tensions between new migrant Catholics and Old English Catholics, and between Diocesan priests and Religious order priests, are also explored. The recognition of the differences between regions and nations is essential when deconstructing the erroneous concept of British Catholicism. Both the Irish and English experiences were different, nonetheless, the fusion between the two created a third dimension which was the eventual amalgamation of both Lancashire and Irish strands of Catholicism within English Catholicism, and is often ignored. The studies of Denis Gwynn for the Irish aspect, and Peter Doyle for the Lancashire element, were particularly useful in this regard. These modernisations will suggest areas of uncertainty which were manifest at the Front. In England, the period 1850 until the Great War was one of Catholic expansion and re-establishment within the Protestant state, albeit with significantly disparate

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<sup>134</sup> Stephen Bellis, 'The Cult of Fr Willie Doyle SJ: Rebalancing the Unrepresentative Treatment of Catholic Chaplains in the Great War', Conference at University of Liverpool, (10<sup>th</sup> May 2014).

regional emphasis. In Ireland the situation was linked to Realpolitik which because of space restrictions is explored in Chapter Five.

Chapter Two of section one, scrutinises priestly education, training, and missionary ethos, and the value that this preparation offered priests in enabling them to conduct their spiritual endeavour for Catholic supplicants as they prepared for battle and the thereafter. This chapter also challenges the concept of chaplaincy training for Catholics which was in effect a training mirage. It assesses the degree of importance of priestly, as opposed to chaplaincy, training. The benefits of a priest's extensive education in the wider and personal spheres cannot be over-emphasised; it is the door by which both the private and corporate world of Catholic endeavour can be entered. This chapter will examine Ushaw school records and reports, and inspect syllabi and prospectuses from various Catholic colleges making the relevant usage of school magazines. Military influences will be demonstrated by college OTCs which were a mix of half-heartedness and professionalism, reflecting the ethos of the particular college. However, there was no lack of commitment to the war effort and a great deal of pride is evident on the Rolls of Honour for respective colleges, Ushaw and Stonyhurst. It will be established that grasping the importance of Catholic education is the key to understanding Catholic chaplains. Catholic soldier's education is also scrutinised. The majority of troops were from proletarian origins, but those from a tradition of strong Catholicism, as in Lancashire and Ireland, had a distinct advantage over their co-religionists, predominantly, although not exclusively, from the south of England. For those troops in regiments with few Catholics, and from those areas short of innate Catholic vigour and tradition, this had potentially fatal spiritual consequences by impairing their ability to receive essential Catholic Sacraments. The negative effects of geographical variations will be explored.

Section two consists of chapters three and four. The third chapter considers the spiritual and emotional benefits derived from regular attendance at Mass and the Sacraments and is definitive in this thesis. Here the chaplains' diaries come to the fore and demonstrate how organising, preparing, and celebrating Mass and the Sacraments were the prime functions for a Catholic chaplain. Difficulties in organisation with the authorities are appraised, although they were generally acceptable to chaplains. Churches and the Catholic built environment are also analysed and the deductions overturn much of the conventional wisdom at home which suggested the mystical attraction of churches. Soldiers had little concern where Mass was celebrated, for it was the Sacraments embedded within the Mass, and the Mass itself, which they hungered for. This emphasised that grassroots Catholics were not simply attending Mass for the visual and sensory aspects claimed by some, and instead

rewards and respects these men for their devotion. In doing so, the imbalance created by well-meaning sentimentalists unravels when directly addressed by working class, rather than middle class, analysis.<sup>135</sup> Away from home and free of parental, familial, or other civilian disciplinary controls, these men volunteered for services. As will be shown they did so with gusto, albeit depending to an extent on other factors such as their place of origin and where their military unit was situated. This argument is balanced by the reality that these men were mostly working class and their religion coexisted within the mores of the day. The church and the public house at home, and ruined chapel and estaminet at war, were comrades.

Section two concludes the role of Catholic chaplaincy. Chapter four describes the devotional and pastoral services which together broadened the Catholic religious experience. Chaplains became not only the spiritual link between God and the soldier but also the psychological connection between chaplain, soldier, and relatives at home. They are studied outside the protection of Catholic institutions. How far could they go to meet other denominations and the British Army? How far did they want to go? The short answer to these questions is not very far and the reasons behind this will be explained. Briefly their roles were defined by Catholicism alone, and in essence were confined to spiritual and pastoral commitments to Catholic troops or civilians. Social services or Army secular assistance were not considered mandatory within this remit. Despite this, their superior education, especially in languages and teaching, was offered to the Army based on the decision of individual chaplains but not at the expense of his religious commitments. Pastoral responsibilities were taken seriously and included letters home to families, attendance and religious succour for those 'shot at dawn', burials and funerals, and the more controversial subject of conversions. Chaplains were able to convert some who in the theatre of war sought salvation, but it will be argued that it was not a co-ordinated affair and exposed Catholic propaganda at home to ridicule. Given that rules and policies were haphazardly issued over time, it is not surprising that difficulties did occur in the early stages, for example the burying of denominations by clergy from a different religion. These instances reveal that one zealous chaplain in particular, displayed an almost hysterical response, suggesting that the distant days of persecution still appeared to loom large in his consciousness. This in turn allows an insight into the tensions of the day in what was a singularly non-ecumenical era.

The last section comprising chapters five and six, examines the attitudes and behaviours which emerged through primary research and locates them within the *milieux*

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<sup>135</sup> The soldier's accounts add to the picture of the chaplaincy experience, many were proletarians so adding to the class analysis.

already established. Chapter Five investigates the changes forced upon the Irish episcopacy and the difficulties Irish chaplains faced. Irish concerns and dynamics were driven by English political failure to appease nationalist aspirations which took on a new lease of life after the events of 1916. It will be argued that much of the anti-Irish angst exhibited was a direct result of 1916. This contradicts other commentators such as Leonard,<sup>136</sup> and was incredibly rescinded in the 1920s and 30s by Fr Gill, despite his own testimony to the contrary in 1916.<sup>137</sup> The physical force elements of the 1916 Rising were alien to many Irishmen, whilst inevitable to others. It was the aftermath which fostered a shifting of moderate Irish opinion towards radicalism and nationalism, if not republicanism. At the Front this was seen as a loyalty issue and chaplains who had an opinion that appeared in any way suspect, were quickly removed.

As the war continued it is important to question what the Irish bishops and clergy were doing. Was Ireland a hot-bed of clerical political radicalism, or was the whole idea an exaggeration? Police reports will inform the debates as will the bishops' involvement in the conscription and food crises. It is at this point that the political entity of Britain as one supposed homogenous body unravelled. Irishmen were, not for the first time, considered disloyal, and her chaplains who did not conform to the conservative English model were by extension a threat and consequently disposable. The fear of military failure in early 1918 re-emerged and threatened to destabilise the singular English ambition. The Irish Catholic Church was forced into a corner, first by internal division and political sea-change, and secondly by the indifference towards the Irish by the English Catholic authorities, from which the Irish episcopacy had always remained legitimately and deliberately distanced. Ireland was at the cross-roads and in political terms Irish chaplains were left isolated. The age old 'Irish Question' is revisited and explained from both Irish and English viewpoints. The inescapable truth is that many Irishmen were not accepted nor treated as full members of British society. In the event, despite obvious personal calumny to some Irish chaplains, Ireland was to become a separate political entity. Crucially, Irish Catholic hierarchical independence had survived colonisation. Political independence from Britain was achieved post-war; religious independence was also upheld and reclaimed from Westminster wartime interference.

The final chapter deals with English chaplains, and brings together the distasteful personal attitudes inherent in society and examines their causes and effects. Its aim is to connect the few cases of snobbery, racism, hypocrisy, and sheer mean-spiritedness on display, with the fissures in Catholic society divulged in Chapter One. Did English Catholic chaplains

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<sup>136</sup> Cecil and Liddle, *Facing Armageddon*, p. 262.

<sup>137</sup> JAD, CHP1/27, Gill Diaries 1922, and CHP1/28, Gill Diaries 1933.

discriminate for social and regional reasons, and can this be related to their formation discussed in the pre-war scenarios? How far did English Catholicism at home influence the attitudes, actions, and behaviour of the Church's representatives at the Front? As the challenge to English Catholic hierarchical hopes intensified towards the end of 1918, the corporate ambition required that individual English chaplains, like their Irish colleagues, were also disposable. The English chaplaincy experience was determined not through politics but by the failure to maintain the expected social mores of the authorities. Some of the expulsions were justified through bad behaviour; others were allegations often based on hearsay and open to doubt. Despite unfairness, it was important for the dominant elements of English Catholic society to enhance their reputations as not only loyal citizens, but also as persons socially acceptable and equal with the upper echelons of English society. Rawlinson and his senior chaplains ensured the authorities and public at large, that the Catholic good name would be upheld. It was time to discriminate for the 'very good sort'<sup>138</sup> and distance one's self from the 'common little man'.<sup>139</sup>

### Conclusion

This study realises and expresses Catholicism in Britain as encompassing differences based on geographical, social, historical, political and cultural axes. Catholicism in the North of England was measurably different than that in the South of England. Irish Catholicism, shaped by economic, cultural, and political diversities, provided another example of variance within the mistaken concept of British Catholicism. These elements affected Catholics at home and at the Front. Chaplains were from these disparate social and cultural backgrounds but their shared educational, vocational, and missionary experiences, assured a relatively consistent level of spiritual delivery. The prospects of religious participation were less obvious for some soldiers, particularly those from southern England and from units with few Catholics, whose lower level of religious knowledge and vigour caused a lesser spiritual opportunity at war. As one chaplain asserted to Plater: 'Catholics who came to the war with a good working religion, with faith and instruction, and a clear definite rule of Christian life, stood the test, the supreme test of war, and the awful temptations of a soldier's life in foreign towns. But the vast majority of the rest have had no real religion at all to help them'.<sup>140</sup> The latter's misfortune was a reflection on

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<sup>138</sup> DAA, Ephemera 0960, Woodlock to Rawlinson, (21<sup>st</sup> May 1918). Woodlock's description of newcomer Fr Plant acknowledged that although he suffered from varicose veins: 'which knocks him for long marches', he was the 'right sort'. Although clearly the 'wrong sort' for the physical side of chaplaincy work at war, he was assessed as being socially respectable, which to Woodlock apparently carried greater weight.

<sup>139</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Chapman, (25<sup>th</sup> May 1917). A comment about Fr Green, a Liverpool diocesan priest, by Fr Chapman OSB.

<sup>140</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, p. 146.



those Catholic communities at home who were distanced from mainstream Catholic life, available to many. The enhanced religious competence and participation by ordinary Irish and Lancashire soldiers, was a result of accommodation between the classes at home which shaped their brand of Catholicism and built thriving Catholic communities. This was frequently expressed through better knowledge and demonstrations of their faith, which meant they would enjoy a wider and deeper opportunity to share the spiritual and emotional benefits available from chaplains. This was an important discovery which was a direct result of regular comments made by many chaplains and Plater. Yet it needs further enquiry, therefore, the episcopacies responsibilities in the area of education will be examined, as will be the delineation established between public religious commitment and personal spirituality.

There was a political undertone evident from the data gathered. The English hierarchical intent was to develop Catholicism by ensuring public displays of loyalty. This was an extension of pre-war policy in an effort to pursue Catholic social and religious progress and maintain a degree of independence. It was interpreted by senior clerics, not as an overt or cynical mantra, but as a manifestation of maintaining the good name of Catholicism. The result was the reaffirmation of the symbolic dominance of southern-based Catholics. Prevailing attitudes favoured the social and political norms of the day, and it was no surprise that the Catholic hierarchy at war was an extension of this process. It was a simple continuation of the pre-war *status quo* but it did lead to some very un-Christian behaviour towards and within Catholic chaplaincy.

This study interrogates chaplains as individuals. Personal inadequacies are explained within the values of the day and addressed by the formative processes to which they were subjugated. Human frailties should not detract from the overall effort made by the majority of Catholic chaplains to fulfil their sacred missions. Spiritually they rose above the vileness of war and overcame their shortcomings as individuals, sometimes in spite of non-spiritual episcopal intent. For most Catholic chaplains, domestic politics paled into insignificance compared to their proper spiritual calling.

# Chapter 1

## Catholicism in Britain

### Chaplaincy Formative Years 1850-1914

## RELIGION, POLITICS and SOCIETY

In this first section of the study, chapters one and two are contained. This chapter examines the underlying influences which originated at home from 1850 until the start of hostilities in 1914, in order to understand how they affected the chaplaincy experience in Flanders and France in the Great War. By extension, the involvement of the episcopacy, and that of the Catholic community at large, is subjected to scrutiny. The exploration and analysis of the foundations of Catholicism in Britain will be shown to be critical in understanding the long term behaviour of chaplains. The impact which these stimuli exerted on their lives at war will be assessed in detail in later chapters.

To make sense of the actions and attitudes of Catholic chaplaincy, a comprehensive array of elements within society, and within Catholicism in particular, necessitates analysis. Geographical, social, political, religious, and authoritarian perspectives will be established within the appropriate chronology. It is the purpose of chapters one and two to develop important contextual frameworks, so that the derivation of the relevant influences which emerged during the war may be ascertained. Understanding the energies which shaped the formation of chaplains is the key which unlocks the awkward, not to say uncharitable comments, discovered in primary research.

England, Ireland, and Lancashire, shared both common and dissimilar experiences in religion, politics, and society. Politics and society will be considered, but with regards to religion, it will be argued that whilst retaining detectable singular characteristics, there was a degree of connectivity or synthesis between Lancashire Catholicism and the Irish variant. Moreover, it will be claimed that Lancashire's Catholicism was sufficiently distinctive to generate a specific area of study within English Catholicism, which itself was by no means cohesive. On the contrary, the tensions within English Catholicism created differences between traditional or Old Catholicism<sup>1</sup> and the Roman influenced Catholicism, or Ultramontanism. Irish Catholicism, which had also embarked on the Roman model, offered

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<sup>1</sup> The term traditional, Old English, and Recusant, have much the same meaning with respect to this study, and refer to those who maintained the Catholic religion from the Reformation, and their successors. They will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

social and practical, rather than theological or ideological challenges to English Catholic orthodoxy. These confrontations intensified after mass emigration to England following the mid-nineteenth century Irish Famine. In post-Famine Ireland, Irish Catholics had little problem absorbing the new Roman ways and encountered no recognisable establishment resistance in the wake of its popular appeal.<sup>2</sup>

Religious climates and realities varied between the three identified areas. Lancashire, England, and Ireland, all had their contribution to make in understanding Catholicism in Britain and are navigated here within so-called 'British Catholicism'.<sup>3</sup> This term is a grossly inadequate misnomer. The case will be presented that there was no such unified organisation conveniently created by simple nomenclature. Such a description would only arise by default, through the political situation in Ireland, and English Catholic restructuring in the 1920s. There was no single Catholic body representing both Irish and English Catholicism before this period, instead there were national and regional variations. It is logical, therefore, to conduct singular studies encompassing the distinctiveness of each area on a geographic basis.<sup>4</sup> Occasional overlaps will be encountered; nevertheless, there were real distinctions in history, culture, and outlook.

The introduction and development of Ultramontanist in both Ireland and England, provides a case-study of the variation in national characteristics over time despite its unifying sequel. The Vatican was the ultimate decision-maker with great authority inside the overarching reality of the Universal Church, and the disciplines and structures inherent within. The Latin Church expected the Catholic hierarchy in each country to navigate its own path through the political realities of the secular world in which it operated. Hence, Ireland and England were treated as different entities by Rome, clearly demonstrating that the concept of 'British Catholicism' is errant.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it will be shown that even English Catholicism was itself not a unified, single, and national entity.

Catholic politics and intrigues of the highest echelon were represented by the national Catholic hierarchies and these will be explored so that future behaviours can be assessed. English Catholicism was constrained and its very existence was dependent on the wishes of a

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<sup>2</sup> Emmet Larkin, *The Making of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland 1850-75* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University, 1980) pp. 37-84.

<sup>3</sup> Snape, *British Catholicism and the British Army*, p. 341.

<sup>4</sup> As has been explained, the Scottish episcopacy awaits study, and Wales was, in episcopal terms, included in the English hierarchy.

<sup>5</sup> Despite the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850, it will be demonstrated that the Catholic Church in Rome had not yet been convinced of the English Catholic episcopacies' ability to succeed. This was one of the most significant differences between the Irish and English Catholic Churches. The Vatican understood Ireland to be British in political terms but treated Ireland and England as two distinct countries.

Protestant State. Catholic survival had been tenuous and problematic since the state's inception. Not unreasonably, English Catholics attempted to remain outside government jurisdiction to protect religion, whilst at the same time courting respectability through exhibitions of loyalty to the King on material matters. To complete the national picture, Irish Catholicism was more confident within a Catholic country whose overwhelming numerical superiority had created more distance with the English Government.<sup>6</sup> The Irish Catholic hierarchy, despite and because of persecution, had maintained a mature relationship within Irish society. By assessing the connecting points between Ireland, Lancashire, and England, the differences can be better described as distinctiveness within Catholicism in Britain. This type of analysis encourages the deconstruction and disentanglement of the simplistic and all-embracing category called British Catholicism. It is the blending of difference and distinction with mutuality, which reveals the true picture of Catholicism in these years. These exposés will be seen throughout the chaplaincy war effort, and the corresponding episcopal policies and implementations.

Religious, political, and social developments were to a large degree, expressions of the mutability of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Society was propelled by unremitting progress; although not all agreed that growth was either desirable or that the modern variety was indeed progress.<sup>7</sup> There was a reaction to the pace of modernisation, with both conservatives and radicals contesting the transformations, and disputing the spaces between the changes. These years did not mark: 'a sudden, complete or marked change',<sup>8</sup> or revolution, more a steady evolution across all aspects of society, although to the traditionalists the differences were merely semantic. These dynamics merit separate study within the combination of all three geographical locations. Unsurprisingly, such developments intruded into the personal lives of young priests and soon-to-be chaplains, and prompted occasional erratic behaviours at war. This formation process contained essential components which were absorbed and then embedded within the psychological and personal development of these men. A structural enquiry has thus been employed to capture these formative years, so that chaplaincy attitudes and actions in action, may be understood with greater clarity. The episcopacies also came under these influences, even if they were more experienced men and less open to impression.

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<sup>6</sup> The 1861 census showed the Catholic population as 5,798,357 and the Irish Church's population as 693,357.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Leo XIII's, *Rerum Novarum: The Workers Charter* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1891), which articulates fears such as consumerism, materialism, class-warfare, excesses of labour and capital, and the spread of class hate found in communism, and the threat of modernism.

<sup>8</sup> Definition of revolution <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/revolution?s=t> accessed October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014.

The formation of Catholic chaplains did not stop at Folkestone. Those who volunteered, were commissioned into the British Army with the rank of Captain 4<sup>th</sup> Class and sent to continental Europe, where another tranche of experience was awaiting them. Newer stimuli which they now experienced, such as the Easter Rising in 1916, or their first sight of injuries, added new dimensions to existing pre-conditioning. Fr Gillett recalled his first sight of the wounded: 'Some 4 trains of wounded arrive from the line. The first effects of the great July push [The Somme]. The walking wounded look awful - vacant and nervous - tunics torn to shreds some with blankets around. The stretcher cases are screened off'.<sup>9</sup> The degree to which chaplains' attitudes and behaviour on the Western Front were directly linked to their formation, or to new impressions and the strength of their personalities, for example, will be explored.

Bishops, and by extension Catholicism at home in this period, did not share this strange new world. The journey for chaplains was to deliver spiritual care in war: the journey for bishops was to deliver strategies which allowed Catholics and Catholicism at home to prosper, so that future Catholic security could be assured. These journeys were not always compatible nor in synchronisation. To their credit, the majority of chaplains survived and proclaimed their religion, despite their varied and at times, daunting experiences. The hierarchies' journeys are on the face of it less worthy at the human and spiritual levels, yet from a corporate viewpoint they ultimately delivered their planned objectives. In that sense, the total clergy delivered both spiritual and strategic success. Their endeavours, together with those chaplains who were unfortunate enough to 'fall from grace', will be interpreted against the contexts outlined.

### **Catholic Society in England**

The British Empire was governed and administered ultimately from the centre, Westminster. This English political surety was the case within Catholicism too. Power was vested in Westminster for both secular and religious leaders, although in the Catholic case it will be shown that this centralised power was arguably more symbolic than real. Catholicism was in many ways a reflection of society generally. The country was in many places still rural but in others, particularly in Lancashire, it had become selectively and intensely industrialised.<sup>10</sup> It is the English experience at large that this section accommodates.

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<sup>9</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries. Boulogne, (3<sup>rd</sup> July 1916).

<sup>10</sup> A study of Lancashire society will follow. There are still large areas of Lancashire which remain agricultural. The cotton and wool industries populated towns near access to canals, railways, and commercial and industrial infrastructures.

## Transformations in Catholic Society

During the years 1850 to 1914, the English episcopacy was presented with the responsibilities of structural renovation and strategic planning.<sup>11</sup> The priesthood were faced with the realities of implementation. Bishops and priests both faced challenges and despite a degree of shared cohesion as Catholic clerics, they encountered additional and sometimes conflicting difficulties. Societal and ancient fissures, and subsequent reactionary attitudes to modernisation, acted as a brake on development. Inconsistencies of behaviour and attitude became exposed as the pressure of war was exerted. Catholic chaplains who served in the Great War, and their bishops, were thus born into a social-order experiencing great change, none more so than within their own Catholic world.<sup>12</sup> From the mid-nineteenth century, traditional Catholic ways were confronted by an array of modernising theoretical and practical influences. Increasing materialism, industrialisation, class-conflict, secularism and the need for welfare reform that was not overly state-sponsored, posed genuine trials and opportunities for the progress of the Catholic community.<sup>13</sup>

In the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the Great War and beyond, society in England underwent extraordinary transformation, particularly with regards to demography.<sup>14</sup> The English experience was influenced by affairs in Ireland and elsewhere. Ireland, as in other agriculturally based societies (including parts of Lancashire), was used to seasonal migration and changes in demographic patterns were common. The more dramatic reality of permanent emigration, however, became a British economic reality after the Famine. Economic emigration was, and is, a necessary part of the Irish experience: it is what Cormac O'Grada calls the phenomenon of the 'Wandering Irishman'.<sup>15</sup> Catholic numbers in England were swelled not only from Ireland but also from the continent of Europe. Religious persecution in France and Germany, and missionary expansion in Belgium, Malta, Italy and elsewhere, created a mixture of external influences. Many displaced religious nuns and priests founded new opportunities in the burgeoning need for social as well as religious provision,

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<sup>11</sup> The English episcopacy includes Wales. Scotland and Ireland had their own independent arrangements. The study of Scotland was an omission driven by space and research limitations. It demands an entire study of its own with a pilot study to measure the numerical significance of its contribution.

<sup>12</sup> Bishops will be studied as important players in the political life during the war, but not as individuals. It is the priest and chaplain where the main thrust of enquiry falls, although many of the formative experiences were shared experiences across the episcopacy, priesthood, and laity.

<sup>13</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *The Workers Charter*, to provide leadership for Catholic Social Teaching, was the Vatican response.

<sup>14</sup> As did Scotland and Wales. Scotland's omission and Wales's inclusion in the English hierarchy have been explained, p. 2, pp. 48-9, p. 71.

<sup>15</sup> Cormac O'Grada, *Ireland: A New Economic History 1780-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 74.

and settled throughout Britain according to need and often by request.<sup>16</sup> Many British workers also moved from rural economies to seek employment in the new industries, the net result was a marked rural to urban demographic shift on a large but erratic scale.

Despite the damage caused by the Irish famine of the same period, 1850 was a significant and convenient date to mark the start of an era of great optimism for English Catholicism, advancing Catholic claims to regain further religious and social self-determination. The restoration of the hierarchy in England and Wales as one body, (Scotland in 1878, Ireland was never dis-established), and the growing Roman influence, or Ultramontanism, were two dominating factors which coincided with a rapid rise in Catholic numbers through the increase of conversions and Catholic immigration. With growing confidence came attendant social advancement.

### **The Restoration of the Hierarchy**

When Cardinal Wiseman successfully lobbied Rome for the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales in 1850, an anti-Catholic political and populist response was predictable. Visible Catholic progression inevitably brought with it reaction from the anti-Catholic faction. When the Papal Bull, *Universalis Ecclesiae*, pronounced the re-establishment of the hierarchy it was countered, with little delay, by Parliament which introduced the anti-Catholic, 'Ecclesiastical Titles Act', of 1851. This act slowly diffused much Protestant concern although in reality was never acted upon. Anti-Catholicism enjoyed periodic nourishment in response to any further moves towards relinquishing Catholic suppression. Not long in the memory was the 'Catholic Emancipation Act' of 1829,<sup>17</sup> and Buchanan has concluded that, [the act] '....was a highly controversial undertaking as anti-Catholicism was still a potent force in British politics. Moreover, many petty restrictions, not to say prejudices, remained in place against Catholics, emphasising that tolerance should not be equated with integration'.<sup>18</sup> Rafferty correctly connects thus: 'A residual element of anti-Catholic prejudice remained in British society and some of this was reflected in the army'.<sup>19</sup> Examples of this will be scrutinised later.

There were legal anti-Catholic restrictions which endured. These included important constraints on wealthy Catholics to the offices of Regent, Monarch, and crucially in Ireland,

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<sup>16</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, quotes, for example, the Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur who opened a training college for girls in Liverpool in 1856.

<sup>17</sup> Emancipation was designated for Ireland but the act was also brought in for England with much the same content.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway, *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 249.

<sup>19</sup> Oliver Rafferty in Burke, *Irish Jesuit Chaplains*, p. 13.

Lord Lieutenant.<sup>20</sup> It was also still on the statute that Catholics could not assume ecclesiastical title or boundaries, the Law of Mortmain, which restricted the bequest of property to ecclesiastical corporations, remained. Despite some reform in 1886, these restrictions endured. Some other modest reforms were granted. In 1867 ‘The Doctrine of Superstitious Uses’ was removed from statute, as was control of Catholic charities and bequests. More importantly the ‘Declaration against Transubstantiation’, as a qualification for civic offices was quashed. Some of the anti-Catholic measures lingering in the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, such as prohibiting civic dignitaries from appearing in Catholic places of worship wearing the insignia of office, were also removed.

The restoration of the hierarchy in England and Wales had no legal basis in English law. As noted, it provoked a Protestant backlash which is unsurprising as it was effectively a *de facto* claim for a larger degree of independence from Protestant jurisdiction. The Papal Bull *Universalis Ecclesiae* allowed and called for: ‘a regularisation of Diocesan business and the establishment of proper structures, so that episcopal authority would be acceptable to all’.<sup>21</sup> These took the form of redefining diocesan boundaries and Catholics electing bishops without reference to the State. The restoration also introduced English Catholicism to a two-pronged Roman advance. Firstly, Wiseman was now safely installed as the leader of Ultramontanism in England as a moderately trusted and able representative of the Vatican. Secondly, he was simultaneously elevated to Cardinal status and thus he was now the visible head of the Catholic Church in England. This move towards a closer relationship with Rome was a portent of future Ultramontane intent.<sup>22</sup>

The newly revised and redrawn diocesan boundaries brought bishops control over both Religious and Diocesan clergy. This was important, and features strongly as a mediating force between these two historically different strands of priesthood which has resonances for chaplains at the Front. Gwynn concludes that: ‘The old conflict of authority between the Vicars Apostolate and the Religious communities had been largely overcome since the Hierarchy gave to the bishops the general administration of the diocese’.<sup>23</sup> Overseen in Rome by the Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith, known as Propaganda, bishops were

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<sup>20</sup> Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was the British monarch’s official representative, and had both symbolic and real powers associated with the position.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Doyle, in ‘The Jesuits Reaction to the Restoration of the Hierarchy in The Diocese of Liverpool 1850-1880’ in *Recusant History*, 26, 1 (May 2002) 210-28.

<sup>22</sup> Although a purely English event, it coincided with the introduction of a more disciplined custom of Catholic organisation and religious expression that was in essence, common to both England and Ireland.

<sup>23</sup> Denis Gwynn, ‘The Growth of the Catholic Community’ in Beck, *The English Catholics*, p. 414.



encouraged to organise their individual diocesan obligations.<sup>24</sup> Consequently they became involved in, and responsible for: church building, social provision, Catholic education, and the ordination of priests to satisfy the expanding Catholic population. Diocesan liaison and organisational obligations helped formulate policies which required management. The result was that Religious and Diocesan missions were engaged in combined and productive social provision.<sup>25</sup>

Each Religious order had specific functions and charismata, or spiritual gifts, to offer and undertake within the Universal Catholic Church. Each was obedient to Rome but had direction and discipline defined by their own founders with which to comply. In England, this had often generated tensions between Diocesan and Religious, as good intentions gave way to competition and became counter-productive. Each had its own remit which clearly needed overall English executive direction. It was not the distinction or particularities of each Religious order that was at stake, but the overall need for the Catholic community to be served in the most efficient and systematic manner. The Religious orders did, nonetheless, retain a degree of autonomy as defined by the historic exigencies of their founders, but within the new Catholic organisational structure.

The requirement for both Diocesan and Religious order priests to comply with the bishops' overall stewardship had been conceded. When the war started the Catholic Church had settled back into a unified Catholic entente, as Morgan Sweeney wrote: 'It cannot be claimed that all the problems were solved completely, but if they were not solved, a *modus vivendi* was established that has stood the test of time'.<sup>26</sup> If the restoration of the hierarchy went some way to mediating the ancient conflicts between Religious and Diocesan clergy, the consequences of this defiant move generate two dynamic functions in this thesis. First is an understanding of the hierarchy. The reaction to the restoration is a reminder of the anti-Catholic feeling which persisted in this period, and prepared the way to define the English Catholic hierarchy's political response. The second relevance of the restoration was to reduce or eliminate intra-Catholic rivalries, which will be assessed through chaplains' attitudes and behaviours. Could chaplains escape ancient and formative influences at the Front reflecting Sweeney's *modus vivendi*? It will be argued that the bifurcation of Catholic priesthood and its attendant pre-existing tensions were in general terms overcome. Nonetheless, evidence

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<sup>24</sup> English and Welsh bishops ceased to be responsible to Propaganda in 1908 after which they became responsible to the Consistorial Congregation. Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 101.

<sup>25</sup> Liverpool diocese for example introduced and paid for blind schools, industrial schools, sheltered accommodation for women, and access to rudimentary further education in anticipation of the State in later years. Religious and Diocesan featured in these projects.

<sup>26</sup> Morgan Sweeney, 'Diocesan Organisation and Administration', in Beck, *The English Catholics*, pp. 123-4.

demonstrated that occasional personal lapses by a minority of Catholic chaplains reveal unresolved historical prejudices of race, class, petty jealousies, and snobbery, although to attribute these idiosyncracies simply to intra-religious historical competition is problematic. Instead, as will be shown, social and personal traits were contributory factors.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the English episcopacy had settled into their new freedoms post-*Universalis Ecclesiae*. Having chosen their own bishops<sup>27</sup> and created new ecclesiastical boundaries to meet Catholic expansion, they now had routine matters of office to contend with. They convened nationally in the spirit of cooperation with the Archbishop of Westminster usually chairing the meetings and leading the discussions. The understanding was that this was a consensual arrangement.<sup>28</sup> England did not emerge from mission status until 1918, which meant that the Vatican did not deem England strong enough in talent (bishops), or Roman enough, to be left to their own devices, or as one historian has noted: 'They [priests and former Vicars Apostolic] had been cut off from Rome for so long that they had become too English in outlook and had developed an unhealthy spirit of independence from Rome'.<sup>29</sup> As a result the Vatican required regular briefings from the Consistorial Congregation based in Rome which settled any disputes that arose within the English hierarchy. This continued even after 1918 when full status was conferred to England and Wales. This necessitated the bishops continuing to send or deliver *ad limina* reports every five years. These commented on clerical performance, behaviour, finances, and changes in populations. The 1918 Code of Canon Law stated: '*Omnes Episcopi tenentur singulis quinquenniis relationem Summo Pontifici facere super statum dioecesis sibi commissae secundum formam ab Apostolica Sede datam*', which translates as: 'Each Bishop is bound every five years to provide the Supreme Pontiff with a report on the diocese entrusted to him in the form given by the Apostolic See'.<sup>30</sup> Rome was the supreme adjudicator, so that Ultramontanism, which demanded consistency and discipline, was soon enjoying the fruits of success through episcopal control.

### **Ultramontanism**

The key intellectual and practical driving force in the period 1850 to 1914 was Ultramontanism, or 'over the Alps'. It was a Roman model driven in England by the Archbishop of Westminster, Nicholas Wiseman: and in Ireland by the less intellectually outstanding but tenacious,

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<sup>27</sup> They chose their bishops only after consultation with the Vatican.

<sup>28</sup> In WWI, Archbishop [Cardinal] Bourne rode roughshod over the bishops and failed to honour this method of conducting business and attract the ire of many a bishops, pp. 176-7.

<sup>29</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 95.

<sup>30</sup> For this information I am indebted to the archivist at Nottingham Diocesan Archive, Rev Canon A. P. Dolan.

Archbishop of Dublin, Paul Cullen.<sup>31</sup> Both men were trained in Rome and became enthusiastic advocates of the Latin Church. These men steered, some might argue in Cullen's case drove, this model of Catholicism. Both Cullen and Wiseman were strong individuals and Ultramontanism was in safe hands. Ultramontanism was a movement within Catholicism which was distinctly, consciously, and overtly obedient to the Pope in Rome. It required discipline in both clerical and lay life, and attracted great devotion whilst bestowing security and continuity to its followers. The Vatican and the Pope are the definitive centres of Catholicism and the ultimate expression of Ultramontanism, dating back to Saints Peter and Paul, the Church's founders. Its devotional intensity and expression appeals to the senses, so that ritual, colour, gesture, and more, gain in significance at the expense, but not exclusion of, Bible study. In that sense it is the antithesis of many of the Free Churches whose values are based on personal choice, simplicity, and sometimes rigid interpretations of the Bible.

Ultramontanism helped create a Church with a shared and meaningful purpose, creating a degree of standardisation throughout the world. The Universal Church is based on Catholic, apostolic and pilgrim values. A Catholic could, and still can, attend Mass in Ireland, Russia, India, Nigeria, the Americas, in fact almost anywhere, and still be able to participate effectively with the congregation and ceremony as the liturgy unfolds.<sup>32</sup> It is a universal method of communicating with co-religionists, and has the added advantage of creating a clergy which is transferrable worldwide. This provides the basis of the Pilgrim Church with its specific missionary purpose, and assumes great importance in the chaplaincy experience.

Roman influence was resisted by those traditional Catholics in English Catholicism. Church architect and convert, Pugin, typified the difficulties. He preferred the twelfth to fifteenth century Gothic style over the Roman or classical style of the seventeenth century, such as Wren's Saint Paul's Cathedral in London.<sup>33</sup> Pugin reacted to the glory of Catholicism in pre-Reformation times and found natural allies from within the deeply founded conservatism of the Old English Catholics. This apparently consistent landscape had its own irregularities.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> David George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (Dublin: Routledge, 1991) Boyce has noted Cullen's belligerence in nationalist politics too: 'Cullen was breaking the conventions of Catholic politics by trying to act, not as auxiliary to nationalists, nor as guide to the people, but as driver and commander', p. 181.

<sup>32</sup> Many of the traditional elements, such as saying the Mass in Latin, were revised after Vatican II in the 1960s.

<sup>33</sup> Frederick Gibberd, *The Architecture of England from Norman Times to the Present Day*, (The Architectural Press, 1938). Pp. 17-27.

<sup>34</sup> Catholic Lancashire was staunchly Roman by this time but still often preferred the beauty of the Gothic style. This apparent anomaly is described as: 'a peculiar combination of isolated provincialism and exotic cosmopolitanism', by Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 46. Sometimes a mix of styles formed either a diplomatic resolution or gradual development towards the Roman style. For example, the first Catholic Church in Blackpool, Lancashire, the Sacred Heart [Devotion to the Sacred Heart inspired by St. Margaret Mary in the sixteenth century] was begun in 1857 by Pugin. It started off in Gothic style but eventually became a mix of Gothic and Classical – a practical manifestation of the ongoing stylistic debates.

Despite its enthusiasm for Roman ways, Catholic Lancashire defied convention and was: ‘overwhelmingly successful in the revival of Gothic architecture’.<sup>35</sup> A fusion of Pugin’s Gothic and later Roman Classical Styles appears below. It was initially built by the Jesuits as a mission on behalf of the Liverpool Diocese.



**Illustration 3 – Sacred Heart Church Blackpool<sup>36</sup>**

The battle for ascendancy between the modernising and conservative forces was, on the surface, centred on church building styles, vestment choice, appropriate music, prayers, and other stylistic differences. However, it was the more profoundly religious changes to Catholic devotions, particularly to the Virgin Mary, that found great popular appeal.<sup>37</sup> Devotions to Mary were not new. The Rosary, for example, dates back to 1214, but devotions to her found a wider appeal after the apparitions of Our Lady to St Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes from 1858. Later, in 1862, Pope Pius IX authorized Bishop Bertrand-Sévère Laurence to permit the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lourdes. Encouraged by Rome, even though she was not canonised until 1933, popular devotion towards the Virgin Mary flourished. The Roman school had succeeded in her promotion in both Ireland and England, and Mary was a particularly distinctive feature of the Irish and, therefore, Lancashire-Irish experience. This can be illustrated at war through the devotion of the Lancashire chaplain to the Virgin, either through the commonly prayed Rosary or Devotional activities, to be explored. He was undoubtedly influenced by the Liverpool-Irish where he worked. Such influences appear to have been weaker and had less effect with the other diarists who emanated from midlands and southern Catholicism, areas of fewer Irish residents.

<sup>35</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 102.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.sacredheartchurchblackpool.com/history>. Accessed May 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Almost all churches devoted a side altar to the Virgin Mary.

The disciplined system of Ultramontanism complemented the restoration, by conferring on bishops increasing authority with which to administer in England. Catholicism, under the stewardship of its bishops, formulated policies to cater for diocesan requirements, through Ultramontanism. They were encouraged to use Monastic and Religious orders as resources to supplement Diocesan endeavours, and in doing so the Roman model brought the Catholic project under supervision and direction. This had the advantage of restricting the more individualistic Religious orders, of reducing ancient acrimony where it existed, and unifying the clergy within a cohesive strategy. Divisions were, as Sweeney has demonstrated, generally healed by the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, but not necessarily, as chaplains will divulge in their letters. Despite the Old Catholic reaction, on the whole Ultramontanism was a regenerative movement which promoted the modernisation of the English Catholic Church. Catholic religious expansion embraced the Latin ways which created something of a revolution in devotional and organisational Catholicism throughout Britain.

Catholic chaplains were born into this Roman Catholic world of Ultramontanism, which is particularly important in the study of fledgling priests in the period 1850 to 1914. The changes derived from organisational and devotional modernisation had a direct impact on both bishops and their strategy of consolidation, and of the young priests who accepted discipline without contradiction, having known no other way.<sup>38</sup> Despite the positive direction the English Church had taken since 1850, its tenure was still tentative and probationary within both the Universal Church and the Protestant State establishments. This must be understood when assessing episcopal action, or lack of action. It offers an explanation as to why the English hierarchy felt able to treat the Irish Church with disdain, by removing some Irish chaplains to protect English Catholic interest, even if its moral base was dubious.<sup>39</sup> It was evidently more profitable to secure the English Catholic position with the civil establishment that it was with the Roman Catholic equivalent. This is not as muddy or ambivalent a situation as first appears. The answer is twofold. Firstly, this was a world war and Rome was immersed in trying to formulate a universal peace entente, and as a neutral force it simply had no desire to become involved in national or military affairs. These were not spiritual matters and each Catholic hierarchy had to decide domestic temporal strategy for themselves. Secondly, English Catholicism did not have full non-missionary status until 1918, yet with the precedence set by the restoration of the hierarchy, effectively assumed it. English Catholicism was emerging from the shadows of the Reformation, albeit without much concern for the Irish.

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<sup>38</sup> This will be shown to be a positive asset at war.

<sup>39</sup> Chapter 5.

## Intellectual Challenges to the Catholic Church in England, 1850-1914

Together with Ultramontanism, the old guard of Catholicism were faced with changes from within, in the shape of Tractarianism and Modernism. Additionally, a fresh generation of well-educated intellectuals, epitomised by the most celebrated convert from the Oxford Movement, John Henry Newman, were raising new questions as the external forces of Darwinism, secularism, and materialism rose on the agenda.<sup>40</sup>

The Oxford Movement, or Tractarianism,<sup>41</sup> was more visible in the South of England than the North. Entrenched Old English Catholics had to absorb the pace and power of this crusade which saw the transfer of allegiance by many Anglicans to Catholicism. The increase in the number of conversions reached a peak at much the same time as the Ultramontanist ascension in mid-nineteenth century. Conversions were not exclusive to ex-Anglicans.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, they harboured the potential danger of a Trojan horse for traditionalists, who were now confronted by two fundamental problems with the process.<sup>43</sup> Firstly they feared an invasion by Anglican converts swamping Catholicism from within thus reshaping it. Secondly they worried that their own social status would be exposed to the newcomers, who were often from the same or higher social strata than themselves. This was not simply a battle over minds and hearts, or even souls; for many Old Catholics with more to lose, it was also a conflict over status and power. The social and intellectual advantages that conversions to the Catholic faith promised, from what may be considered a social and intellectual élite, were not without detractors. It is claimed that: '...the sense that the traditional Catholic leaders were unduly unresponsive to the waves of conversion contained some substance'.<sup>44</sup> A note of caution with regard to the antipathies between Old Catholicism and converts is, nevertheless, required. The resultant feuds did not exert as much practical opposition as was feared. There is evidence that recent converts rather than forming an opposition to the established Catholicism, including fears of forming a reunion between Anglicans and Catholics, became its greatest defenders. Newman belonged to this camp: 'Newman's attitude to reunion, once he was safely within the Catholic fold, was hostile'.<sup>45</sup> The old guard harboured a reasonable, if

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<sup>40</sup> With regards to secularism and materialism, as established, *Rerum Novarum* became the Church's teaching on social policy from 1891.

<sup>41</sup> Tractarianism originates from the Oxford tracts or pamphlets, from 1833.

<sup>42</sup> There were conversions throughout this period from other sources than Anglican. They rose from 864 per annum in 1890, to 1216 by 1914, in the Liverpool Archdiocese. Some came from Protestants of unspecified denomination, who married Catholics, particularly after the Papal Decree *Ne Temere*, 1908. Appendix 11.

<sup>43</sup> This was similar in essence to the reaction towards the influx of the Irish from established northern Catholics, although in Lancashire religious opposition had strong socio-economic underpinning. In the South it will be shown that status was the dominant issue.

<sup>44</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 211.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

disproportionate sense, that as proud protectors of the Faith they would simply be swept aside by a new élite. The dispute was settled by Rome. In 1896 the Cardinals at the Holy Office were of one, and the Pope published Papal Bull: '*Apostolicae Curae*', which decreed that Anglican Orders were invalid and so ended any possibility of reunion.<sup>46</sup> It is ironic that the remnants of Old Catholicism were protected by Rome, their earlier source of apprehension.

The intellectual challenge of Modernism contained only a passing influence on Irish or English Catholicism. Modernism occupied the minds of many continental European Catholics, most notably in France, between the years of the movement's activity 1893-1907.<sup>47</sup> It was a campaign described as: 'an attack upon authority, both church and state' and: 'potentially that most powerful of heresies'.<sup>48</sup> This timing, which coincided with formative seminary or early post-ordination years in priesthood, might be considered a dangerous and competing influence, but no evidence emerged from chaplains that Modernism exerted any inspiration whatsoever, and the same can be said of both Irish and English clergy at all levels. Modernism in Britain was a perceived threat rather than a real one. It attempted to wrestle power from Rome, but only made significant in-roads in countries that had been subjected to secularism, notably France. Modernism was simply too heretical for contemplation. English Catholicism was still in missionary status without full Vatican approval, hence bishops as probationers, were reluctant to become involved in controversy. When Pope Pius X condemned Modernism as: 'a fallacy cutting at the very roots of the Faith', then the Vatican *imprimatur* ensured that Modernism carried no weight in conservative, tentative, Catholic England.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, English Catholicism was not overly concerned with a movement with such strong continental associations. In Ireland, Modernism never took root. This is entirely consistent with Ireland's strong links with Rome. Ireland was never disconnected from the Vatican despite the Penal Laws, maintaining full status throughout.

Some Old English Catholics were parents to a minority of chaplains. Their ways and traditions were now invaded by interlopers not only from the bogs of Ireland, and from the spires of Salisbury Cathedral and York Minster, but also the Romans with their brash and vulgar religious materials, churches, and devotional and liturgical impositions. Modernisation was a painful experience for Old Catholics, north and south, who had helped to maintain survival in the face of persecution over recent centuries. It had been rather more painful for humbler Catholics who had to deal with the reality of poverty, social exclusion, and sectarian

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>47</sup> JAL Obituary Fr Francis Devas. Refers to: 'When in 1906 Modernist troubles came to a head', p. 195.

<sup>48</sup> Hales, *The Catholic Church in the Modern World*, p. 178.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

violence, and whose forefathers had also helped to maintain Catholicism in the face of suppression and death. To this latter socio-economic class, modernisation could not come quickly enough.

### **Episcopal Strategic Planning**

The conservative senior English Catholics occupied a relatively comfortable position in English society. Consolidation and rapprochement, rather than radical or confrontational strategies, were the order of the day. They were keen to secure this position and continue these ambitions. There was never an English Catholic political party and little attempt to publicly subscribe to Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* of 1891. The concept of confederations between labour and employers under the auspices of the Church, which is a dilution of what the paper proposed, was not a priority to a body of men who spent much of their time fending off government intervention. They were becoming increasingly wary of organised labour and feared socialist or communist infiltration. There were exceptions. The Archbishop of Westminster, later Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, was credited with helping to settle the London Dock Strike of 1889, and for being a champion of the poor. Despite his good relationship with Rome, little positive advanced political or social thought emanated at these times in England, unlike for example in Germany where there was an active Catholic Centre Party. The Nottingham Diocese, which will come in for a deal of criticism later because of the weak performance of some of its priests, curiously provided one exception to this conservative rump. Bishop Edward Bagshawe attempted, in advance of *Rerum Novarum*, to promote: 'a distinct political party (1885).... He got very little support [because] he was known for his political radicalism'.<sup>50</sup> *Rerum Novarum*, although published extensively in the Catholic press was, according to Norman, inert: 'its limited encouragement of a more reformist attitude to economic relationships, did little to foster in English Catholicism the spirit which was making such advances within the Anglican intelligentsia'.<sup>51</sup> Bagshawe was alone and his voice was drowned out by the forces of conservatism.

At the political and strategic level in England, the determination to align Catholicism and Catholics with existing English, and therefore, established Protestant political institutions, consigned any radical alternative developments to oblivion. This policy had been established by Cardinal Manning:

He [Manning] resolved the question of the form of Roman Catholic political activity in the liberal State so clearly and decisively in favour of participation in existing mass

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<sup>50</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 191.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.



democratic parties – as opposed to a confessional party – that the question never again arose in any meaningful way for the Catholic community.<sup>52</sup>

This was an opportunity that slipped through the English hierarchy's grasp, at least at the conscious level. Nevertheless, *Rerum Novarum*, as will be shown, permeated both Lancashire bishops' thoughts throughout the war, suggesting that more of the Pope's policy had influenced Casartelli and Whiteside's philosophies than was always visible. Radical progression was not possible, innate English Catholic conservatism unsurprisingly won the day, but despite the slow pace Catholics had established a foothold in British society by the end of the Edwardian era. In this distinctively sectarian world the need to display patriotism to the British State remained paramount. In the eyes of many, Catholics remained on probation, but the reforming political legislation which reduced the suppression of Catholics was welcomed by the bishops, clergy, and laity alike.

To protect Catholic progress in English secular society, episcopal Catholic strategy was based on looking after its own ambitions first. If it had to abandon, or at least ignore the Irish, then so be it. This blatant opportunism, shared with the Lancashire episcopacy up to the turn of the nineteenth century before it changed tactics, was by the Great War restricted to the English episcopacy based at Westminster under the auspices of Cardinal Bourne. There was never any attempt to assimilate or accommodate an Irish sense of aspirational political difference, culture, or identity.<sup>53</sup> Nor was there the same need that existed in Lancashire with its rapidly expanding urban Catholic base. This was total English supremacy centred on the English political and social models. Even before Irish independence, the parallel positioning of the hierarchies and their connectivity within the English social fabric ensured separate development.<sup>54</sup> This will be witnessed through the way Catholic chaplains were treated and particularly those of Irish blood. Lancashire chaplains were also occasionally treated as inferior by those English chaplains who distanced themselves from their Lancastrian colleagues, through supposed social superiority expressed as snobbishness.<sup>55</sup> The English Catholic Church did not rid itself of snobbery at war, as Fr Plater will shortly confirm. The aim was not to persecute Irish or Lancastrian chaplains, merely to ensure that the social and political norms of the élite were maintained in order to further a closer fusion with the

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<sup>52</sup> Jeffrey, Paul von Arx, *Catholics in Politics*, in McLelland and Michael Hodgetts, *Without the Flaminian Gate*, p. 264.

<sup>53</sup> Despite Bourne's mother being Irish.

<sup>54</sup> This did not apply to spiritual, social, or pastoral endeavour where ground level Catholicism was consistently improving its lot. The Irish simply carried no political weight, either in numbers or wealth, in such areas such as Tyneside and Merseyside, where substantial numbers of Catholics demanded better representation.

<sup>55</sup> Chapter 6.

dominant society after the war ended. Whether these mind-sets can be attributed to the unconscious absorption of cultural and social mores, or simply mild megalomania, is somewhat of a moot point.

### Episcopal Power Relationships in England

The Archbishop of Westminster resided and operated from within the bureaucratic centre of Britain, although the choice of location for his power base, a direct replication of the civil situation, requires examination. Would Liverpool for instance, with its greater Catholic population, be a realistic alternative as the seat of power?<sup>56</sup> It will be argued later that Liverpool did have the real power and that Westminster the symbolic. Be that as it may, there was never any doubt among English Catholics, including Lancashire Catholics, who their spiritual and administrative figurehead in England was. The reasons are many. Precedence was a major factor. Wiseman's initiative to lobby Rome for the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales was granted by Pope Pius IX in 1850, and when Wiseman was in Rome he was appointed Cardinal. That in itself was recognition of him as the senior English Catholic prelate, and it follows that his elevation to Cardinal acknowledged the Archbishop of Westminster as the leader of Catholic England and Wales. He was indisputably *de facto* leader. Liverpool was the largest diocese but there were no precedents of note transferring power away from the accepted centre whether ecclesiastical or secular.<sup>57</sup> Westminster's position was confirmed and the precedent set when Cardinal Wiseman consecrated Bishop Goss of Liverpool in 1853.

The role of the Archbishop of Westminster as leader of the Catholics in England and Wales was not in reality a truly dominant or independent position, having to defer to Rome on matters of consequence. This was in fact what other English and Welsh bishops did too and not always through the central figure. Nevertheless, despite the technical difficulties, the practical combination of Wiseman's role in the restoration, together with his Roman obedience, effectively confirmed his position as leader. It was a *fait accompli* and he was a safe pair of hands. In addition he was a man of great charm, diplomacy, and intelligence and was in many ways a natural choice. Significantly, there was an absence of episcopal opposition, although when Cardinal Bourne is appraised later, that was no longer the case. The lack of formal clarity concerning the powers of the Archbishop of Westminster, nevertheless, caused ambiguity within the organisation and remained so until the English Catholic Church

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<sup>56</sup> The 1881 Census shows that as percentages of the total English and Welsh population, the Irish born was 1.5%. Liverpool was 12.8%, Manchester 7.5% [both in Lancashire] and London only 3.3%.

<sup>57</sup> All the great Liverpool shipping and insurance companies: Bibby, Blue Funnel, Elders and Fyffes, Royal Victoria, Royal Liver, for example, operated from Liverpool with their Head offices in London.

emerged from mission status in 1918. The position of the Catholic hierarchy was never clearly established, yet neither was it seriously brought into question. Perhaps this is not surprising in an institution based on discipline, loyalty, and paternalism. Cardinal Bourne oversaw the Catholic contribution to the war in much the same way. He operated as a *de facto* chaplaincy leader until replaced by Keatinge, effectively in 1918, and his autocratic style caused internal friction throughout the war.

Symbolism, the realities of London dominated centralism, and hierarchical precedence apart, the true power of Catholicism in England it is claimed, lay with the Liverpool Archdiocese, then part of the county of Lancashire. In the 1930s this remained the case: 'The most powerful figure in the English church lived not in Westminster but in Liverpool, still the most populous Catholic diocese in England'.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, Hastings states that: 'Archbishop Downey incarnated the Liverpool Irish Diaspora' and quotes Downey thus: 'Do not forget your Eminence [to Cardinal Griffin] that I rule the North'.<sup>59</sup> This meant in Catholic population alone, the country. Despite the common sense of this argument, fealty remained ultimately with Westminster. The ecclesiastical organisation was a mere replication of the London civic model. When attitudes at the Front are considered, this debate becomes not merely peripheral but fundamental when interpreting certain actions, deployments, and status relationships. The seeds of a sense of injustice on the one hand, and implied superiority on the other, have resonance with both the chaplaincy experiences and those at home.

### Social Composition

Catholics were visible as part of the demographic and social changes occurring throughout society, from the hapless migrant to the wealthy landowner. Catholicism embraced the poor but that should not hide the fact that individual Catholics had survived penal times and had grown wealthy and powerful, the Duke of Norfolk being the prominent example. Catholic England recruited its sons for the priesthood, either externally or internally, right across this broad social spectrum. Hence, Fr Berkeley Oswald OSB, the son of a 'Gentleman of Independent means', and living at the highly desirable Wooton Hall, Wooton Wawen, near Henley-in-Arden, replete with a servant and two governesses, existed at one extreme. Fr Jim Leeson existed at the other. Killed in action, he was a son of a dock labourer in Plum Street, Litherland, Liverpool. He shared his home with a boarder, a not unusual arrangement to keep within financial means.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 275.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Both priests from 1901 Census.

The pattern of social background of the future priesthood was variable, but so too were the cross-societal demands placed on the Catholic project of the Pilgrim and Universal Church. This is reasonable on two counts. Firstly, a Catholic family from whatever socio-economic background was usually overjoyed at the prospect of a priest in their midst, hence Catholic priests were broadly recruited across the classes: and secondly, Catholic society at large needed to recruit from within. This meant curates to diplomats, and everything in between. It was important to include all of society in this endeavour in order to meet the range of challenges. It was easier for a young man from a privileged background who had been exposed to a higher stratum of society to move into an administrative, diplomatic, or other sphere of priesthood, where these advantages might bring the Church advantage. That, nevertheless, depended on his ability, the religious organisation he elected to join, and the missionary requirements defined by that institution. It was by no means a cut and dried case of favouritism, even if they did have advantage. There were many variations. The aforementioned Fr Leeson, despite his disadvantaged background, was identified and supported by the Society of Jesus and educated at St Edwards College Liverpool. He studied for the priesthood at Upholland before being ordained into the Liverpool Archdiocese as a Diocesan priest. Three Whiteside brothers from humble backgrounds in Blackpool, all became Jesuits and chaplains to the forces. Fr Steuart, one of the diarists' studied, showed the other side of the coin. He was born in Reigate, Surrey, and his life reflected his ancestral Scottish Catholic family and upbringing. He enjoyed the family estate in Perthshire playing golf-croquet, and fishing.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, even as a member of the Society of Jesus he never rose to a position which reflected his social status, nor was he able to capitalise on his status in the Army, supporting an assessment that the authorities were not over impressed with status on its own.

Supply and demand were not just the levers of economics; they also captured the claims and resources mandatory for the development of the Catholic Church. Young men from all backgrounds had a place within an expanding Catholic Church. There was a fundamental need to produce more priests including increasing numbers of chaplains. The need to train its male youth for the Universal Church, and all the challenges that lay within, had to take place in the world in which these young men existed and imbibed both positive and negative aspects of cultural transference. The Catholic hierarchy needed to plan, and then devise and develop its own resources, in order to achieve its spiritual and pastoral objectives. It was the absolute responsibility of bishops and the leaders of religious houses to ensure a fit compatible

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<sup>61</sup> Steuart referred to golf-croquet, the formal name of croquet.

with talent and need. Unfortunately, war was not on the original blueprint and trained resources for that mission were somewhat unforeseen and strained.

These are important realisations as they help a clearer understanding of many of the events which will unfold. Simple reductionist analyses of class falls woefully short of the reality. Education, training, and experience, are more valuable tools to understand Catholic chaplains. Class was, nonetheless, undeniably a feature of society and of the Catholic Church, and will be examined as such. Individual cases of snobbishness, class consciousness, and racism, from those priests usually from the wealthier Catholic areas of England, will reveal much about attitudes in Catholic society generally. It will be shown that snobbishness was rife within society and Catholicism was no different, as Plater remarked: 'We are riddled with snobbishness and split into cliques and coteries. Yet we ought to be taking the lead in healing the breaches of society in dissipating the fumes of class hatred which threatens to poison the nation'.<sup>62</sup> This was an important statement from a priest of recognised excellence in the Society of Jesus, and a man who was: 'a talented classicist, he devoted his intellect to the study of industrial economics and the pursuit of social justice through education'.<sup>63</sup> His assessment was based on knowledge, experience, and conviction.

### **Catholic Communities – North-South Divide**

In chapter two, Catholic education for Soldiers will be explored. The deductions that geographic and communal limitations were at the root of soldiers' public expression of their religion, has to be placed within the wider English societal context, for it is here that social attitudes need to be resolved.

Defining geographic contours within English Catholicism is problematic, but some attempt to provide geographical delineation is necessary. Hastings noted that since the Reformation the: 'Catholic community was weakest in the South and East, strongest in the North....Catholicism quickly crumbled in the counties south of a line drawn between the Wash and the Bristol Channel'.<sup>64</sup> The established Anglican Church succeeded in the South. In the North, there was still a significant Anglican presence, but also more effective opposition from Dissenters and Catholics. Catholicism had retained its ancient foothold in the North, albeit a

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<sup>62</sup> JAL, *Month* 135 (January-July 1920), p. 256. See also section on snobbery and social exclusion.

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.jesuit.org.uk/profile/charles-plater-sj>. Accessed May 13th 2015.

<sup>64</sup> Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 32.

tenuous one at times, and was particularly successful in western and northern Lancashire, although still only a significant minority in a Protestant bloc.<sup>65</sup>

The concept of a North-South divide with London as the epicentre is not a new proposal, one historian sets out the difficulties of perception thus:

London, as always, is *suis generis* and so - let the question be put, it never ceases to present itself to all who are not London-bred. Does London as such, ever understand, has it ever known, how England lives, what England thinks, and why England thinks as it does? Few questions are more important for whoever would arrive at the meaning for Catholic history in England down to the very moment the question here is posed. For it is from London since 1850, that Catholic England too is, if not governed, then controlled.<sup>66</sup>

The larger picture is, however, more complex. There were patches of wealth in the North and poverty in the South. Dioceses made provision for the poor, sick, destitute, insane, blind, and illiterate across the country in response to need.<sup>67</sup> For the purposes of this study, Lancashire and Westminster define the North-South divide.<sup>68</sup> Hence, future derogatory anti-social comments, and allocation of rank and privilege, will be located within the contexts of class, status, and power differentiation, loosely enveloped within the geographical boundaries chosen.

It will be shown that the initial pain of modernisation and change was felt by Lancashire Catholicism. When harmony between indigenous and immigrant Catholics was achieved, then success and expansion followed suit. Old English Catholics, North and South, shared the pain of modernisation, but their way of life was already in decline as the world engaged consumerism, industrialisation, radical political ideas, and rejected old values. Their advantageous position was increasingly tentative as the twentieth century unfolded, but they could not yet be written off, and vestiges of their ascendant position at war emerged on occasions. It is sometimes difficult to define with precision a direct correlation between ingrained attitudes and those which emerged. On other occasions it is relatively straightforward.<sup>69</sup> Fr Robert Steuart SJ a chaplain from an Old Catholic Scottish aristocratic family illustrates this in simple terms: 'Tried to get a room at the Grosvenor. Full up, so went to Rubens in Buckingham Palace Road. It is a very excellent hotel'.<sup>70</sup> By contrast, Fr Gillett a Lancashire chaplain, from a more modest background, stayed at the: 'Hotel Gibraltar, an

<sup>65</sup> An approximate, but by no means infallible guide to Catholic settlement is the A6 road. To the west of where the road now exists, Catholics were generally more numerous.

<sup>66</sup> Philip Hughes, 'English Catholics', in Beck, *The English Catholics*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>67</sup> Refer to the Annual Catholic Directories for erratic but useful details for each diocese.

<sup>68</sup> A full geographic study was outside the remit and space of this thesis. The terms Westminster and Lancashire although specific in themselves, have in general terms, wider resonances in the North and South respectively.

<sup>69</sup> Chapter 6.

<sup>70</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (9<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

American YMCA hostel'.<sup>71</sup> Both were on leave from the war but had very different expectations and conditioning.

Catholicism, in the period 1850-1914, shaped to a great extent its own future destiny, at least in internal decision making. Those from advantaged Catholic backgrounds continued their ascendant role in society, and engaged with senior Army personnel as they had in civilian life in their chosen fields of perhaps education or diplomacy. This being the case and reflecting British society generally, it may be expected that southern clerics would occupy the higher echelons of Catholic chaplaincy. This is exactly what happened. Hence, Army GHQ was staffed entirely by Benedictines and one Jesuit.<sup>72</sup> Without exception, every position of authority within that organisation was filled by a priest originating from a southern Religious order. Even the Benedictines at GHQ, were from Downside in the South, rather than Ampleforth in the North. Father Dawes OSB from Ampleforth, among others, most notably leading Irish Jesuits, was eminently suitable for GHQ work.

What happened to Diocesan priests? When class and status were factored into the equation, then those southern priests in working class areas would, like their counterparts nationally, become entrusted with the common soldier and not assigned to responsibilities corresponding to a higher societal plane. It was left to Irish and Lancashire priests, and those from other areas working with the poorer elements of society, in other words those chaplains with experience of 'proletarian and peasant mores',<sup>73</sup> to relate with the ordinary soldier to advantage. They might be trusted with the role of Senior Chaplain, which in reality meant the supervision of three other chaplains, but no more. This seems a craven injustice today, yet was simply a reflection of society in general, and English Catholic society in particular. Viewed from a contemporary angle it made complete sense, if somewhat underlying the absence of any real democratic process, and thereby completely in character with Catholic organisation.<sup>74</sup> This is not to imply overt favouritism or the supposed superiority of managerial over routinely religious responsibilities, although it is tempting to be drawn in these directions.<sup>75</sup> It is rather a continuation of the realities back home, that is the need for Catholicism to recruit from all social levels, and more importantly, to fill all vacancies with known, trained and trusted men. They had initially been sent by their respective bishops with spiritual intent, although once under the jurisdiction and control of Bourne, or later Keatinge, became subject to

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<sup>71</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (26<sup>th</sup> June 1919).

<sup>72</sup> Benedictines were Keatinge, Rawlinson and Young. King was a Jesuit.

<sup>73</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 65.

<sup>74</sup> It is reasonable to point out that the Catholic Church, and particularly in this era, never laid any claim to the democratic process except in limited situations and to degrees, such as the election of a new Pope.

<sup>75</sup> By this I am referring to those chaplains who became more officer than priest, examples follow.

Westminster's directives. If this was conspiracy then it was probably unconscious. Judgements that are simply based on class and social considerations fail to recognise the facts. Yes there was regional bias, but this was a result of what might now be termed a 'wired in' mentality. It is likely that positions were filled simply by deploying the people with whom the leaders were familiar, and from a recognisable background of which they had knowledge. Benedictines were clearly well thought of in this regard which was not simply a geographical accident or active discrimination. Recruitment and deployment policies followed existing patterns recognisable at home that were merely replicated at war, society never imagined itself to be egalitarian.

Whatever the processes employed, the system seems to have been successful. The priests studied coped well, and many appear to have been reasonably suited to their allocated tasks. In any event there were few obvious candidates on the northern English horizon that might have claimed, or desired, to occupy a seat of power. There were no examples of Catholic chaplains contesting these managerial status issues, confirming the normality and acceptance of rank within the priesthood. In the current climate of theoretical equality and empowerment, this situation appears backward and discriminatory, but it was apparently tacitly accepted by all.

Without a doubt, it will be shown that hard-working chaplains with a pragmatic approach to fulfilling their religious vocation earned the real kudos in this war. Paradoxically and unwittingly, they also did much to support the consolidation of English episcopal strategy. If they were not to excel in the field of career ambition, management, or administration, then Irish and Lancashire chaplains, and others from similar circumstance, could claim the mantle of excellence in spiritual terms when dealing with soldiers in the line, and others. This was, after all, what they went to war for, and both troops and laity expected nothing less. It is prudent to point out that this responsibility was not the sole preserve of the Diocesan priest; many Religious also shared a life with soldiers. Fr Charles Wright, a Redemptorist, is a case in point, he who was successful with the Liverpool-Irish battalions. Performing their religious duties is the measure by which chaplains should be assessed. Irregular regional and national patterns of Catholic public religiousness inevitably came to the fore in this situation.<sup>76</sup> Lancashire and Irish troops, and their chaplains, repeatedly demonstrated and engaged in public religious activities on the Western Front. It was simply a

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<sup>76</sup> This one of the key observations in Chapters 3 and 4.



replication of their Catholic communal life which existed at home.<sup>77</sup> In reality, no Lancashire or Irish Catholic priest expressed a desire to be placed in any other than an Irish or Lancashire unit. Chaplains from other areas also requested to be deployed with these men because they demonstrated a high Catholic presence in the field.<sup>78</sup> Complimenting religious activity, those southern based priests who were chosen for other careers in the organisation at war, fulfilled their administrative functions seamlessly. An unspoken equilibrium between problems and resources was maintained by English Catholic chaplains across the social divide.

In internal affairs Catholics organised other Catholics as an extension to the domestic and civilian situation, but life was not as simple as that and interaction with the external Catholic world was inevitable. The war, and the confusions generated therein, was not under the direct control of the Catholic domain, although within reason Catholicism always determined its own religious role at war. The real mismatch was with the Army, itself a manifestation of British society which was: Protestant, socially divisive, and deferential. It understandably followed its own agenda, necessitating that Catholicism had to work within these value systems. The key questions revolved around how the inner-sanctum of internal Catholicism coped with the outside world, which was often apathetic and sometimes hostile. With Catholic eyes turned inwards in the pre-war period, how did priests emerge from their cloisters or parishes? After a sustained period of growth and expansion, could the bright new world of Catholic optimism be sustained in a conflict scenario? How did the turmoil of the last sixty years leading up to 1914, impinge on their ability to survive and prosper in the outside world, especially that unique world that was the Great War? And what about the Irish whose country was being engulfed in civil and military unrest? These questions will be addressed.

Attitudes towards the Irish formed part of the racial, class, and political composition of the Old English Catholics. The influx of the Irish did have an effect on English Catholicism outside the North. Frederick William Faber, a leading convert who had joined Newman before starting the Brompton Oratory, Kensington, complained bitterly in the midst of the Famine in 1849 that: 'The Irish are swamping us, they are rude and unruly and after many complaints, the Catholic tradesmen are leaving us'.<sup>79</sup> Considering that Faber was a recent convert to Catholicism, his apparent lack of Christian spirit for fellow Catholics does not reflect well on him or the emerging Catholic middle classes in London. It was a less than impressive start for

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<sup>77</sup> This was replicated in vocational activity which shows the Irish and Lancashire contribution 1800-1914 as 21.9 and 19.5%: Yorkshire, Middlesex and Bedfordshire as 4.4, 6.1 and 0.4% respectively. Irish and Lancashire priests supplied nearly half of all priests in this period. Appendix 1.

<sup>78</sup> Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>79</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 217.

the new disciple. Paradoxically the hymn: 'Faith of our Fathers' which he wrote was hugely popular with Lancashire and Irish congregations and troops. Norman concluded that: 'To the English Catholics, the Irish were thus sometimes a practical problem - especially to the ex-Anglicans [recent converts], with their bourgeois or gentry susceptibilities'.<sup>80</sup> These predispositions included anti-Irish sentiment often within the snobbish mores mentioned earlier. An Oratorian priest, Fr Philip Oddie, demonstrated a direct link between these prejudices and his own. He repeatedly used strong anti-Irish rhetoric of which: 'I beg you not to send another rough Irishman [fellow Catholic chaplain] to this Division', was among his mildest.<sup>81</sup> These comments and more, along with his unremitting anti-Protestant rhetoric, will be explored<sup>82</sup> although it is not altogether surprising given the stance of the Oratory's founder.<sup>83</sup>

Southern Catholic prejudices were not restricted to the Irish, other regional bigotry existed. Bishop Ullathorne of Birmingham had Yorkshire roots and: '....was thought to embody the robust, simple Catholicism of Yorkshire recusancy, yet to have occupied the middle ground between the values of the Old Catholics and the influence of the Roman outlook and the converts'.<sup>84</sup> Yet even a celebrated bishop ran the gauntlet of regional class consciousness and dismissiveness: 'Ullathorne was certainly not, by the time of his elevation to the priesthood, an uneducated man. He did, however, retain a regional accent which, to London ears, always sounded rather unsophisticated'.<sup>85</sup> Accent was a punitive weapon of discrimination, which explains why both Ushaw and Maynooth seminaries included elocution lessons within their training.<sup>86</sup>

Anti-Irish attitudes from Catholics also persisted elsewhere than London. In Birmingham, for example, where: 'Informal segregation took place. The Irish attended St Chad's Cathedral, and the English Catholics resorted to St Peter's Church'.<sup>87</sup> The lack of empathy with Irish Catholics appears endemic within some areas of the Catholic gentry, such as the convert Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle: 'that most prominent of Catholic laymen'.<sup>88</sup> Lisle stated: '[Of the Famine], God has visited that wretched and untameable race with those

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>81</sup> DAA, 3235, Oddie to Rawlinson, (29<sup>th</sup> August 29 1918).

<sup>82</sup> Examples of both types of bigotry can be found in Chapter 6,

<sup>83</sup> It has not been possible to fortify the link between Oddie and Faber and mean spiritedness towards the Irish. Of the other 5 Oratorian chaplains, only the Du Moulin Browne brothers, and Fr Lowry-Corry left correspondence. J Moulin-Browne and Lowry-Corry became unsuitable because of poor health but there was no suggestion of anti-Irish feelings, advocating that it was probably Oddie's personal idiosyncrasy.

<sup>84</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 161.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. Norman confirms the connections between class and education, articulated in Chapter 1.

<sup>86</sup> Chapter 2.

<sup>87</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 217.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

chastisements which are inseparably the lot of all Catholick (sic) nations that disgrace the Name of the Church'.<sup>89</sup> These were astonishing comments about fellow human beings, never mind fellow Catholics, and owe much to the contemporary Malthusian philosophy of demographic control based on a tradition of checks and balances in populations. These comments would have been grist to the mill for any observant sectarian. Nonetheless, it is an insight into the arrogant and condescending attitude of some of the new converts. It appears that de Lisle was comfortable in supporting building projects and grand schemes, but less supportive of the common man: not a unique standpoint in a society based on class and at complete variance with Christ's teaching. Norman provides a more balanced opinion by pointing out:

The condition of the "rough" Irish was often, of course, exaggerated, especially by those who had no experience of proletarian or peasant mores. The Irish were actually, a revitalising force in many of the churches, and, despite their poverty in the first generation, often made financial contribution to support the clergy, which must have involved real sacrifices. They also elicited evangelistic and philanthropic qualities among the English Catholics that might have remained dormant.<sup>90</sup>

This study of English Catholicism has revealed a less than edifying situation. In reality the Catholic world, as society in general, was defined by class and status, and it is remarkable that the negative examples generated by Catholic chaplaincy to be analysed, were so few and far between.

### **Catholic Society in Lancashire**

What made Lancashire Catholicism different from many other dioceses and particularly those in the south? For all the niceties and neatness of the assumption of southern executive authority and intellectual credence, it will be shown that the enormous social problems in Lancashire created a brand of pragmatic Catholicism that sustained the Faith and overcame domestic difficulties. The verve, energy, and pragmatism of Lancashire Catholics represented a success story in human dignity, common sense, religious devotion, and sustainable social development that even the most critical found hard to belittle.<sup>91</sup> These talents came to the fore at war, but emanated from home, as the eventual combination of a major Irish presence combined with a strong local Catholic tradition. Occasional combinations of these two factors occurred elsewhere, but never in the numbers which industrialisation and famine uniquely and unintentionally created.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> In all the evidence analysed there was never any adverse comment about Lancashire Catholics religiosity, only those based on social or class criteria.

Irish immigration fed the rapid increase in Catholic numbers in Lancashire which in turn fuelled the total advance of English Catholicism. Bossy disagrees and minimises the impact of Irish Catholics. He considers that Catholic growth in England was an internal process, being: 'continuous and self-generating'.<sup>92</sup> This position might have been sustainable up to 1850, but the sheer growth of Irish immigration and successive generations of English born men and women of Irish descent, who closely identified with Ireland, renders this position untenable. Growth in English Catholicism could not come from converts alone, whether traditional conversion of non-Catholics of all classes, or by Tractarianism, which was more important socially than numerically. In any event, the expected conversion of England did not materialise and the Old Catholic reaction to these newcomers was hardly a recipe for growth. Buchanan recognises the realities of protecting the faith at the expense of expansion: '[Catholics were more concerned with]....defending their position within British society, rather than trying to reconvert Britain to Catholicism'.<sup>93</sup> Intellectualism on its own could not produce enough stimuli to grow the Church without the finance, energy, and doggedness supplied by the poor, of which Lancashire had more than its fair share.

The regional Lancashire-Irish experience will now be examined to define its inter-connectivity and relationships.<sup>94</sup> It is a divided picture socially and politically, if not spiritually. Lancashire boasted the largest Catholic population of any county in England. The 1851 census, the only one which included a religious enumeration, showed that on a Sunday in March 1851, 42.5% of all the Catholics attending Mass in England were in Lancashire. Hilton illustrates the growth in Catholics stating 666,000 in Lancashire in 1910, served by 557 secular priests and 208 regulars.<sup>95</sup> These numbers had been swollen with constant waves of Irish immigration, all of whom were British citizens since the Act of Union in 1801. This influx culminated in the mid-nineteenth century following the mass evacuation from Ireland as a result of the 'Death Dealing Famine'.<sup>96</sup> This catastrophe led to the collision of both Lancastrian and Irish strands of that religion, as Catholic immigrants came face to face with their indigenous Lancashire co-religionists. Both strands were deeply rooted in resistance to the Penal Laws and successive persecutions. The Lancashire variant was traditionally based on a

<sup>92</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), p. 306.

<sup>93</sup> Buchanan and Conway, *Political Catholicism*, p. 248.

<sup>94</sup> By national I refer to Ireland and England, which requires explaining. Ireland's political union within Britain, was conceded in the Act of Union, which became law on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1801. Scotland signed the Act of Union in 1707. Both of these political acts were separate from the Catholic Church, which remained independently Irish or Scottish. Both countries were independent from England in episcopal terms. Whilst Scotland requires its own episcopal study this was outside the spatial parameters of this thesis. Wales was incorporated into the English hierarchy and such distinctions do not apply. In chaplaincy terms, all priests from the four countries who became commissioned British Army chaplains on the Western Front have been included.

<sup>95</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>96</sup> Christine Kinealy, *A Death Dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland 1845-52* (London: Pluto, 1997).

recusancy model which had a distinctly Lancashire flavour. The Irish model also had its roots in resistance to religious suppression, whilst echoing the Gaelic tradition with its own specific customs and beliefs. Both Catholic traditions were modified under Ultramontanism from the 1850s.

Both societies were the subject of disparate economic growth and modernisation processes. The immigrants shared the locals' experiences of being subjected to the social, economic, and demographic effects of the industrial revolution. Agricultural life in Lancashire was now an uncommon and underpaid alternative to work in industry. These changes, a complete reversal of almost every fabric of life for the Irish, were already in place in Lancashire. The pace accelerated as the Victorian age progressed, and consumed both Irish and Lancashire Catholics alike. Hilton describes the effects of industrialisation, immigration, and Ultramontanism on Lancashire Catholicism as: 'a peculiar combination of isolated provincialism and exotic cosmopolitanism. Its people left their factories and their terraced houses to kneel in Gothic churches, lit by stained glass and candle light, as amidst clouds of incense, to the sound of Latin chant the priest performed his daily miracle'.<sup>97</sup> This rather creative description has been supported in the debate on architecture, as Lancastrians often preferred Gothic to Classical, despite the Roman credentials of the latter. It is referred to by Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP in a similar vein: 'They were fellow citizens of the saints whose statues filled the churches, God's own children. Their houses might be slums but their church was heaven'.<sup>98</sup> Clearly the visual aspects of Catholicism, albeit a mix of Roman and Gothic, had an appeal in Lancashire which was also a mix of Lancashire and Irish, Saxon and Gael.

Lancashire was shaken to its roots by the Industrial Revolution; however, both the Irish and Lancastrian Catholics had one common and unbreakable bond, the Catholic religion. This strong and shared value and belief system sustained the Irish in the early years of most hardship. In time, both groups overcame economic and religious opposition and fused into a relatively homogenous entity. As an example of the coming together of the various Catholic hues, by the outset of war Fr Looby from Cahir, Tipperary, and Fr Gillett from Lytham, Lancashire, were both working in the Liverpool Diocese with the Liverpool-Irish community. They shared this experience with Fr Leeson from Liverpool and all three went to France as chaplains. Only Fr Gillett survived.

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<sup>97</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 103. This statement is by no means meant to be derogatory. Having met John Hilton, it is clear that he was simply trying to re-create the period.

<sup>98</sup> Radcliffe, *Why Go To Church?* p. 11.

What really happened at this time in Edwardian England and particularly in the industrially advanced, yet socially lagging Lancashire, was described as: ‘The end of innocence’.<sup>99</sup> This was a classic post-Victorian clash of the old and the new. Mill owners were not benevolent men, but even the dreadful conditions of the towns offered better prospects than servitude and penury on the land, or so it was thought. The aristocratic tradition was forced to confront, and finally accept, a changing world. This process accelerated significantly after the Great War. Change was grudgingly conceded in all walks of life including Old Catholicism. The deep-seated traditionalists were under threat from the internal British rural to urban shift, most noticeably but not exclusively from Ireland, and the economic, social, and personal experiences of the war itself. Tensions developed between the old guard of Catholicism in Lancashire and the new incomers from within England, or externally from Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

Lancashire was the centre of this demographic revolution and understanding the results of rapid demographic transformation holds the key to unlocking Catholic Lancashire’s secrets. The industrial revolution’s voracity for expansion oversaw the building of ports, mills, and infrastructure. Coal, wool, cotton, and the gamut of industrial and commercial processes needed to service the industrial behemoth sprouted up. The most essential resource of all was people. Society was within a few short years urbanising into what has been called: ‘an Industrial State, a state that is to say that lives by the export of its manufactures’.<sup>100</sup> Irish immigrants were well established in Lancashire yet the Irish population burgeoned in the years 1845-1852.<sup>101</sup> In 1841 Irish Catholics in Lancashire numbered 106,000. By 1851 the figure reached 191,506, which represented an increase of 81%.<sup>102</sup> In one year alone, 1847, ten Liverpool priests died ministering to famine fever victims in Liverpool.<sup>103</sup> The blueprint for Catholic chaplain endeavour had been announced during this period of famine disease, and it was no surprise, therefore, when chaplains at war showed similar courage and devotion to their flocks. Returning to the wider picture, at the same point in history the old and the new worlds were forced on each other. Rapid and unprecedented societal change inevitably ensured that the diverse, urban and rural, upper and lower classes were on a collision course, albeit sharing the common denominator of the Catholic faith.

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<sup>99</sup> Roy Hattersley, *The Edwardians* (London: Abacus, 2004), pp. 315-337.

<sup>100</sup> Hughes in Beck, *The English Catholics*, p. 53.

<sup>101</sup> For an in-depth and convincing argument for these dates refer, Kinealy, *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-1852* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994). Various commentators have estimated British and colonial troops deaths at about 850,000, The Irish Famine of 1845-1852 claimed 1,000,000 deaths and many more emigrated.

<sup>102</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 36.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74. Compared to 34 Catholic chaplaincy deaths in the British Army in the Great War.

The proximity of Lancashire to Ireland had encouraged trading and migration connections over the centuries, particularly to the port of Liverpool. Cultural, demographic, familial, geographic, religious, and historical exchanges between Lancashire and Ireland were, and are, common connections between these two adjacent land masses separated only by the Irish Sea.<sup>104</sup> The Famine years added impulses of immigration which coloured the perception of all Irish immigration as being driven by poverty. This was generally the case but also included those who migrated with trades and professions. Doyle is correct to point out that: 'It is important not to think of them all as the poor driven out by famine, hardship and over population'.<sup>105</sup> This may be so, but many of the Irish in mid-nineteenth century Lancashire were desperately poor. When added to pre-existing racial prejudice, these factors ensured that the Irish were initially the convenient whipping boys for oppositional forces in society, as were some of the Irish chaplains later. Yet the Catholic Irish persisted and took their place in the development of twentieth century Catholic expansion in Lancashire. These deep-rooted connections are an integral part of Lancashire Catholicism at both conscious and unconscious levels. A hundred years since the commencement of World War 1, Lancastrian Catholics continue to recognise the importance of the Irish connection.<sup>106</sup>

It was not only the Irish who flocked to the towns, the rural classes of Lancashire and from all over Britain also migrated there, and in doing so became disconnected from their previous recusant fealties. The Fylde coast, a traditionally strong, rural area of Catholic recusancy, even within the robust recusant Lancashire tradition, had as its chief patron Lord Clifton at Lytham Hall. The dutiful farm labourers of Clifton's agricultural estates were among the groups attracted by the prosperity which Preston was now promising. David Mathew has confirmed the local position: 'the building of St Warburge's in 1850 and St Augustine's and St Gregory's fifteen years before were the immediate results of the population from the hereditary Catholic farms of the Fylde'.<sup>107</sup> So before the 1850s there was an established Lancashire Catholic presence in Preston and a lesser Irish one.

Traditionally, the preservation of English Catholicism has been considered to be in the hands of recusants, characterised as a small wealthy élite and an attendant rural poor,

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<sup>104</sup> Dublin and Liverpool were designated as twin cities in 1998, and both became cities of culture in 1991 and 2008 respectively.

<sup>105</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 36.

<sup>106</sup> A current Catholic newspaper, *The Catholic Voice*, a Lancaster Diocesan publication, (September 2012), Lancaster parishioners: 'We wanted to say "Thank You"' to the Irish Church on behalf of the Diocese of Lancaster for all the wonderful Irish priests, religious sisters and brothers, who have ministered to us over the generations as much-loved and respected parish priests, teachers and catechists'. Dean Nick Donnelly from St Mary's of Furness Church in Barrow.

<sup>107</sup> David Mathew, 'Old Catholics and Converts', in Beck, *The English Catholics*, p. 224.

together withholding the Catholic Faith. This was not the full picture in Lancashire where: 'Recusants, led by the gentry, also contained an unusually large number of recusant yeomen and farmers. The overwhelming numbers of recusants in all classes in Lancashire were women'.<sup>108</sup> Catholicism in Lancashire was strongest in the West and North of the county which defined part of the Liverpool Archdiocese until 1924. Preston, incorrectly thought to be 'Priest's town',<sup>109</sup> is geographically situated approximately between Liverpool and Lancaster, in the central-west of Lancashire. It was: 'the most Catholic town in England' and Hastings continues: 'In such parts, Old English Catholicism survived by no means as a matter of a few aristocratic families and their retainers: it was on the contrary the healthy religion of a normal structured society'.<sup>110</sup> East Lancashire, with Manchester at its hub, had many of the characteristics of West Lancashire including rapidly increasing Irish communities and abject poverty. Nevertheless, it was the West that had the largest numbers of Catholics in both historical and contemporary experience. Demography aside, the Salford Diocese had similar problems to Liverpool and its chaplains had a significant part to play in the war, as did Bishop Casartelli.<sup>111</sup> Despite intra-Lancashire rivalries, Catholic society in Lancashire found a way to merge different ingredients and personalities, and eventually present a common front to the rest of the Protestant nation and southern English Catholic society.

Lancashire's political role in the intra-episcopal power relationships was largely concerned with local affairs. The role of the Lancastrian episcopacy, with respect to the grand Catholic political picture, was complex and constantly developed over the period 1850 to 1914. By the start of the war it will be shown that Lancashire Catholicism had absorbed the Irish Catholics and had also outgrown fidelity to the Old Lancashire Catholics. As the war approached, both bishops of Salford and Liverpool were in-line with the English Catholic national war strategy and hence consolidation with the state, but crucially they were also developing practical solutions to address their own particular sets of difficulties which demanded pan-class cooperation. Although Casartelli and Whiteside in Lancashire were not working as a visible single entity, they managed to produce strikingly similar results in provision for the poor, especially education, including religious instruction. The inclusion of Lancashire, the most significant Catholic diocese in England historically and in this era,

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<sup>108</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 12.

<sup>109</sup> Popularly thought of as Priest's town, this is incorrect. The name of Preston is derived from the Anglo-Saxon Priest's tun or farm, particularly glebe or *gleba*. Latin for a farm assigned to a priest. Thanks to Mr John Hughes for this local information.

<sup>110</sup> Hastings, *A History of English Christianity*, p. 133.

<sup>111</sup> Liverpool providing 31 chaplains who served on the Western Front, and Salford 26. These figures are from the author's own database, see Methodology. Sources include Fitzgerald-Lombard, *English and Welsh Priests 1801-1914*, Catholic Directories, National Archive, SDA, LAA, DAA, and Army Lists.



reveals the fissures in English Catholicism nationally, justifying the addition of a regional analysis.

Liverpool was the numerically dominant bishopric in Lancashire, and when the Liverpool bishops' attitudes from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century were revised, it marked the gradual acceptance of the Irish within Lancashire Catholicism. Liverpool Diocesan Catholic ambition originally feared that their hard-earned status within English society would regress with so many Irish to contend with. The existing and well-trodden path of episcopal diplomacy with the Westminster government of consolidation would be at risk. They were concerned that the establishment would view the Irish influx negatively from political and social standpoints. Overt English nationalism as trumpeted by Bishop Goss [1856-72] of Liverpool, defined his attempt to distance himself and Lancashire Catholics, from Irish Catholics. Bishop Goss claimed: 'I am English, I am a real John Bull, indeed, I am a Lancashire man'.<sup>112</sup> He repeated these sentiments at Preston: 'We have been born on the soil and have all the feelings of Englishmen. And we are proud of the government under which we now live. We believe it to be the best, the most perfect government in the world ....We belong to the nation: in heart we are English, in purpose we are loyal'.<sup>113</sup> Goss made a rather lame excuse for such an approach. Doyle believes that: 'It is clear that he felt that it was only by playing down their nationality that the Irish could be fully accepted in English society, and so gain the position that 'their natural ability and fertility of their mental resources deserved'.<sup>114</sup> This type of patronisation by Goss, replete with the colonial undertones, is not uncommon in this period.<sup>115</sup> Goss was also aware that he had to tread carefully with his rapidly increasing Irish Catholic population who were increasingly funding Catholic expansion. If not, he would assuredly be reminded by his advisors in the clergy and laity. He backtracked: 'When I say this country I mean England, Ireland, and Scotland, because it is perfectly chimerical to attempt to separate them – it is an impossibility. The people are spread and intermixed amongst each other, and there is hardly any work done or great act achieved, which is not equally shared by natives<sup>116</sup> of the three different parts of the country'.<sup>117</sup> Goss was

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<sup>112</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 44-45.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>115</sup> For example, *The Universe*, (23<sup>rd</sup> February 1919). The Open Forum: 'The Irish Question and the Irish Mind'.

<sup>116</sup> The Welsh also migrated to Liverpool in numbers. Goss was talking in terms of hierarchies, with the Welsh Church incorporated into the English and Welsh hierarchy. This convention is maintained throughout. As noted, the Irish and Scottish hierarchies' were separate and independent from the English. As far as chaplains were concerned, Scottish, English, and Irish chaplains were included in the general thesis. There appears to have been no Welsh born chaplains.

<sup>117</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 46.

succeeded by Archbishop Whiteside who continued the policy of Irish Catholic containment as Doyle explains:

Bishop Whiteside showed the determination of the bishops of Liverpool that their Church should not become an Irish Church, as happened in parts of the United States and Australia. In this context the existence of a strong, well-organised Lancashire Catholic Church into which the Irish gradually integrated was very important; even in places where they came to dominate it numerically, they were not able to create it in their own image.<sup>118</sup>

In the event the bishops resolved to steer a course between its spiritual and pastoral responsibilities to the Catholic poor, whilst at the same time protecting the status of Old Lancashire Catholicism, of which they were the products. The Catholic bishops of Liverpool, therefore, operated an ambivalent or dual policy approach towards Irish Catholics. They endeavoured to provide all the assistance they could muster, both spiritual and social on the one hand, whilst on the other securing the status and overall ambition of Catholicism, compatible with the Old Catholic establishment. Initially the bishops sought to promote Catholic loyalty to both the governing institutions and the traditional Old Catholic hierarchies, at the expense of jettisoning the Irish whenever expedient. At this point Liverpool episcopal stratagems were no different to their southern counterparts.

Things began to change in Lancashire which marked the separation between its policies and that of the South, who were not subject to the same degree of pressure and adjustment. Old Lancastrian Catholicism's influence was becoming moribund and making way for the Catholic proletariat and the expanding upwardly mobile Lancashire Catholics. These were mainly Irish or of Irish descent, or indigenous to Lancashire. The bishops themselves were not only religious leaders but also diplomats. They recognised transformations in society and within Lancashire Catholicism, and accommodated this new composition into what was in effect the same English political ambition of consolidation. The evolution and convergence of two strands of Catholics, therefore, marked the complex shifting of episcopal ambition in this region as the new century approached. The bishops genuinely shouldered responsibility for these changes and understood that any attempt to foster the advancement of Catholicism in all its spheres, and across all classes, necessitated inclusive Lancashire Catholicism. The emergence of a single Lancashire Catholic identity by the commencement of the war confirmed that this dual approach had worked. The bishops had ensured that as one body, they were better able to realise a degree of social progress through consolidation within the state and the Protestant establishment, and to achieve a degree of local harmony between the

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

classes irrespective of their ancestries. This was not a fusion of conscious design, more a blending of natural Catholic mutuality. In any case, many of the laity were comprised of first and second generations of Lancashire Irish Catholics, or simply Catholics from Lancashire, as were some of their priests and chaplains. Catholicism in Lancashire was more unified as the war approached than at any time in living memory.

This fusion can be demonstrated in microcosm by Preston, then in the Liverpool Diocese. Similar to Liverpool but on a much smaller scale, Preston had built a flourishing dockside and dredged a channel to provide sea access.<sup>119</sup> The Lancaster canal between Kendal and Preston had an outlet at the Preston basin which furnished the export of finished products of central and northern Lancashire industry. Shoes and woollen products from Kendal vied with clothing from the great northern mills, many of which blackened the skyline of most towns. Raw materials were imported, especially wool from Kendal, cotton from East Lancashire and Yorkshire, and coal from Liverpool and elsewhere. Canal transport was supplemented by the new railways, hastening production. Preston, awash with belching chimneys and mills, survived the mid-1850 cotton crisis despite riots and civil unrest. To this amalgam, huddled in the tiny terraced dwellings hastily erected to house the mill workers, was added the immigration of many Irish economic migrants, many of whom had constructed the canals and railways or worked in the mills. This emphasised Preston's distinctly Catholic flavour. Here, as elsewhere, two rural communities, recusant Fylde and Irish immigrant, became industrialised and fused together in religion, work, and living conditions, thus providing a template for the rest of the county in the coming years. This fusion and communal spirit had significant value in educating and motivating Catholics in their religion, which in turn affected sacramental and religious opportunity at war.<sup>120</sup>

Both Lancashire bishops during the war, Whiteside of Liverpool and Casartelli of Salford, exhibited absolutely no interest in the pursuit of hierarchical or personal ambition. That is not to say that they were indifferent to the overall episcopal policy of Catholic consolidation within the Protestant State, on the contrary, they knew only too well how vital such a strategy was to the progress of their own diocesan projects. This was not a new stance, merely an extension of the existing one. Bishop Goss of Liverpool wrote as early as 1871: 'To the Sovereign of these realms we own allegiance, and we give it...It would be a great sin to give the Pope what belongs to the Crown as to give to the Crown what belongs to the Pope'.<sup>121</sup> This was continued by Whiteside who made a call to obedience and deference: 'It is the duty of the

<sup>119</sup> Jack M. Dakres, *The Last Tide: A History of the Port of Preston* (Preston: Carnegie Press, 1986).

<sup>120</sup> Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>121</sup> Bishop Goss, Pastoral letter (February 1871), in Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 99.

ordinary citizen with his limited knowledge and outlook, to trust to the decision of the rulers of the State'.<sup>122</sup> This Pastoral Letter was part of a larger treatise explaining the moral justification for the war and informed the English speaking world that Catholic England's loyalty was assured.

Bishop Whiteside, as Bishop Goss before him, was a Lancashire-born conservative and traditionalist, from much the same mould as his national colleagues.<sup>123</sup> Bishop Casartelli born in Cheetham, Manchester, of Italian parents, was a conservative character yet with a strong interest in intellectual pursuits. Described as: 'Born a Victorian and remained so in many ways throughout his life',<sup>124</sup> and 'it seems that he would have preferred scholarship to the episcopacy'.<sup>125</sup> Despite his many cerebral pursuits including Orientalism, he was also a champion of the poor and a supporter, as Whiteside was, of Catholic education and of the active involvement of clergy and laity in social provision for the disadvantaged. How would these men from the two dioceses in Lancashire, Liverpool and Salford, men who were not in open and frequent communication, adopt social policy to the particular hardships in their areas of responsibility? The answers are remarkably consistent across the county. Theoretical Catholic social policy in Lancashire appears initially as something of a sideshow. Lancashire's bishops, after closer scrutiny, differ from many of their English colleagues and reveal the pragmatic approach synonymous with this region. There is some evidence that the Catholic population, and the clergy at the grassroots level, harboured at least a hunger for knowledge for the Pope's social policy direction. A miner from Prescott, Lancashire, who interestingly appears to be on a council which might have been the vehicle for advancing Catholic Social policy, but clearly was not, wrote to his Parish Priest:

In the first instance I am a miner whose sole study and relaxation, are a deep and abiding interest, in industrial and political matters. As the representative of the C.G.M.S to the St Helens Deanery Council, I am constantly brought in touch with the delegates of other branches, and just as constantly do I hear reference made to an Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII entitled, I think, *Rerum Novarum*. Extracts of this I have read in a pamphlet edited by Fr Husslein, and this has whetted my appetite for more. I have endeavoured to buy a copy of this work, but so far without success. If you could procure me a copy – or if there are any means which I could buy a cheap copy, I would ask you please send me particulars.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>122</sup> LAA, Thomas Whiteside Archbishop of Liverpool, Diocesan Pastoral Letter, *Diocesan Missionary Fund, for the year 1913*, (Rockliff, August 1914).

<sup>123</sup> Goss was born in Ormskirk, Whiteside in Lancaster, both from strong recusant traditions.

<sup>124</sup> Martin John Broadly, *Louis Charles Casartelli: A Bishop in Peace and War* (Manchester: Koinonia, 2006), p. 55.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction, no page number.

<sup>126</sup> LAA. S2 111, M/28. Letter from Mr John McIntyre to Canon Hughes, [n.d.].

This letter is interesting not only for the reasons stated within, but also because it indicates self-advancement, which was an important part in the growth of the Catholic working class.<sup>127</sup> It is well constructed, respectful but not fawning, and written in the fluent and stylish hand of a man who despite the rigours of his occupation was clearly a well-practiced letter writer.

It is tempting to conclude that this ambitious Catholic miner, who turned to his priest for guidance, had been failed by the episcopacy. That would be an unfair and unbalanced judgement and requires some reflection. It is true that the bishops were occupied ensuring that the boat of English governance was not rocked too vigorously, and they were tentative in pushing through the ideas of *Rerum Novarum*. They were, nonetheless, aware of the messages from the Pope's encyclical. Casartelli for instance, enveloped its core concerns deep in a pastoral letter: 'God's chastisement [through the suffering in the war]... for its ever growing materialism, selfishness, excessive luxury, abuse of the marriage tie, and disruption of family life'.<sup>128</sup> There is little in Whiteside's early war pastorals directly attributable to *Rerum Novarum*, until 1916 when he presented the idea of both religious and social reconstruction after the war. By 1919 he was urging ideas promoted by *Rerum Novarum* into vigorous public debate on how the post-war world was to be run: 'Reconstruction is bound to come; reconstruction in the relations of nation to nation; reconstruction in the relations of man to man; and particularly in the relations of capital and labour; and reconstruction even in religion'.<sup>129</sup> This neatly combined the Pope's encyclical with the American President Woodrow Wilson's plans for a League of Nations.

Clearly *Rerum Novarum* influenced the Lancashire bishops. They also realised that to make progress in their practical policies of welfare reform, headed by education, they had to work within the constraints of worldly reality. It was they who were responsible for driving forward social policy. In effect the bishops had absorbed the theory yet operated pragmatic policies to put Catholic Social policy into effect. Whiteside, consumed by social welfare and increasing religious participation from his flock, announced a range of institutions set up in the Liverpool Archdiocese with State support. By February 1914, these including six Poor Law Schools, seven Industrial Schools, three Reformatory Schools and two Special Schools for 217

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<sup>127</sup> The Liverpool Archdiocesan Archive is an extensive facility and may have more on this subject than I discovered.

<sup>128</sup> SDA, Louis Charles Casartelli, Bishop of Salford, *Pastoral Letter Advent 1914*, (22<sup>nd</sup> November 1914).

<sup>129</sup> LAA. His work is detailed in the 1919 Ecclesiastical Education Fund and is a remarkable document which senses and distils *Rerum Novarum* within the desire for a 'Britain fit for heroes'. The tone is distinctly favourable to improved conditions and a 'living wage' but is also balanced by the rights of capital, 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay'. This exactly replicates the underpinnings of the Pope's document and it is possible to see the moderating effects which influenced the trade unions in future years. This Catholic interpretation was encouraged by Bishop Whiteside.

children who were 'physically or mentally defective'.<sup>130</sup> He was not alone, other bishops were following suit as any inspection of the annual Catholic Directories at this time testify.

It is too simplistic to summarise Liverpool and Salford bishops as mere conservatives embroiled in the machinations of power. They managed national politics when necessary but they were much closer to the ground than this depiction allows.<sup>131</sup> Their priests and nuns were actively engaged all over the cities and towns in works of social reform as witnesses to the deprivation of the poor all around. Poverty and distress were inescapable realities. They were not necessarily men of the people but they were men among the people.<sup>132</sup> Mr McIntyre had almost certainly been a product of their strategies over time. They were not by nature radicals and, even if they had been, they had to work within a Protestant state which restricted their ability to go too fast.

Ground level power dynamics engaged the episcopacy in sectarianism of a violent nature but the brunt of the action fell to the laity and clergy to endure. Despite Lancashire and Ireland's geographical, communal, and religious ties, it cannot be implied that these centuries-old relationships, encouraged by migration and trade, were always welcome affiliations. Catholics in Lancashire were a significant minority within a dominant and vociferous Protestant society. The indigenous Protestants of Lancashire, particularly in the port of Liverpool, were often hostile to those fellow Britons whom they saw as unwelcome incomers. Catholicism in Lancashire and Ireland had survived many periods of religious intolerance and persecution, and the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries were no exceptions. The latest sectarian attacks existed at a time when anti-Catholicism had, in the legal sense, been attenuated by reforming statute over recent decades. Law is one thing, the exploitation of human weakness another. Existing passions were inflamed by a sudden surge of immigrants applying additional pressure to the already none too affluent areas of the economic and social fabric of Lancashire. Prejudices which were inherent in the host society became rekindled. When raw impulses can be attributed to a religion, and particularly a religion which has only a tenuous degree of permanence, then resultant sectarianism was inevitable.

Two regional studies, Neal in Liverpool and Bush in the North-East of England, testify to the degree of anti-Irish Catholic sectarianism. Neal has shown that Catholics from Ireland,

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<sup>130</sup> LAA, 'Report of the Ecclesiastical Education Fund', (27<sup>th</sup> February 1914).

<sup>131</sup> Brian Plumb, *Arundel to Zabi: A Biographical Dictionary of The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales (Deceased) 1623-2000* (Ormskirk: North West Catholic History Society, 2006). No page numbers but contains much information on bishops, including Bishop Whiteside who attacked Liberal policies on education, and was described by Augustine Birrell as: 'the mildest man ever to slit a throat'.

<sup>132</sup> This is not to suggest that they shared everyday existence with their congregations, even if their clergy did, more to suggest that they were as close to the ground as propriety, important to both classes, allowed.

the vast majority of arrivals, faced sectarian hostility and resistance from a population who feared Roman influence and from the disease, poverty, and violence which accompanied them. Ireland had long been the butt of colonial stereotyping which helped fan the fires of sectarianism. Nonetheless, from a Protestant perspective, these were genuine, if exaggerated, invasions into their space and particularly their livelihoods.<sup>133</sup> Neal points to the economic and political pressures which helped foster extremist Protestant reactions, most notably through working class Orangeism in Lancashire, and predominantly in Liverpool. It should also be noted that mass immigration strained the Poor Laws beyond breaking point. The local rate payers were forced to make additional contributions as Westminster ignored requests for government intervention, a continuation of the economic policies of laissez-faire. Anti-Irish feeling was condensed forcibly by Hilton: '[the immigrant Irish] ....were seen as a burden on the poor rates, as undercutting English labour, as black-legs and strike-breakers, as dirty, drunken, promiscuous, and violent'.<sup>134</sup> To add to the existing tensions, the reform of existing anti-Catholic legislation, and a perception of Catholic ascendancy, caused a further Protestant backlash. Thus the Catholic Emancipation Act, Maynooth Grant, Papal Bull *Universalis Ecclesiae*, and the Pope's proclamations on infallibility, mixed marriages and more, were interpreted as threatening to Protestant England and particularly Protestant Liverpool:

Rome scoffs at the authority of the Protestant Sovereign of the British Empire, and is resolved to treat her dominions as if they were a fief under its absolute control. The insolent edict [Restoration of the Hierarchy] has gone forth which is to elect amongst us a hierarchy owing allegiance both temporal and spiritual, not to a constitutional queen but to a foreign potentate.<sup>135</sup>

Despite these inflammatory and inaccurate claims, of which the term 'insolent' reveals much, the Protestant bloc needed addressing. The requirement to show loyalty to the Monarch, in temporal terms, is a recurring theme in this thesis. With the recusant refusal to obey the Crown in matters spiritual still residing in the public consciousness, the need to reassert Catholic loyalty in the lay world created the milieu for the hierarchical Catholic response. Like it or not, Catholic bishops and particularly Whiteside, had no other option than to consolidate.

Bush explains how these sectarian problems were repeated on Tyneside and makes the pertinent observation that: 'Regional cultures of anti-Catholicism should not be viewed simply as national political events but also in the way in which they responded to the perceived threat

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<sup>133</sup> Frank Neal, *Sectarian Violence: The Liverpool Experience 1819-1914: An Aspect of Anglo-Irish History* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1988), pp. 105-21.

<sup>134</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 93.

<sup>135</sup> Neal, *Sectarian Violence*, p. 131.

posed by the growth of Catholic communities at the local level'.<sup>136</sup> Catholicism was expanding and with it came sectarian violence. Violence was met by violence. The Irish were often at the forefront in defending their territory and Church. The newcomers were not pacifists by tradition and resisted intimidation. It has been claimed that throughout the world: 'the Irish sustained their reputation as mighty fighters in the cause of the Church'.<sup>137</sup> Statistics from Walton Gaol in Liverpool, particularly the role of women combatants, confirm this claim.<sup>138</sup>

The sectarian environment from which Liverpool Archdiocesan priests emerged was an intense experience.<sup>139</sup> The *Courier* reported: 'The scum of Irish popery, abundantly thrown into that great city, [Liverpool], is the very element that is, and has been for half a century, demoralising that and all our large cities. The influx of semi-savages brings all the turbulence and disorder of Popish Ireland with it'.<sup>140</sup> These civil experiences were formative and can now be drawn into chaplaincy life. Fr Gillett of Liverpool had no known Irish connections but worked within the Irish community in the Everton and surrounding districts of Liverpool, the epicentre for much of the sectarian strife and violence. Fr McBrearty worked in the Tyneside area before the war for the Hexham Diocese, and he too saw sectarian violence, albeit attenuated compared to Liverpool. It is noticeable that these priests who became chaplains, both from different diocesan and military units, shared a friendship through the war. Fr Gillett wrote: 'After, the chaplains sit down to supper in the Club - a great time. What a joyous gathering when priests get-together. Doss down with Fr McBrearty<sup>141</sup> for the night'.<sup>142</sup> Ushaw seminarians and newly commissioned chaplains were common denominators, but so too was sectarianism and it entered into the chaplaincy experience. The Redemptorist, Fr Wright, will be shown to directly address sectarianism and the reveal the attitudes of the Liverpool Irish Regiment with respect to perceived anti-Catholic action by the military. Sectarianism openly persisted in Liverpool into the 1960s as Cardinal Heenan's experiences will later testify.

Historians such as Snape and McLeod, who pay less attention to regional or micro-data, tend to create convenient generalisations which fail to recognise trends. This presents a danger of distorting the true picture at the local level. Ethnic or disadvantaged groupings are vulnerable in this type of historiography, hence, the statement that: 'Catholicism in England

<sup>136</sup> Jonathan Bush, *Papists and Prejudice: Popular Anti-Catholicism and Anglo-Irish Conflict in the North East of England, 1845-70* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 235.

<sup>137</sup> Hales, *The Catholic Church in the Modern World*, p. 243.

<sup>138</sup> Appendix 9.

<sup>139</sup> Liverpool as the Northern Province became an Archdiocese in 1911.

<sup>140</sup> Neal, *Sectarian Violence*, p. 165, quoting *The Liverpool Courier*, (16<sup>th</sup> February 1855).

<sup>141</sup> George McBrearty, Hexham Diocese and 24<sup>th</sup> Tyneside-Irish Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers. Gillett was to be attached to the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Liverpool Irish, in the Kings Liverpool Regiment, who were drawn from his working district, until an illness changed the arrangements.

<sup>142</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (10<sup>th</sup> June 1917).



and Scotland at the beginning of the twentieth century was still to a large extent “a religion of the slums”,<sup>143</sup> has undoubted truth yet it is too static and generalised, repeating the mistakes of M. G. Smith in 1965. As Eriksen has noted: ‘Smith has been severely criticised for regarding ethnic<sup>144</sup> groups as static, as well as for reifying culture’<sup>145</sup> [seeing cultures as fixed and closed systems]. This inert view fails to detect modernisation such as the advances made in education, social provision, and church building by the turn of the century. Industrial British society was itself slum based, irrespective of any religion or none, but a broader middle class was emerging from the initial slum inhabitants.<sup>146</sup> The root causes of the slums namely: avaricious landlords, the demands of production, low and unsecure wages, no housing policy, badly built housing, poor or non-existent education and so on, are rarely seen as causal in this type of remark. In any event slums and poverty were only one side to the Irish-Liverpool experience. Peter Doyle’s extensive study of the Liverpool Archdiocese represents a more considered approach:

In the eighteenth century there were Liverpool-based Irish Catholic ship owners whilst other Irish immigrants were to be found in all social levels of the town. By the mid-nineteenth century there were Irish merchant families to be found in the wealthy Abercromby Square area and about 7% of all merchants, bankers and businessmen in the town were Irish by birth or descent. The important and lucrative cattle trade, for example, was dominated by the Cullen’s, brothers of Dublin’s Cardinal Cullen.<sup>147</sup>

Moreover, Oliver Rafferty suggests that Snape’s: ‘colourful, if somewhat misleading phrase, a “religion of the slums” is driven more by the lack of success from the Anglican and Nonconformist Churches at that time’.<sup>148</sup> Despite Rafferty’s intervention, it cannot be denied that there was appalling housing and economic deprivation in Lancashire, epitomised in Liverpool and Manchester slums. If there had not been then the philanthropic societies and reform agencies, often Church led, would not have existed. The slums were not the sole domain of Catholics. Slums were also the last resort, or sometimes the first resort, for people of all religions and unbelievers. Workhouses, or homelessness, were hardly attractive alternatives to the slums for the poor and destitute.

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<sup>143</sup> Snape, *British Catholicism and the British Army*, p. 341.

<sup>144</sup> Ethnic is described as ‘belonging to or deriving from the cultural, racial, religious, or linguistic traditions of a people or country’ - <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ethnic> - accessed 16th August 2014.

<sup>145</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, p. 49.

<sup>146</sup> As a random reference of class, a sample of priests with mostly Lancashire connections can be seen in Appendix 7. It is not meant as a definitive study, but is illustrative of the move upwards on the social scale, for many working class Catholics at this time.

<sup>147</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 36.

<sup>148</sup> Oliver Rafferty, ‘Catholic Chaplains to the British Forces in the First World War’ in, *Religion, State, & Society*, 39 (March 2011) 34.

Poverty by itself did not stop social advancement and it is misleading to depict poor Catholics simply as miserable interlopers damaging the fabric of Old Lancashire Catholicism. Over time, quite the reverse happened. This took place through the new energy which propelled the conservative Catholic ways into the modern age. It was above all education that became recognised as the means for self-improvement. The clergy and parishioners funded and built the schools necessary. Nuns specialised in the delivery of primary and secondary teaching, as did some Diocesan and Religious priests. Many of the nuns and priests were Irish, or from continental Europe. The expansion of the Catholic population, particularly but not exclusively in Lancashire, created a new energy which fostered social reform on a grand scale. Despite the particular difficulties posed by the Famine, the Catholic Church was revitalised by the poor. They initially funded the Church which underwent impressive social expansion.<sup>149</sup> The Church was not slow to reciprocate. Bishop Bernard Ward,<sup>150</sup> (whose father W. G. Ward was a convert and a renowned Catholic historian from a wealthy land owning family), commented:

Irish immigration after the Great Famine, affected the future of Catholicism in this country more than even the Oxford Movement, for it was the influx of the Irish in 1846 and the following years which made our congregations what they are and led to the multiplication of missions....for example, go to East Anglia, whither the Irish hardly penetrated, and see the desolate state of those counties so far as Catholic religion is concerned.<sup>151</sup>

The Catholic Church understood the pressing human needs of late Victorian society, and as Whiteside and Casartelli have demonstrated, anticipated state social provision in many areas. This self-awareness was fortified by external stimuli: 'The inexorable growth of collectivism in the nineteenth century as the government assumed increasing powers of intervention in social and economic relationships'.<sup>152</sup> Responding to the threat of state intervention or interference, as many Catholics saw it, the Catholic Church engaged in social provision to develop education, health, minimisation of destitution, and much more. Funding was not entirely raised from the poor. Increasingly finance was augmented by the new Catholic middle class, further supplemented by individual and often generous contributions by wealthy Catholics. State funding was patchy and resisted when there were conditions attached, yet almost inevitably state funding gradually took over from Catholic provision. These were pragmatic collaborations. The notion of kindred spirits would take longer to achieve. Nonetheless, '...the

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<sup>149</sup> LAA. Archbishop Whiteside of Liverpool made cogent arguments of the advantages that the education of Catholic soldiers had over their Protestant counterparts, emphasising that it was the poor who had paid. Pastoral Letter, Ecclesiastical Education Fund, (31<sup>st</sup> January 1917).

<sup>150</sup> Bernard Ward became the first bishop of the newly appointed Brentwood Diocese in 1917.

<sup>151</sup> Gwynn, 'The Irish Immigration' in Beck, *The English Catholics*, pp. 270-1.

<sup>152</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 158.

Catholic community had become less inward looking, better educated, more socially aware and more loyally Roman'.<sup>153</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, a new socio-religious fusion in Lancashire had emerged.

Developing education was without doubt the primary approach to advance Catholicism within a modernising society. It was also the absolute line of demarcation between secular and religious power and authority. Catholics consistently insisted on their right to educate their children in their own faith. Fearing the potential of leakage or proselytism attached to any alternative government initiative, and forever mindful of government tinkering, they drove their own systems. This meant supporting education from wholly or partial Catholic sources, even at a time of economic weakness for the majority of Catholics. There was a constant nervousness of the fear of a Protestant reversal of relaxation towards Catholics, and at the same time an absolute resolution to stand firm on education.

The education system provides the litmus test for understanding the emergence of a Catholic middle class. Social mobility can be demonstrated by studying three examples of Catholic secondary education in the early 1900s in Table 1. The majority of fathers clearly had the means to afford their sons education. It is not known to what degree these boys were immigrants, but they were all Catholics. This evidence creates problems for devotees of the concept of 'religion of the slums'.<sup>154</sup>

#### **The Catholic Institute Liverpool 1905**

Occupations of fathers	%
Professional/Independent	8
Merchants, bankers, etc	12
Retail Traders	18
Farmers	0.5
Clerks etc.	37
Elementary Teachers	1
Artisans	12.5
Not stated	11

#### **St Francis Xavier's Liverpool 1904**

Occupations of fathers	%
Professional/Independent	16
Merchants, bankers, etc	11.8
Retail Traders	31
Farmers	1
Commercial Managers etc	30
Elementary Teachers	0.2
Artisans and Labourers	10

#### **Catholic College Preston 1904**

Occupations of fathers	%
Professional/ Independent	9
Merchants/Manufacturers	14
Retail Traders	32
Commercial Managers etc	18
Artisans and Labourers	12
Not stated	15

**Table 1**

There were also worrying internal Catholic bigotries in Lancashire. Protestant resistance was not the only hurdle for Irish Catholics to overcome. The Old Catholic attitudes will be shown to be at best, slow to realise the value of the Irish in enlarging Catholic development, and at worse, every bit as intolerant as some Protestants had been. It took time to recognise the energy that the poor contributed to the cause of Catholic expansion. The Lancashire episcopacy was shackled by pre-existing mindsets which created an unchallenged and conservative *status quo*. This was not an era of radical action and even less of democratic intent. This unfortunate state of affairs between Irish and Lancashire Catholicism will be explained in the context of social, industrial, and historical developments. In Lancashire, recusancy, which had been a bulwark to help preserve Old Catholicism since the penal times, was resistant to newcomers. Despite that, it was not easy to ignore the increasing demands of a society restless for a move towards democratisation which was itself the inevitable result of modernisation brought about by industrialisation. These challenges to the existing state of affairs continued during and after the Great War.

The Irish were subjected to continual harassment and prejudice.<sup>155</sup> There was friction between English and Irish Catholics from all strata of society. Working class Catholics resented occupational competition, whilst traditionalists resented change and being saddled with the proletariat, as this example shows:

At a house party at the Marquis of Westminster's, the Marquis attempted to spare embarrassment caused at dinner by disparaging remarks about Roman Catholics. He thought he may assuage the feelings of, 'That typical grand lady from Northumberland Mrs Charlton', by mentioning that she was a 'Roman Catholic lady'. She, however, retorted at once: 'Yes, but an English Catholic, not an Irish one, which is all the difference in the world. English Catholics are responsible beings who are taught right from wrong, whereas Irish Catholics, belonging to a yet savage nation, know no better and are perhaps excusable on that account.'<sup>156</sup>

The arrogance, indifference and constrained 'empathy' from this 'Roman Catholic lady' appears shocking, especially in the light of her avowedness to be a 'responsible being'. Her religion's theologies run contra to her utterances: 'Rejoice with those that rejoice, weep with those that weep. Live in harmony with one another: do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly'.<sup>157</sup> There are other interpretations other than the religious. Colonial theories suggest that her attitudes are the very snare of the coloniser upon herself. In other words, that Mrs

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<sup>155</sup> Irish Catholics were particularly conspicuous as they tended to live in ghettos, share religious events and socialise together. They also shared cultural characteristics, none more so than the Irish accent if not the Irish language.

<sup>156</sup> Denis Gwynn, *A Hundred Years of Catholic Emancipation* (London: Longmans, 1929), Chapter 1X.

<sup>157</sup> J. P. Dewis, citing Rom 12: 14-16a in, *Morning and Evening Prayer: The Divine Office* (London: Collins, 1976), p. 532.

Charlton by projecting colonial ascendant values, became indoctrinated with the very values she supposedly despised, she became the colonised. D. K. Fieldhouse described this theory as: 'The very basis of imperial authority was the mental attitude of the coloniser [on themselves]'.<sup>158</sup> Perhaps she was simply ingratiating herself with the English social order, and if so, that does not project a morally desirable or mature society. In any event, the Irish were jettisoned for English Catholic comfort, although it should be acknowledged that her prejudices were not in the sole ownership of her class.

The Irish were also despised by English Catholics in general,<sup>159</sup> as John Redmond wrote in 1910: 'The English Catholics...have always been the most bitter enemies of Ireland. Why, I do not know....We have fought their battles, we emancipated them....but not even the Orangemen in Belfast today are more bitter opponents of the cause of Irish freedom than are the average Catholics'.<sup>160</sup> This rueful observation suggests, by his reference to Orangemen, that it was a working class enmity towards their co-religionists. It confirms that the incumbents were not ready to concede to the newcomers without a fight, and serves to illustrate the extraordinary contradictions and conflict within Catholic society at this time.

The concept of an all-embracing British Catholicism within this environment is incongruous if not derisory. There can be no doubt that the Catholic Irish had many battles to fight from friend and foe alike, and had to contend with ethnic and religious prejudice, as Buchanan states: 'Catholic immigrants in the nineteenth century were made to feel alien within British society on both religious and ethnic grounds, and this acted as a check on their assimilation into it'.<sup>161</sup> Time allowed fusion between exiled Irishmen and indigenous Lancashire Catholics to develop slowly, nevertheless, it did happen, healing the divisions as McLelland has noted earlier. When the strength of both Irish and Lancashire Catholicism were brought into collision in the 1850s, these first awkward clashes gradually formed a confluence and then a synergy, by the early-twentieth century they had effectively coalesced. Lancashire provided the platform for analysing this joint experience. These changes created a unique and recognisable Lancashire Catholic experience with its own distinctiveness, within the existing conventional Irish or English Catholic Churches. Catholicism was stronger in Ireland and in Lancashire than in any other parts of Britain, and always had been, and this commonality provided at least part of the basis for the new fusion.

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<sup>158</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 11.

<sup>159</sup> He does not define English Catholics but as Liverpool was highly supportive of Irish politics, and voted for T. P. O'Connor as MP for the Irish Nationalist Party until 1929, Lancashire Catholicism, or at least Liverpool-Irish Catholicism, might as a result, be excluded from these criticisms.

<sup>160</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 93.

<sup>161</sup> Buchanan and Conway, *Political Catholicism*, p. 252.

There was yet a third classification of men who straddled both Irish and English imperatives. These were Irish priests who had come to live and work in England and volunteered as chaplains. They were Irish by birth, culture, and probably sentiment, but remained English by mission. The particular sets of problems which these men had to face reflected both their place of birth and, on occasions, their adopted homes. Here the Irish accent is as much a beacon attracting prejudice as is colour in an African context. Accent will also be shown to have generated anti-northern chauvinism and some of these men experienced both sets of prejudice. These partly English, partly Irish men, have been totally ignored by all historians and this study gains more pertinence by their inclusion. The use of identity was not simply to explain the individual place of belonging for a chaplain. It was a flag on which bias of a national or regional dimension might be planted.

Poignantly, the determining of one's own identity, whether English, Irish, or some composite of the two, also occupied the thoughts of some chaplains. This was a particularly complex issue due to the inter-connectivity of priests on both sides of the Irish Sea, such as shared seminary and missionary friendships. The Society of Jesus, for example, had Irishmen in the English Province and Englishmen in the Irish Province. This could generate identity questions at war, especially after the events of 1916. Fr Page SJ was born in India, but educated in Tasmania and Belgium. Of English parents, he was a declared English patriot who found himself in a quandary: 'My last Provincial [Irish] recognised that a full-blooded Englishman was out of place in Ireland'.<sup>162</sup> Working in the Irish Province he became disenchanted with the rise of Sinn Féin and anti-English sentiment. He transferred to the English Province although his identity definition was yet more complex. Whatever the reality of his birth, in essence he was to become a Lancastrian at heart, and wrote as such to Rawlinson at GHQ: 'You sent me here chiefly for the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment as I come from Preston'.<sup>163</sup> It will be shown that Fr Page was repeatedly impressed by Lancashire troops as examples of spiritual excellence and he was not alone with these sentiments. His post-war work, after being attached to the Army in Russia until 1921, was the development of St Warburge's Church and community in Preston. The Catholic Church asserted itself as the Universal Church, but the identity of its priests within the religious homogeneity could create problems at the personal level. The regional, national, political, and above all personal aspects of Fr Page's example validate the research methods in this study.

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<sup>162</sup> DAA, 3235, Page to Rawlinson undated. Page was later transferred and never returned to Ireland. He became a priest in St. Walburge's, Preston after serving as a chaplain in the Russian post-war campaign.

<sup>163</sup> DAA, 3235 Page to Rawlinson, undated.

There were tensions between Religious and Diocesan priests in Lancashire, as elsewhere, whose reasons were deeply embedded in history. Hilton claims that as far back as 1590: 'The secular clergy received their own organisation but were involved in conflict with the regular clergy, both the Jesuits and Benedictines'.<sup>164</sup> Under the Stuart's this continued: 'The English clergy were divided into three increasingly organised but also increasingly competing orders, the seculars, the Benedictines and the Jesuits'.<sup>165</sup> In the eighteenth century, in a dispute over the Religious orders being able to hear Confessions of laypeople, Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) had ruled in the negative. The Diocesan's were pleased but Sweeney claims: 'He did not mention the heat, the jealousy, mistrust and suspicion that had been aroused. Nor did he foresee that vested interests and established rights together with a delightful vagueness about the powers of the regulars, was going to complicate the issue'.<sup>166</sup> Rivalries continued into the nineteenth century: 'Animosity towards the Regulars was strongest in the North of England....such phrases as: 'altar being raised against altar' and: 'open war' between the two sets of clergy, the annihilation of subordination to episcopal authority'.<sup>167</sup> R. W. Faber preached in 1853 that: 'Secular clergy were the life of the Church, whilst the Regulars were only its ornament. The Church could exist without the latter but not without the Seculars whom Christ himself had founded'.<sup>168</sup> The tensions continued and in the 1870s Bishop Vaughan of Salford felt the need to assert his authority over the Society of Jesus: 'He was jealous of his episcopal authority, forbidding the Jesuits to open a school in Manchester'.<sup>169</sup> Dom Bellenger OSB writing from within the debate explains his reading of the role of Religious orders and recognised ancient conflicts:

The contribution of the male religious [Religious orders] to the life of the English Church has been a great one, even if it has been delivered in a diffuse and sometimes haphazard way and is difficult to quantify. It is the nature of the beast. Among the charisms in the Church the various societies of men are not part of the hierarchical structure, indeed they have often been in conflict.<sup>170</sup>

With regards to life in the trenches, when a Catholic Diocesan chaplain remarked: 'Please not another Jesuit', the potential ancient rivalries between Diocesan and Religious order priests in England were resurrected.<sup>171</sup> It will be demonstrated that despite Doyle's claims that: 'The

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<sup>164</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 25.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>166</sup> Sweeney in Beck, *The English Catholics*, p. 123.

<sup>167</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 145.

<sup>168</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p.45. (R. W. Faber, not to be confused with F. W. Faber, of the Oratory).

<sup>169</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 100.

<sup>170</sup> Adrian Bellenger, 'Religious Life for Men', in *Without the Flaminian Gate*, eds., McLelland and Hodgetts, p. 142.

<sup>171</sup> DAA, 3234, Hessenhauer to Rawlinson, (11<sup>th</sup> July 1916). He was appealing against being sent another Jesuit for him to place. The date has significance in later analysis.

survival of Catholicism in Lancashire in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries owed a great deal to the active and often heroic ministry of Jesuits and Benedictines',<sup>172</sup> variances remained between the two strands of Catholic priesthood, Diocesan (secular) and Religious. These binary attitudes found expression under stress. Nonetheless, as has been argued, any enduring enmity between the two in combat situations was small and not totally proven, which supports the theory of reconciliation for the majority.

Practicalities are one thing, sentiment is quite another. The world was changing but a study of chaplains will show that mindsets had a longer journey to travel. Some bore the brunt of social, class, racist, and snobbish attitudes and behaviours, largely from fellow chaplains.<sup>173</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter outlines the first half of the structure developed to comprehend the formative years of these young men and their place in Catholicism in Britain. Its purpose is to pave the way for analysing chaplains' attitudes and actions in the Great War. It should be noted that the idea of this analysis originated from first examining primary sources. These exposed distinctly un-Christian attitudes such as snobbery and racism, which called for satisfactory insights into the influences that helped create them. The narrative has not been designed to add drama to the fundamentals, rather to understand which principles created the drama in certain individuals. It is designed to portray the personal experiences of chaplains as the result of geographical, historical, social, and episcopal forces at work in their formative years. The realisation of Catholic hierarchy's ambitions was a result of searching for these clues to individual behaviours, a bi-product of this person-centred study.

In Ireland, 1850 marked the introduction of Ultramontanist and the painfully slow modernisation and recovery of society from devastating famine. In England, 1850 signalled the restoration of the hierarchy, the continued reform of anti-Catholic legislation within a sectarian climate, and the rumbling internal strife from challenges within society and within the Church. Lancashire had all of these elements within its boundaries and experience, and often in extreme proportions. It has been necessary to delve into these experiences from both geographical and historical perspectives. The term 'British Catholicism', for example, has been exposed as wholly inadequate to explain the diversity which existed both nationally and regionally within the political entity of Britain in these years. The caveat is the omission of a

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<sup>172</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 134. Peter Doyle and John Hilton provide the most authoritative modern accounts of Liverpool and Lancashire Catholicism respectively. Adrian Hastings also has a good and accurate grasp of these histories but they are restricted within his much larger historical scope.

<sup>173</sup> Chapter 6.



national study of Scotland, and a microscopic study of all regions in England and Wales. The Catholic religion was robust and self-assured in Ireland, noticeably unsure of itself in many parts of England, and as might be expected, a combination of both in Lancashire. It has been shown that these distinctive strands of Catholicism existed, each with its own social, economic, and power derivatives. The inter-relationships vied with the realities of the social and class systems on which they were based, releasing in turn, negative and positive characteristics. A chronology has been established showing the different phases of development from 1850 through to the start of the Great War. The resultant attitudes and behaviours of chaplains and their episcopacies will materialise later.

Lancashire and Irish Catholic traditions with their strong Catholic representation encompass both distinctions and similarities. This study is, therefore, not only defined by difference but also by fusion and common interest. Lancashire Catholicism by the Great War, incorporated both Irish and existing Old Lancashire Catholicism, and together they exhibited the partial healing of the schisms present in the preceding recent years. This synthesis between both expressions of Catholicism was not always easy, consistent, or popular, and did not happen overnight. However, the progress made through education and commitment, left an indelible impression which will be abundantly clear at the Front. This was not a consistent English Catholic experience. A certain lack of Catholic tradition, or communal involvement, meant that many southern Catholic troops were exposed to potentially tragic spiritual exclusion. This important theme will be developed later.

The bishops had to steer the ships of Catholic secular advancement to safe harbours. As the war progressed, Irish and English hierarchies were not necessarily on the same course. The Irish hierarchy will be scrutinised in chapter five whilst the English hierarchy continued with its policies of garnering social and political acceptance within the Protestant state. In Lancashire the bishops had developed a parallel course for approximately fifteen years, attempting to accommodate all classes, and although the strong Irish influence had created a characterful amalgam with indigenous Lancashire Catholics, it should be remembered that their political aims remained part of the overall English ambition.

The difficulties examined are only part of the overall Catholic picture. The accent on the formation process has so far been pessimistic. The unfortunate elements of the Catholic experience sometimes reverberated in poor chaplaincy attitudes at the Front. This is a disproportionate judgement which will be properly adjusted as the thesis develops. Chapters Three and Four address the role of chaplains, and it is here that the positive aspects of these early years, comes to the fore. The regularisation of the clergy and Rome's standardisation of

liturgical, devotional, and other religious practices and discipline, was a great boon to both Irish and English Catholics and clergy, and brought them under one roof despite the schisms in society. The chaplains will assume centre stage and the limelight will properly illuminate the strengths of their formative years.

The next chapter is directly concerned with the priesthood. It will be argued that education and the sense of mission become crucial to priestly development, and here there is little room to manoeuvre in interpretation. This second half of the structure completes the determining process, as young novices continued their education and matured into men, priests, and finally chaplains. They were preparing for mission, wherever the Pilgrim and Universal Church needed them, in this instance the bloody, cruel, and tragic Great War. Any developments taking place outside the seminary walls were to a great extent peripheral at this stage of their development. Both chapters are distinctly different from the rest of the thesis which progresses the research and analysis away from home to the combat zones, although political ambition will re-emerge in chapters five and six.

## Chapter 2

### From Boyhood, to Priesthood, to Chaplaincy

### Chaplains Personal Formative Years

### EDUCATION, MISSION, TRAINING

The second part of the formation process described as section one, now progresses to the development of young men into priests and then chaplains. This takes place not in the cauldron of civic and religious transformation recently described, but within the context of their protective yet demanding seminarian experience. The bishops had previously experienced the same educational systems as novices, and retained an interest in the development of their protégés.<sup>1</sup> This chapter is dominated by the creation of young pilgrim priests. Once ordained, their work as chaplains was shaped by the effectiveness of their Catholic priestly education, training, and historic missionary tradition. The benefits and deficiencies of these systems are probed and an insight into their lives gained, in part, by scrutinising the school records and life of Fr Gillett at Ushaw, one of the diarists extensively employed. The Ushaw College to Ushaw Seminary experiences provide the template. Comparisons by sampling other colleges and seminaries will present a picture of the overall educational enterprise.

There are two strong Catholic pulses detectable. The first is the passion and commitment to provide the spiritual demands of Catholics through the ordination of more priests. The second is the longer plan to educate young men to carry out the expansion of the English Catholic Church. This dual stratagem was achieved by educating, then ordaining priests in sufficient numbers to promote their role as God's emissaries. By exhibiting high standards priests were living examples of good Catholicism. Army chaplaincy was not in the bishops' minds for seminarians on completion of their studies, nor was it what the seminarians had anticipated, but they both felt compelled to respond to Catholic soldiers who were dying in numbers. At the Front, both priestly and hierarchical motives converged. Good priests equalled good chaplains, and good chaplains by extension promoted Catholicism in a positive vein, thereby promoting Catholic strategic ambition. This was not a planned but a reactive response and prone to error. There was no great master plan, simply a genuine desire

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<sup>1</sup> Not in the physical sense, but bishops needed to satisfy themselves that their investment in education was worthwhile.

to spread the Gospel in historic pilgrim fashion, through a dedicated clergy.<sup>2</sup> Here in the great British project of winning the war, Catholicism was thrown into the spotlight, and it had to respond in such a way as to cement Catholicism within the English public's imagination.

The Catholic Church lays claim to be the Universal, Apostolic, and Pilgrim Church. It became universal through its pilgrim missionaries, tracing its origins back to Saints Peter and Paul, and the apostles.<sup>3</sup> Bringing the Gospel throughout the world is not the exclusive domain of Catholics, but the long and historic Catholic tradition sets it apart from other denominations, thus defining its missionary ethos. St Peter's influence may be found in the preparation and discipline required in priestly education, and the fulfillment of the wider strategies of Catholic ambition as defined by the hierarchy. Pauline influence is both a theological and a missionary undertaking, reflecting the life of St Paul. Missionary ethos simply means spreading the Gospel. This may be achieved by a priest's core work which is not necessarily overt evangelism. Setting a good example, and celebrating the Sacraments, were the characteristics of Pauline chaplaincy. This found resonance at war: '...the impression remained that, with the exception of the Roman Catholics, who sought to inspire faith through personal example, chaplains were either unaware of what men were going through, or just plain hypocritical in their talk'.<sup>4</sup> Both the Petrine and Pauline traditions were subtly interwoven, however, a degree of separation is necessary to clarify the distinctions between education and missionary intent. This is an artificial partition for explanatory purposes only, for as a leading writer on missionary theory states: 'The Church is one and the training is one. There can be no isolation of the training in the full apostolate from all the rest a priest has to give. He is the cultivator of the vine and the tender of the branches'.<sup>5</sup> At war he accomplished both as will be demonstrated. Education and missionary philosophies together constitute Catholic priestly training and action.

The Petrine tradition within Catholicism demanded discipline, commitment, and strategic planning. Fulfilling the requirements of an expanding religion within a modernising society required the appropriate Catholic social and political strategies. Both bishops and priests had a role to play. Strategic planning was formulated by the bishops under overall

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<sup>2</sup> Creating a good impression by example, should not be confused with the more formal desire for the conversion of England.

<sup>3</sup> The iconography of the Catholic Church frequently shows both saints together, thereby, defining their unity.

<sup>4</sup> S. P. Mackenzie, *Politics and Military Morale: Current Affairs and Citizenship Education in the British Army 1914-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> S. Shaw, *English Studies in Missionary Practice*, ([n. p.], Missionary Union of the Clergy, [n.d.]). Document in the Talbot Library, Preston, filed alphabetically.

guidance from Catholic, particularly Vatican, social teaching.<sup>6</sup> Implementation of these plans was the task of priests. To build schools, hospitals, and other social institutions, not forgetting churches, required pragmatic and determined men.

The Pauline strand of Catholicism is missionary inspired, and embraced spiritual and pastoral duties, which were demanding in the busier parishes. There were many other missions to fulfil other than parochial work and the educational requirements were accordingly extensive. Seminarians were educated and trained for the delivery of consistent spiritual care, and were prepared for the exigencies of any eventual mission. These ranged from traditional evangelical work with the foreign and home-based missions, to the internal training of the clergy, and the need to educate and train priests as diplomats, scientists, accountants, lawyers, strategists, educationalists, and much more. These tasks in the Catholic context were not merely jobs but missions and part of God's calling. A priest was allocated a missionary role within the Church only after ordination, and whilst bishops or religious superiors might consider a priest's own preference, in the final analysis the choice was made on the grounds of suitability and need.

Priests were trained to high educational standards and disciplined to achieve their superior's strategic planning requirements, whether spiritual or practical.<sup>7</sup> When the Bishops and Religious Superiors laid the foundation stones, it was the priests who completed the bricklaying of spiritual and practical development, both Diocesan and Religious. St Peter's organisational aptitude was complemented by St Paul's missionary zeal.

### **Educational Institutions**

Pupils entered Catholic secondary education with a view to joining the priesthood if they could confirm or discover their priestly vocation.<sup>8</sup> Two colleges have been chosen as examples of Catholic pre-seminary provision. They are: St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, Durham, for prospective diocesan priests, and The Apostolic College of the Sacred Heart, Mungret College, in Limerick run by the Society of Jesus.<sup>9</sup> The former's detailed syllabus is comprehensive, whilst the latter's prospectus is illuminating. Ushaw took students at 11, Mungret at 14, and

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<sup>6</sup> Arguably the most important influence on the wartime bishops had been *Rerum Novarum*, which sought to alleviate class tensions, warn of materialism, the dangers of state over-interference, and the duties of both capital and labour.

<sup>7</sup> That does not automatically ensure that priests were aware of all the hierarchies' strategies although they were in tune with the sentiment. This is important because it will find its corollary at the Front with respect to English post-war political ambitions. Bishops were also products of the seminary and priestly educational life.

<sup>8</sup> Colleges and seminaries examined are samples of the overall educational system. There was more individuality between these institutions than can be expressed within space restraints. Clongowes or Belvedere might have been more obvious choices in Ireland but Mungret had a missionary purpose which is in tune with this chapter.

<sup>9</sup> Another reason is the well maintained records of both institutions at JAD and UCA respectively.

they both offered preparatory education for the priesthood for some six or seven years, by which time their vocations had been established, or not as was the case. Attendance at Ushaw preparatory college did not carry an obligation to become a priest but perhaps an inducement, or if sponsored by a diocese, an expectation. Students could then continue their training for the priesthood in situ. Students at Mungret were trained to go onto higher ecclesiastical studies or to take a commercial career. They were free to enter religious or diocesan seminaries after matriculation, but only those institutions with an established reputation for missionary undertakings.

Additionally diocesan seminary training at Ushaw, and at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Kildare, has been included for comparison in priesthood training. The ideals of each institute, and their syllabi, reflect the English and Irish diocesan experiences. Stonyhurst College was governed by the Society of Jesus, and aspects of the military have been included because of its particularly strong associations with the Officer Training Corps. Other colleges such as Belvedere and Clongownes in Ireland, and Upholland and Oscott in England, showed a remarkably consistent approach to educating young men as good Catholics first, and possibly priests at a later date. Each has its own distinctive qualities, yet the overall goals and means were much the same, so that Ushaw, Maynooth, and Mungret, represent a reasonable cross-section of preparatory education for the priesthood.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Apostolic College of the Sacred Heart, Mungret**

This Jesuit College in Limerick was designed as a school for missionaries whose prospectus stated that the college promoted:

....above all things to educate the Pupils in the Principles of the Catholic Religion, and to habituate them to faithful observance of its precepts. A course of religious instruction, comprising Scripture, Church history and Christian Doctrine, is obligatory on all. Special attention is paid to the improvement of manners and the formation of character. The object is to train boys for the Priesthood in order to increase the number of English-speaking missionaries throughout the world. The course extends over 7 years and begins with grammar and ends with philosophy. Thus the Mungret student is ready at the end of his course to enter upon the higher ecclesiastical studies.

It was very clear that Mungret was making both the man and the priest, and continued:

The qualities required are: Good health, good appearance and address, mental abilities above the average, sincere piety, a solid vocation to the Priesthood, and an earnest desire of the missionary life. The student is left free to join the secular priesthood or to enter a Religious order. Parents are required not to interfere with their son's vocation or to make any difficulty in taking him back if he is unsuitable for the apostolic life.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1 for a list of seminaries who trained more than 100 priests 1800-1914.

<sup>11</sup> JAD, 'Prospectus', Apostolic School of the Sacred Heart, Mungret, Limerick, 1915.

The emphasis on character and address generally reflected the societal standards set by Mungret and the wealth or class of its patronage, but as we will see with Fr Delaney, not exclusively so.<sup>12</sup>

### **St Cuthbert's College Ushaw**

Ushaw, the most northerly English Diocesan seminary at Durham, began in 1808. It has been chosen for the longevity of its existence and its strong northern diocesan flavour, attracting many of the Lancashire born pupils and seminarians.<sup>13</sup> It fits in with the Lancashire based study. Gillett's diaries establish the connection and supply a personal motif. The English pre-seminarian experience can be demonstrated by Ushaw College, before the 'green was crossed', or in other words the short distance which students walked from the preparatory to the seminary colleges to become priests-in-training. They made this transition usually at the age of 18 or 19.<sup>14</sup>

The educational experience for all boys at St. Cuthbert's College Ushaw was the same, so that building up a comprehensive picture of the Gillett brothers at college will suffice for the many. Fred Gillett, and his identical twin brother Harry, began their first year at the age of twelve in 1895.<sup>15</sup> Their year on year progress has been recorded, and with other future priests provides an interesting insight into their educational and sporting abilities. Their rudimentary class comprised of: Christian Doctrine, Latin, French, English, Mathematics, English History, Biblical History, Geography, Elocution and Gymnastics. Chemistry was added a year later, as was Greek History. The next year Physics and European History appeared. At the age of sixteen Roman History, and at seventeen Hebrew and elocution by private tuition (for all the boys) were studied. These continued for another year until seminary studies.

Neither of the Gillett brothers was an academic overachiever before seminary life.<sup>16</sup> Harry's results usually placed him in the middle of each class, occasionally drifting lower, although nearly always a place or two above Fred.<sup>17</sup> Fred turned the tables on his brother in sports and gymnastics, excelling at football and cricket and the Ushaw game of 'Cat', a Douai-inspired racquet game. Both brothers went on to have long and successful lives in the

<sup>12</sup> Fr Delaney was a working class boy from Dublin, refer to page 195 in this thesis, and in Thomas J. Morrissey, *From Easter Week to Flanders Field - the Diaries and Letters of Fr John Delaney SJ 1916-1919* (Dublin: Messenger, 2015) p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Upholland near Liverpool is a better geographical fit being in Lancashire. However, it was not as well-established as Ushaw at this time.

<sup>14</sup> For a survey of seminarians in England 1800-1914, see Appendix 1.

<sup>15</sup> Harry and Fred were ordained together and both became CFs. Harry's career in the Army was short, joining in late November 1918, his brother said: 'Harry pops in to say he is demobbed - lucky dog'. DAA, Gillett Diaries, (9<sup>th</sup> June 1919).

<sup>16</sup> The standard must have been high. Fred was always in the bottom three in French, but was able to give sermons in French and act as an interpreter in France, despite his poor academic results in the language.

<sup>17</sup> UCA. Close inspection of all the pupils' examination results from 'Ushaw College Diaries', 1882-1921.

priesthood in Lancashire, and illustrate the soundness of the overall scheme of their training and vocation.<sup>18</sup>

Although there was no evidence discovered to suggest that the outside world affected the pupils, the college authorities had no such comfort. It is worth recalling that the late nineteenth century was still an era where anti-Catholic sentiment could be re-ignited at short notice. This had implications for the seminaries as for education in general. Finance, and the potential withdrawal of the guarantee of religious freedom, remained constant concerns at Ushaw. Bishop Ullathorne of Birmingham, an ex-Ushaw student, expressed these fears whilst considering educational grants from the Government: 'Those springs within the machinery over which the Government holds the direct, the exclusive and perpetual control'.<sup>19</sup> Norman explains his views thus: 'He was sceptical of the grants as they were compounded by suspicion of the Government because of the traditional anti-Catholic prejudices of English Government, and suspicion of the rise of the power of the State as such'.<sup>20</sup> This attitude can also be traced to the Catholic Relief Act 1791 which prohibited the foundation of Catholic schools: '...but this was interpreted as applying only to schools concerned exclusively with the training of priests'.<sup>21</sup> Ushaw with its pre-seminary college attached, escaped a rigid interpretation of this act, although changes in government or public opinion were still possible. Nevertheless, with the threat of confiscation or expulsion diminishing, Ushaw continued to grow, albeit with the northern bishops also seen as unwelcome predators. Following the restoration of the hierarchy, some bishops tried to influence the college authorities and seminarians preparing for diocesan work.<sup>22</sup> It appears, nonetheless, that students were not affected and were able to dedicate themselves to their studies. It might also be argued that a seminarian might welcome the opportunity to introduce himself to either his future bishop if he was diocesan sponsored, or to canvas an opportunity for himself from any visiting prelate, and potential employer, if self-funded. Any mechanism for potential recruitment, or contact between bishop and seminarians within the seminary walls, remains undiscovered, if it existed. Human nature might assume, nonetheless, that a bishop and his future priest would establish some cordial contact, if even a short chat when a bishop visited to say Mass on a special occasion.

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<sup>18</sup> *Universalis Ecclesiae Sollicitudo*, 22 November 1914, in Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 224. Liverpool remained in Lancashire until boundary changes in 1973. New Diocesan boundary changes in 1924 meant the both the Gillett's left the Liverpool Archdiocese and joined the newly founded Lancashire Diocese at this time.

<sup>19</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 166.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>22</sup> David Milburn, 'A Convert in Residence', in *A History of Ushaw College* (Alnwick: Ushaw, 1964), Chapter 1V.



Both the Gillett identical twins were born in Lytham, Lancashire in 1882, and were later recruited for the Liverpool Diocese. Their father paid their fees and they proceeded from the college, across the green, to the seminary.<sup>23</sup> They were completely northern England trained priests, as opposed to those with additional continental education.<sup>24</sup> Having been accepted as seminarians the real work began. At least another six years of enclosed study lay ahead to realise their vocation. The subjects tackled now were: Natural Sciences, Philosophy (at least 3 years Christian Philosophy), Ecclesiastical History, Sacred Scripture. Later: Greek Philosophy and Criticism, Cosmology, Ontology, Psychology, Natural Theology, and Ethics. The Structure of Materials was followed by: Physiology, Pathology and the Ethics of Biology. Natural Sciences were accompanied by the advanced Scripture Study of the New Testament and further Ecclesiastical History. Theology was next studied including: Morals, Sacred Scripture, Dogmatism and Canon Law. By any standards this was an extensive educational programme. The rubrics and liturgy of the Church added to the learning process. Discipline was inculcated in the work and through the general routine of communal living. The whole intensity of Ushaw enveloped a life which was as far removed from outside influences as possible, although occasional engagement with the local agricultural and mining community meant that boys would have some experience of civic life.

Obedience and discipline were part of the design to prepare young men for the rigours of the priesthood. Mundane objects added to the conformity. Classrooms, and furniture and fittings, imitated similar educational establishments elsewhere and contributed to the total sum of regulation and strictness. Despite the hard wooden benches, angled wooden desks, and basic ink pens, there was a lot of work to get through. These were sparse times with long hours and strict codes of conduct, with the Crucifix overseeing the students duties. Ushaw discipline was strict and the schedule punishing. It was a cold and forbidding place situated high on the moors and susceptible to the North-East coast weather, luckily window panes had recently been installed when the Gillett's arrived. Boys and seminarians were awoken at 6 am and continued to be involved until 10 pm. Lessons were interspersed with silent meditation which included meal times. Most students had a short summer vacation but were expected, or forced due to transport difficulties, to remain at Christmas and Easter. It was a harsh regimen repeated in most seminaries and took the public school model a stage further. There was a stark difference between the two as I could find no evidence of corporal punishment. These

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<sup>23</sup> Mr Gillett senior, was a hairdresser with a small salon (1891 census). The information that he paid his fees was donated by Brian Plumb, Liverpool Archdiocesan Archives, who met the elderly Fr Fred Gillett before his death in 1969.

<sup>24</sup> Many priests attended foreign seminaries at Paris, Rome, Valladolid, Lisbon, and Louvain and so on, for part of their studies, and enriched their world experience and linguistic capabilities as a result.

young men were being disciplined, but they were also introduced to a degree of respect compatible with their future roles.

**Illustration 4<sup>25</sup>**



It was not always bleak for these young men. In keeping with the Catholic Ultramontane tradition of colour and majesty, the chapel was, and still is, a rich spectacle that surely enticed the young seminarians into their Prayers, Mass, Vespers, Benediction and other sacramental and devotional worship. **Illustration 5<sup>26</sup>**



<sup>25</sup> A photograph taken from a display in the corridors of Ushaw College, 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> A photograph of the chapel in Ushaw College, November 2012.

Illustration 6 <sup>27</sup>

The general health of seminarians was important, and although sample menus were not discovered, judging by the pictures of young priests food was at least adequate. Communal eating was all part of the process of discipline and conformity, and although seminarians ate in silence, this was not unusual in these times.

Ushaw was generally comparable to educational establishments elsewhere; however, a particularly repugnant ritual of scholastic retribution distinguished Ushaw from the rest, challenging the assertion of developing respect for these maturing young men stated above. Examination results were extremely important for seminary students. Economic pressure was one thing, but once a vocation was declared the added pressure to become a priest meant that poor results might jeopardise or seriously delay their ordination. Punitive measures were employed. Students awaiting examination results were required to congregate in ignorance and silence outside the auditorium which held seniors, staff, and those parents who could make the trip. The boy who came first in class was singly ushered in and told of the fact. The process was repeated until the very last boy entered to receive confirmation that he was indeed the last pupil in his class. This lengthy process was repeated for each subject. This was humiliation of the less able in front of everyone, and must have been a cruel spectacle. What was the purpose of such a system? The answer owes more to creating a disciplined environment than to intellectual improvement. Seminaries believed they needed to instil the discipline which was necessary for work after ordination as a priest. Fortuitously, this method

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<sup>27</sup> A photograph of the dining room, taken from a display in the corridors of Ushaw College, 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2013

of discipline appears to have stood them in good stead in their military mission where discipline, particularly under fire or when living in the most primitive of conditions, was necessary for survival. Very few chaplains, as will be shown, exhibited signs of indiscipline.

### **St Patrick's College Maynooth**

Maynooth may be considered an Irish approximation to Ushaw for the purposes of this study. In reality no two seminaries were the same, even if they shared subject areas to a great degree. Nevertheless, Professor Gwynn's comments with regards to Maynooth, holds sway with Ushaw, and helps define the differing aspirations, requirements, and abilities of seminarians. His observations are profound and aid the understanding of intra-Catholic priestly relationships and Catholic ambition. He crucially understands that a range of priests, from whatever background, were needed to fulfil Catholic expansion:

Maynooth, in its long tradition, had aimed always at producing zealous missionaries, rather than men of spectacular gifts and individual distinction like Wiseman, with his vastly different Roman training. They were not trained to be either diplomats or administrators, or scholars intended for Catholic universities. Their whole training and their subsequent experience on the English mission, whether in the congested cities or as pioneer missionaries in remote places, had been for directly personal work among their growing and precarious congregations. As such, they lived and laboured until death took them. Their monuments are to be seen in the flourishing churches and schools and institutions which have arisen from their personal labours, each man performing all that lay within his power while he lived, and relying on his successor to continue and to develop further what he had begun.<sup>28</sup>

At the diocesan seminary of Maynooth, the first year students matriculated in the following subjects: Christian Doctrine, Bible History, Music, Reading, and Elocution. By the end of the second year, Greek and Scholastic philosophy were added. Entering the Arts and Science route they needed Irish, Latin, English, Greek, and Mathematics or Physics. In the second year, French, German, Italian or Hebrew were compulsory. These languages were useful on foreign missions and occasionally at war. In essence Maynooth and Ushaw followed similar seminary blueprints as would other diocesan seminaries.

Those catering for Gwynn's diplomats, administrators or scholars had the opportunity to attend higher studies which extended their total education. It was a complex picture. Fr Looby, a Liverpool Archdiocesan priest committed himself to normal parish work, he was trained at St Joseph's Waterford and St Sulpice Paris. Others like Fr Gill SJ went to Clongowes, St Stanislaus College Tullamore, and Cambridge to study science. There is not a simple formula to explain which seminary a novice might aspire to, or to his definitive educational

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<sup>28</sup> Denis Gwynn, 'The Irish Immigration' in Beck, *The English Catholics*, p. 290.

plan. Distributed as they were into Diocesan and Religious priests, and then into geographic dioceses or provinces, young men were allotted according to ability and need. It seemed an intuitive process owing much to word of mouth or instinct rather than any official or scientific criteria, and as such impossible to verify. Nevertheless, it appears that senior clergy were proficient at talent spotting.

### **Military Connections**

#### **Comparative Roles of Ushaw College (Diocesan) and Stonyhurst College (Jesuit)**

There was a surprising amount of voluntary military conditioning and drilling at Catholic college/seminaries. The examples of Ushaw for anticipated diocesan students, and Stonyhurst College for students potentially for priesthood in the Society of Jesus, demonstrate the degree of commitment to militaristic activities. Moreover, episcopal backing was assured. Cardinal Bourne wrote a pamphlet for Lord Meath's Discipline and Duty Movement entitled: 'The Paramount need of Training in Youth', which set the Catholic hierarchy's tone.<sup>29</sup> Seminaries published their own magazines and included some type of war stories. The Boer War created the precedent. In an era where young boys played at war with their new tin soldiers, and joined quasi-militaristic groups such as the Boy Scouts, or the Catholic Boys Brigade, they were also regaled with tales of derring-do. *The Ushaw Magazine* of 1902 tells of a story where the enemy, the Boer, was almost less than human: 'The pioneers then dug a grave. It was hardly deep enough – *he was only a spy*'.<sup>30</sup> Although less gruesome, the seed of a potential future chaplaincy career was placed in the readers minds by the same magazine. An African War account from a Catholic chaplain to the forces, the Rev. Charles Swarbreck from the Liverpool Diocese, as with many of these accounts later in the Great War, tended towards the romantic and idealistic in a boyish spirit of good fun. Romantic place names, famous generals and no mention of the gore of war must have had an impact on impressionable boys and young men.<sup>31</sup>

The creation of Officer Training Corps was another matter, and ratcheted up the connection with the military another notch. This trend demonstrated Catholic loyalty as British citizens, yet the juxtaposition between the spiritual and violent is a vexed one. The following evidence suggests that the military was condoned at Ushaw, but encouraged at Stonyhurst. As not all students were destined for the priesthood, then there did not appear to

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<sup>29</sup> Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 161.

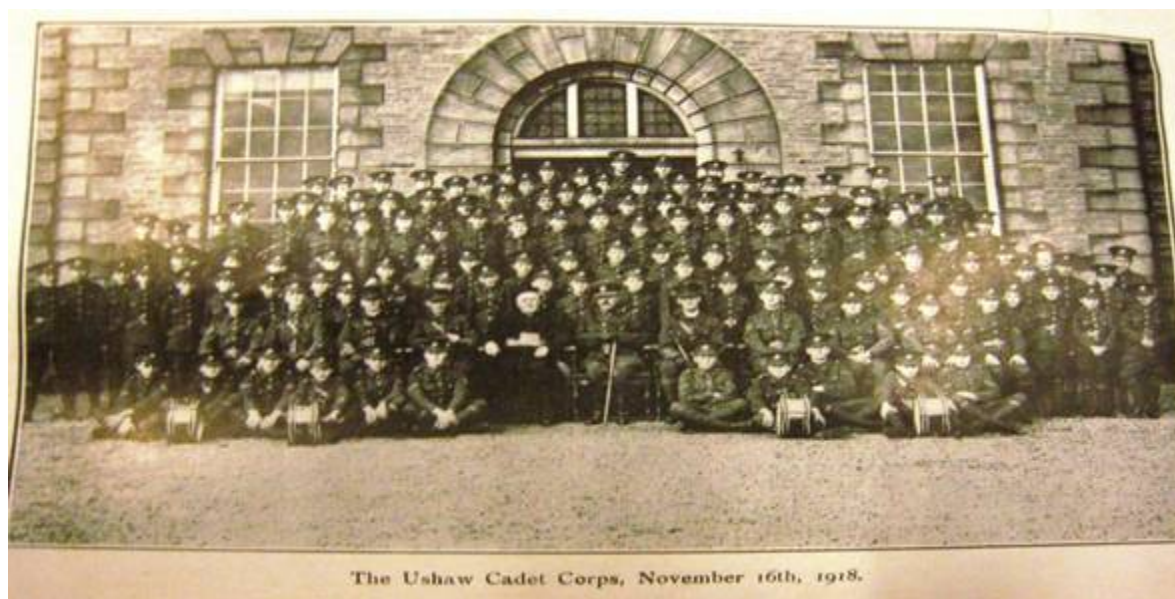
<sup>30</sup> 'On the River Tugela', *Ushaw College Magazine*, 12 (March-July-December 1902) 26.

<sup>31</sup> These magazines were available at college and often sent to former students who were invited to contribute articles. It is probable that the Gillett twins, studying at Ushaw at this time, would have read these articles.



be any serious debates on the matter, and seminarians followed their own consciences or college directives.

This account from *The Ushaw Magazine* suggests the importance that an OTC had for Ushaw: “It is not a far cry from the army to our newly established Cadet Corps. This has been talked about for some time, and we are happy to say that is now a very flourishing reality. Meanwhile drilling goes on with much eagerness, and we are very confident that the Corps will give a good account of itself. It numbers 140, its official title is: ‘The Ushaw Cadet Corps’.”<sup>32</sup> All was not as it seemed. The Ushaw OTC were late for action: ‘It is true that the Corps have not yet appeared in uniform, but we are hoping that it will not be long before the work of the tailors is complete so that we can have an official parade’. However, in the same issue of *The Ushaw College Magazine* which covered a span of nine months, this photograph appeared, taken on November 16<sup>th</sup> after hostilities were over. This suggests a certain lack of urgency, not to say commitment. The work of the tailors was completed in time for victory parades now that the war was over.



**Illustration 7**<sup>33</sup>

Milburn’s history of Ushaw does not mention the OTC and only makes passing comments on the war.<sup>34</sup> It appears that Ushaw quietly saw the war out and left the action to its former students, chaplains, and soldiers, in whom there was great pride for their military service as the following Roll of Honour testifies.

<sup>32</sup> UCA, The Officer Training Corps Ushaw in, *The Ushaw College Magazine*, March, July, December 1918, p. 25.

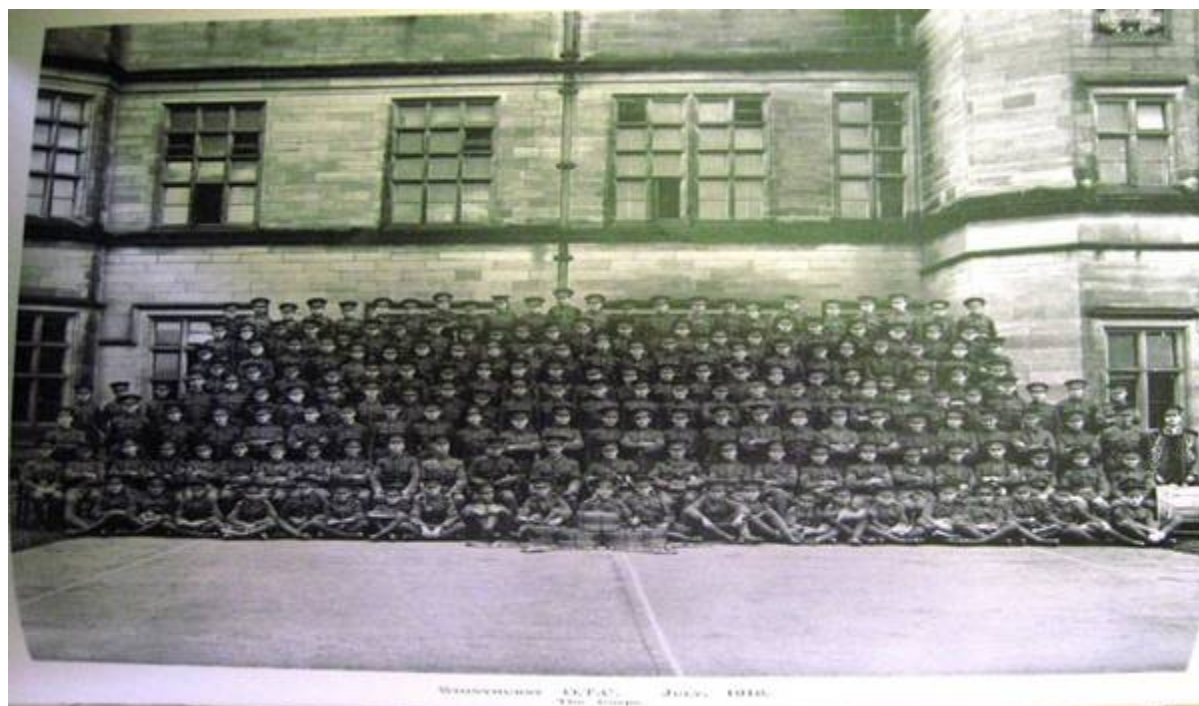
<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.33.

<sup>34</sup> Milburn, *A History of Ushaw College*.



Many Jesuit chaplains studied philosophy at Stonyhurst, including Fr Steuart one of the diary contributors. Stonyhurst represented the Jesuit tradition and with a soldier-saint founder, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, a militaristic flavour might be considered appropriate. The Jesuits had long had a reputation for organisation and discipline and this is evident in Stonyhurst's commitment to the military. As the following pictures taken in 1916 demonstrate, St Ignatius of Loyola's influence had lived on. The picture shows the boys as a well-drilled, smart group of young men with a distinct military appearance, (compare to Ushaw, illustration 7). The comparative standards of training and discipline between the two OTCs, is dramatic. Stonyhurst cadets were drilled by the East Lancashire Regiment, a local unit, and by 1915, 129 cadets had joined the forces.

**Illustration 9**<sup>38</sup>



Photographs in the college magazine showed drilling, weapon use, displays of athleticism, and outdoor living in tents, demonstrating the military nature at Stonyhurst awash with Muscular Christianity. The combined effect is dramatic for a college specialising in theology and philosophy. It may raise moral concerns but it impressed those who wished to claim that Catholics were doing their bit for the Army and the country. Many Jesuit chaplains were trained in this environment and had been OTC officers. For example: 'Tempest. An OTC officer who knows Army ways. Not strong but ought to fit in well in any post', and:

<sup>38</sup> SCA, *The Stonyhurst War Record*, (1925), within pp. 1577-695. Photograph page numbers not given.



‘Collingridge. Rides. OTC officer. Will do well’, and: ‘Montague. Rather wanting in initiative, a silent shy man and won’t set the Thames on fire. An OTC man’.<sup>39</sup>

The Catholic desire to establish itself in society benefitted by publicly demonstrations, but it was also fundamental that their spiritual obligations took precedence. The next photograph illustrates this well. The clerics lead, complete with flamboyant vestments and at prayer. The cadet soldiers make up the rear, smart and disciplined, carrying rifles, but very much in their place. That generally sums up the Catholic position, and specifically the relationship between spiritual and secular matters. The Corpus Christi Parade was both an important religious festival, and a public opportunity to show commitment to both God and the Crown, with God taking the lead.

**Illustration 10** <sup>40</sup>



The Church had created its own personnel resource pool to meet Catholic expansion. Young men were given a lengthy and broad education, which was generally unavailable to many of their generation. Not all students were destined to be priests but all students were expected to be good Catholics. All priests shared a similar, if not exact, educational experience, with discipline and routine being instilled as a matter of course. The Catholic Church was not in the business of creating radicals, but instead promoted functionaries and

<sup>39</sup> DAA, Ephemera 0960, Woodlock to Rawlinson, (21st May 1918).

<sup>40</sup> SCA, *The Stonyhurst War Record*, (1925) within pp. 1577-695.

men who could be relied upon to carry on the Pilgrim Church. Education, spiritual, and disciplinary needs were fulfilled.

There was not, however, the slightest mention of any emotional assistance to these sheltered novices. Such thinking was anachronistic in a society with a very different value system. The fact remains, how would they cope with women in a parish or with emotional crises in real life, either personally or in the community? Above all, as chaplains in the military, whom may *they* turn to? On the face of it, they coped very well in public without any emotional support, although all diarists confess to being lonely at times and one can only speculate as to their emotional private health.<sup>41</sup> They endured many sacrifices, and offer an explanation into the understanding of a priest's life and its chaplaincy equivalent. The majority of chaplains were conventional priests operating within an urban or rural parish in England or Ireland, trained for the missions ascribed to them by their bishops or religious superiors. These men had no military experience or inclination whatsoever,<sup>42</sup> and accepted hardships and suffering in return for the graces, happiness, and fulfillment from doing God's work. These were chosen men with a vocation and not simply educated men with a job.

### Mission

The importance of the missionary code should not be underestimated. When a chaplain went into no-man's-land to minister Extreme Unction, it was not just his vocation to celebrate the Sacrament, or to do his duty, it was also to fulfil his mission. This will be examined so that its relevance for chaplains can be contextualised. Understanding the Catholic position will give meaning to the chapters which follow. Traditionally, the Universal Church became so through the endeavours of men and women pilgrim missionaries. The message was established by Christ to his disciples when he said: 'As the Father has sent me, I send you'.<sup>43</sup> The Mass, whose Latin origins are: *Ite Missa est*, or 'Go, She is sent',<sup>44</sup> signifies the bringing together, or communion, of the congregation who are sent out to spread God's word, or as Aquinas stated: '*Quantum potes aude*',<sup>45</sup> ['Dare to do all that you are able to']. It was priests who were in the vanguard of missionary spiritual endeavour, and it was they who understood the traditions and expectations of the Catholic Church.

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<sup>41</sup> The cases of Frs Cagney, Galvin, Prevost and others later, hint at emotional unbalance but remain unproven.

<sup>42</sup> The activities of the Ushaw OTC suggested little commitment to the Army on behalf of future Diocesan priests. Gillett never mentioned any military interest at Ushaw, or in his diaries, neither does Drinkwater an Oscott trained priest. Fr Steuart, on the other hand, was Stonyhurst trained and continually referred to military rank, promotions, deployment, and training. He clearly mixes with men of war and the concept of Muscular Christianity.

<sup>43</sup> Radcliffe *Why Go To Church?* p. 196.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199. Origins cited earlier.

Newly ordained priests were often offered a post or mission commensurate with their aptitudes and skills. They were accommodated within overall Catholic opportunities or vacancies. Fr W. Doyle is instructive and his early missions included conducting workers retreats, and creating and publishing educationalist pamphlets.<sup>46</sup> His main ambition was poignantly: 'The almost certain conviction that I have a real vocation for the foreign mission'.<sup>47</sup> By foreign mission he was referring to the Congo which he enunciated in his 'long retreat'<sup>48</sup> in Tronchiennes in October 1907: 'If Jesus wants me to go to the Congo, I shall do more for souls there than remaining at home'.<sup>49</sup> Instead he was nominated by his Provincial Fr Nolan for Army chaplaincy. Fr Doyle excelled with fighting men and did so as an outstanding and brave priest, but not in the specialisms that had prepared him for peacetime mission.<sup>50</sup> This is a typical wartime situation and reflected the urgency to provide spiritual succour to the troops whose needs were greatest, and for whom chaplains were well able to provide. Any extra skills might be brought into use later as a distinctly supplementary role, as will become evident.<sup>51</sup>

On arrival in foreign war zones, confusion in deployment, the overall chaos of conflict, and the lack of preparation for this particular mission, meant that chaplains were to a great extent simply dumped into a general deployment pool and discharged to their duties according to necessity. This was not always successful, unfortunately conventional mission work and the Great War were not necessarily compatible bedfellows and mismatches were inevitable.<sup>52</sup> Two examples, Frs Gillett and Steuart, show how difficult it was to interpret orthodox Catholic priestly training and missionary vigour, within the military scenario. The common factor in both cases was their uneasy relationships with senior British Army officers. They were encountering Protestants in numbers for the first time and were not prepared. Having lived a life amongst Catholics now turned out to be their Achilles heel. Fr Gillett was uneasy dealing with the Army authorities. His superior education compared to the majority of the Army officers meant little. He was judged by established class-prejudices and snobbishness, sometimes coupled with clerical indifference or hostility, and this prevented him making successful headway in establishing a rapport with the upper echelons of the

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<sup>46</sup> A. O'Rahilly, *Father William Doyle SJ*, for example, *Vocations*, which sold over 100,000 copies, p. 80.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p53.

<sup>48</sup> Part of the religious stages of development a Jesuit undertakes.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p42.

<sup>50</sup> There was a benefit in his communication with soldiers through his previous experiences with the working classes of Limerick and other Irish urban centres.

<sup>51</sup> The obvious exceptions were at GHQ, where the Benedictine experiences in diplomacy had a natural fit. Others, such as language usage for interpretation purposes, were only marginal use of their specialisms.

<sup>52</sup> It will be shown that even Fr Steuart, for all his social skills and posturing, failed to break into the senior officer class. Yet it did not matter to the Catholic plan which was well under control by those at GHQ, through Benedictines, Young, Keatinge and Rawlinson. In that sense Steuart was a mismatch of resource and opportunity without strategic damage.

military. At higher officer level he floundered but with soldiers he excelled for it was here that his experience amongst the working class Irish community in Liverpool could be brought into play. His earlier life at seminary and as a parish priest, had prepared him for successful relationships with junior officers, fellow-chaplains, and soldiers. In other words, rather than defining his problems as a failure because of the class system, through which he had little control, his success should be marked by the easy way he could socialise and work with the rank and file, and junior officer class. His seminary training, background, and importantly, pre-war parish work were vindicated in his army mission. At the other end of the class spectrum, Fr Steuart's background and training identified him with the wealthier Catholic strata and he was equipped accordingly for the higher social levels. Alas, it was not that simple, his senior officers were invariably Protestants of which he had little knowledge or experience and he failed to gain advantage from his contacts and social position. Unfortunately for Steuart, he had little experience of the common man either and was constantly exposed to the awkwardness of dealing with soldiers with whom he floundered. Both chaplains administered their spiritual obligations with responsibility and care, but no one was prepared for the Great War and the new demands it made on its chaplains.

The English hierarchy constructed a complementary strategic mission for chaplains, whether chaplains were aware of it or not. There was no secondary, secular, hierarchical ambition at the start, but the English bishops soon realised the positive kudos that could be gained by good Catholic chaplaincy being reported in the press and elsewhere. The good name of Catholicism came to fruition by setting an example. This was not a plot or part of any covert proselytism.<sup>53</sup> It was simply good priestly practice building on pre-war policies. In that sense the missionary process continue but it was opportunism, rather than any pre-planned episcopal strategy, which sought to make political gain from their legitimate efforts. Taken together, Petrine and Pauline influences adapted to the war situation. Paul's theological and spiritual dimension was fulfilled. Peter's organisational and strategic dimensions were opportunist and reactive and tailored to meet English episcopal requirements.

The chaplaincy mission was both similar to other missionary enterprises in terms of sacramental care, but also different because of the extraordinary military demands of war. The priests' ability to deliver their religious and pastoral functions as Army chaplains was subject to an intense examination of the human qualities demanded in this astonishing conflict. The degree of convergence between the conventional Catholic spiritual mission and

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<sup>53</sup> Quite the reverse was true. For an account of the fears that Catholics had from Protestant proselytism in the North East, as elsewhere, refer Bush, *Papists and Prejudice*, p. 9, 132, 143, 157, 168, 175-6, 183, 187.

the specific requirements of the military mission will be analysed, and show that there was a real, yet incomplete, coming together of the two.

### Training

Formal chaplaincy training of Catholic priests as raw chaplains in World War One was the biggest non-event in their war experience. It simply did not happen: 'There are no Schools for padres',<sup>54</sup> claimed Fr W. J. Brown SCF, precisely describing the state of affairs for all chaplains regardless of creed.<sup>55</sup> In theory, formal chaplaincy training for Catholic priests was a luxury insofar as they had sufficient priestly training way above their fellow chaplains from other denominations. More importantly they had a missionary ethos, tempered over the centuries, which should have allowed them to adapt to any situation. However, this was not any situation. The Great War was not a mission in China, Venezuela, or indeed Liverpool or Cork. Chaplains, ministering to troops in a war where the scale, intensity, and violence were completely new experiences, would undoubtedly have benefited from knowledge of Army ways. Best practice, military etiquette, and the religious limitations which this war had uniquely imposed, were eventually negotiated by most of these men but they had to learn lessons the hard way. Some were fortunate to enjoy familiarisation with their military unit before embarkation to France, although these were a small minority, and no formal training was given even to those few chaplains. In fact, no plans for formal training have been discovered or evidence of discussions having taken place for such a proposition. Inexperienced chaplains, in common with many people in the Great War, simply had to make the best of the situation. These educated men had to rely on their priestly preparation, without the benefit of formal chaplaincy training, to deliver their sacred mission. If that meant subsuming their own personal pre-war missionary agendas for the war effort, then so be it.

In any case, not all chaplains would have needed chaplaincy training. Some commissioned chaplains were selected for home stations for the duration and performed their duties without experiencing a 'Jack Johnson' or a 'Minenwerfer'.<sup>56</sup> Their remit included hospitals, and army training and prisoner of war camps at home. Prisoners of war and hospital patients returning from war either sick or injured, were also dealt with by local non-commissioned clergy. This might suggest a planned co-ordinated system, but as most things in this war it was in fact a best-efforts and reactive response to the circumstances. Newly commissioned chaplains were sometimes fortunate to accompany their intended army unit at

<sup>54</sup> DAA, 3234, Brown to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> August 1918). Brown of the 38<sup>th</sup> Welsh Division was writing to Rawlinson ref Richmond as a means of mitigating bad chaplaincy behaviour.

<sup>55</sup> Church of England chaplains did have a 'school' built in 1917 but functioned as a respite facility.

<sup>56</sup> Types of German shells in WW1. A heavy German shell omitting black smoke, and a trench mortar, respectively.

the outset, as new formations were created from an assemblage of new recruits and officers. This should have yielded benefits for new chaplains to familiarise themselves with army life and provide an opportunity to create chaplaincy-army bonds. In reality this was not the case. Fr Gillett's correspondence illuminates the situation. He was to accompany his new unit, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Line 8<sup>th</sup> Irish Battalion of the Kings Liverpool Regiment. In reality, after a period in Ipswich, he became a base chaplain at Rugeley Camp with responsibilities for three reserve Brigades, whilst his army unit trained in a separate location. Here his role was conventional priestly work. He had no specific army or chaplaincy training or familiarisation and no contact with his men.<sup>57</sup> This was a missed opportunity but there was nothing in place and no apparent impetus to deliver any benefits of chaplaincy training. Chaplains were simply treading water until they were ushered to the continent. Fr Gillett contracted an illness which further delayed his embarkation, and he unavoidably became dislocated from his Lancashire regiment. This would have adverse consequences for his mission at the Front. He continued his priestly role at camp until fit again, almost as if the camp was simply another parish in Liverpool. He was as naïve about war chaplaincy after eight months of work at base, as if he had gone directly to the Somme, Arras, or Ypres, his eventual destinations.

Nothing changed in training terms when newly commissioned chaplains disembarked on continental soil. They were met at the ferry, or at a local headquarters, and directed either to a Base Hospital, or increasingly as the war continued, directly to a fighting unit. The exigencies of war and deployment informed that decision. Theoretically, reporting to Base Hospitals allowed a period of acclimatisation, perhaps a degree of training and chaplain assessment, but it mainly satisfied shortages at these hospitals at this time. The degree of acclimatisation was debatable and formal training non-existent. There was a significant difference from a Base Hospital in Boulogne to the active war zone in Albert.<sup>58</sup> Induction directly to a fighting unit became more common from late 1917, as Base Hospitals became the province of recovering or ailing chaplains. Severe chaplaincy shortages later demanded immediate Front line occupancy for new recruits.

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<sup>57</sup> RCBFA, Gillett wrote to Keatinge from Rugeley Camp, (17<sup>th</sup> March 1916), suggesting that chaplains should be deployed 1 per Brigade in these large permanent camps rather than congregating in local towns.

<sup>58</sup> SDA, Gillett's diaries, (28<sup>th</sup> June until 6<sup>th</sup> September) demonstrate a 'phoney war' type of existence in Boulogne at times, prior to going to the Front. For example: 'Fri 14<sup>th</sup> July 1916. French Republic Day - bunting all over the town. Shops all bedecked on the river. A half- holiday for the townspeople'. 'Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August 1916. Mass, then lolled about, great fun watching the marketing. Mistresses all out with their maids, who parcel things up and toddle away at the heels of their mistresses'. It changed when he joined his regiment: 'Thurs 28<sup>th</sup> September 1916. Visited the regiment resting temporarily in Martinsart Wood. Later toddled off to Albert to look around and see the wonder of the leaning Madonna. What a place Albert is. It was really my first site of a ruined village, terrible. Lunched in the fields close by and the while German shells were falling a little way off. Trudged off to Lancashire Dump in Aveluy Wood and watched the boys fighting their way over the Thiepval Ridge, to the left of the village. The Bosche guns were very active and all kinds of stuff was bursting over our troops'.

Military training progressed throughout the war. At war's finale Major-General Kennedy claimed that: 'The most important part of our training must be to produce commanders with the character and ability to turn unfamiliar conditions to their own advantage, and who will neither be crushed by the unexpected, nor afraid of the unknown'.<sup>59</sup> Kennedy's considered observations could not be more apt for Catholic chaplains who substituted non-existent formal chaplaincy training with these attributes of grit and innovation. At the onset of war, training was not an option for any chaplain across the denominations, revealing a lack of preparation and foresight which added to the confusion and haste of chaplaincy recruitment. This also holds true for the Catholic project. The strong Catholic seminary and pre-war schooling cultivated a certain degree of complacency, although in fairness to the bishops and professors at seminaries, they could not have anticipated that this war would materialise, even less the course it would take. Therefore, the demand for different skills and instruction required for army chaplaincy was not a realistic proposition. In truth they were simply overwhelmed as recruitment problems engulfed other considerations.

Despite apparent lethargy towards chaplaincy training provision, this thesis will argue that Catholic chaplains benefitted enormously from their long process of priestly formation. Fr Rawlinson concurred with this assertion, even if Fr Drinkwater was less than convinced, [At a chaplain's conference in Bethune June 14<sup>th</sup> 1917]: 'Rawlinson presided and said that every priest who comes to France already knows about his business, except one or two small points of military etiquette: which struck me as hardly true'.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, as they gained experience and practiced self-help, and their leaders belatedly formulated directives and advice, their overall effectiveness improved. In the final analysis, the lack of training although undesirable, was not a serious impediment to their success as army chaplains, but may have added to their personal discomfort.

Training Schools for Catholic chaplains did not exist, and nothing was to change throughout the war with regards to Catholic chaplaincy. Did the Church of England padres with a closer association to the Army, benefit from the military's long established policies on training? Yes, of sorts. The Church of England padres did have a training school set up in 1917 at St Omer.<sup>61</sup> It was known as: 'a bombing school for padres'<sup>62</sup> and developed along the lines of a respite or retreat centre. It provided the opportunity to communicate and meet with other

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<sup>59</sup> Corrigan, *Mud, Blood, and Popycock*, p. 407.

<sup>60</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (14<sup>th</sup> June 1917).

<sup>61</sup> This location was ironic for Jesuits. The School in Place de Victor Hugo, St. Omer, being close to the Jesuit College where they had been expelled in 1762.

<sup>62</sup> A. M. Brown, 'Army Chaplains in the First World War', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of St. Andrews, January 1996), p. 124.

Anglican chaplains, thereby raising morale and safeguarding emotional and moral sensibilities. In spite of that, it hardly functioned as a training school *per se*. Reverend Barry summed up the school as: ‘...it saved many a chaplain from mental and moral breakdown and sustained us all in our dangers and adventures’.<sup>63</sup> General Plummer was an enthusiastic supporter and could not resist the opportunity to give instructions how to preach: ‘Prepare carefully and be brief’.<sup>64</sup> He initiated a directive as Fr Drinkwater recalled: ‘... [The GOC] told the C. of E. chaplains to preach fighting sermons and to take their texts from the Old Testament’.<sup>65</sup> Military expediency notwithstanding, this may have been sound advice for a padre of the established Church, but would have provoked a reaction akin to mutiny from Catholic chaplains. Such incursions into their fundamental functions from secular and military non-Catholics were interpreted as interference, possibly a portent carrying heretical resonances for a minority of extreme chaplains, such as Fr Philip Oddie to follow. These sensitivities apart, the school was a non-Catholic facility, and open to gentle ridicule by Catholic chaplains. Fr Butler OSB a confidante of Rawlinson wrote this tongue-in-cheek, yet pertinent letter:

The other day I met a C. of E. chaplain who had just been ‘summoned’ to St Omer for a chaplain’s course consisting of a few days of ‘quiet thought and prayer’. It is notorious that we of the True Church are so far behind our separated brethren in new ideas – why have you not long ago organised some such system for us? – See to the matter at once. Remember the days must be quiet and the thought may not crystalize into words or deeds.<sup>66</sup>

Butler and Rawlinson, as cloistered Downside monks, were no strangers to quiet thought and prayer. His comments and attitudes may be considered sarcastic but should be interpreted within the friendly teasing which was apparent between these two, and also by Fr Paul Brookfield a fellow Benedictine. They were obviously comfortable to practice their humour and gentle irony within their own tight circle formed at Downside Abbey. They were also keen to separate the ‘True Church’ from the rest.

The desire, vision, resources, and arguably need for a formal school did not, therefore, exist. How then did Catholic chaplains cope? The alternatives will now be explored. There were a few directives but the dividing line between directives and information was thin. For instance: ‘The Use of Catholic Churches by non-Catholics’ and: ‘The Objection of Catholics to taking part in United Services’, were in fact clarifications reprinted from the Westminster

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>65</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (30<sup>th</sup> April 1918).

<sup>66</sup> DAA, 3234 A179 B17], Butler to Rawlinson, (6<sup>th</sup> March 1917).



Chronicle.<sup>67</sup> These simply restated the orthodox Catholic response to long-standing questions which war had reactivated. The situation regarding burials, more importantly the sacraments attached to Catholic burials, merely revealed the Catholic orthodox position. A new section defined the uniformity of cross-denominational registration and location of graves. Two publications emerged: 'Instructions to Chaplains Issued by the Adjutant General 1916, Location and Registration of Graves'<sup>68</sup> and: 'Direction of Graves Registration and Enquiries, Technical Instructions, 1918'.<sup>69</sup> Both directives dealt with practical rather than religious matters, and these were the limit of direction as such. There were some purely Catholic instructions referring specifically to changes in Catholic observance derived from Rome, for example fasting.

There was evidence of individual chaplains wanting some formal guidance from the top: 'A letter from a Chaplain to his Eminence Cardinal Bourne', in September 1915 anonymously asked for a system indicating where other priests are to be found to avoid duplication or dereliction of duty.<sup>70</sup> It was not a request for a manual and seems unrealistic given the nature of war and the need for secrecy; nonetheless, it does indicate a desire from a Front line priest to have some guidance from his Superior. It also indicates a serious 'grumbler'.<sup>71</sup>

A 'Red Booklet' was issued by the Army Printing and Stationery Service in January 1917. It does not give details of the author, yet is almost certainly from the pen of Monsignor Keatinge, probably without the collaboration of Rawlinson. It has Keatinge's officious style which is replicated in his correspondence in the Rawlinson Papers and particularly how he distances the clergy from the Army.<sup>72</sup> It has elements of Rawlinson's knowledge of chaplains but does not carry the same diplomatic composure which was his trademark.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, Fr Rawlinson's papers do not mention its compilation. The everyday military detail was outside Bourne's experience unless he acted as the ghostwriter, which given his high-profile personality and ego is highly unlikely. It may have been a composite effort, but its origins have

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<sup>67</sup> DAA, Ephemera 605-620.

<sup>68</sup> DAA, Ephemera, G.H. Fowke Adjutant General, (17<sup>th</sup> April 1916).

<sup>69</sup> DAA, Ephemera. Issued by Fabian Ware, Brigadier General, Director of Graves Registrations and Enquiries.

<sup>70</sup> DAA, 3238, Bourne to Keatinge, (16<sup>th</sup> September 1915). Although anonymous it was certainly the work of Fr Gosling. He repeated the same criticisms and in the same handwriting as below, (21<sup>st</sup> November 1917).

<sup>71</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Monk, (6<sup>th</sup> November 1918). When asked by the War Office if he wanted to retain Gosling: 'No. I do not consider him suitable to be employed on any Front. It is simply a matter of incompatibility. He is naturally a grumbler and no use around soldiers'. Rawlinson was not a man to cross, and by-passing himself to appeal to Bourne directly displeased him, he took his retribution.

<sup>72</sup> Keatinge did leave files but somewhere between the RCBF and RACD they have been mislaid. Nevertheless, there is sufficient correspondence at Downside Abbey to confirm Keatinge's style with assuredness. Distancing the religious from the military, confirms claims made later, that Catholic ambition depended on Army and, therefore, the establishment receiving Catholics in a good light.

<sup>73</sup> Stephen Bellis, 'The Rawlinson Papers' in, *The Downside Review*, 459 (April 2012) 1-26.

gone unrecorded. The preface states: 'This is not meant to be an exhaustive treatise on the duties of chaplains, but merely to give a few general ideas and practical hints which may be useful to a Catholic chaplain'.<sup>74</sup> This is an interesting publication, yet it did not satisfy everyone. Fr Gosling remarked on its delay into the field: 'The Red Book has, I know, now been issued, 2 years and 8 months after the beginning of the war!'<sup>75</sup>

Even though late, it did provide a good deal of information on army formations, attitudes to officers and men, and more specific areas of interest. The Army data was split into Division, Brigade, and Battalion, with the roles, demands, and deployment, being described in straightforward language leaving little room for misinterpretation. For example, regarding Divisional organisation it states: 'Having reported to the Division the chaplain (unless he is the Senior Divisional Chaplain) will not have direct dealings with the Divisional Staff'.<sup>76</sup> The arrangement of services is dealt with in detail, and brigade and regimental data is managed in a similar manner with the emphasis on organisation and deployment of chaplains' services. This information is supplemented with practical tips. Pages 6 and 7 bluntly defined the relationship between religious services and army necessities: 'There are certain works that cannot be interfered with, and the Chaplain must not expect the war to stop while he says Mass'.<sup>77</sup> Being posted to a Catholic Regiment the Chaplain is advised that: '...the majority of the Officers will probably be Protestants, therefore, he should avoid religious discussions in the Mess, and keep away from the subject of controversy whenever Protestant Officers are present at Services. They are there under orders, and their religion should not be discussed'.<sup>78</sup> On general matters: 'If the Chaplain is always willing to oblige others, and do things for them, they in turn will all the more willingly help him...St Paul's axiom: 'All things to all men', cannot be too closely followed'.<sup>79</sup> In reality, Protestant Officers at services would have been counter-productive and their presence was not mentioned in any of the evidence, which suggests that this was a writer with more theoretical than practical knowledge, Keatinge is the most probable candidate.

The same booklet advised on: 'A Few General Hints', covering: reporting, courtesies, relations with others, kit, riding, and Confessions on the road. Of these rather brief advices the

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<sup>74</sup> DAA, Ephemera.

<sup>75</sup> DAA, 3234m Gosling to Cardinal Bourne whilst on leave, (21st November 1917). This type of complaining behind Rawlinson's back inevitably infuriated him.

<sup>76</sup> DAA, Ephemera. 'Roman Catholic Chaplains – Information and Hints – British Armies in France', (Army Printing and Stationery Office, January 1917), p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> This rhetoric supports the argument that Keatinge was behind the document. It is not Rawlinson's style but has similarities with Keatinge's philosophy and attitudes.

<sup>78</sup> DAA, Ephemera, Roman Catholic Chaplains: 'Information and Hints', p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

Chaplain is told: 'Remember to be always courteous. You are probably a Captain in rank, and as such you are only 'small fry' in the Army'.<sup>80</sup> He was advised to have only 35lbs kit excluding portable altar, but this was clearly ignored by some chaplains. Fr Carden, originally Hessenhauer reported: 'As transport is difficult the chaplain should be warned not to bring excessive kit. That seems to be the chief objection to a chaplain, most arrive with bed, library, gramophone etc'.<sup>81</sup> With regards to transport: 'Learn to ride a horse, if you cannot already do so. Much time is wasted when a Chaplain cannot ride...'<sup>82</sup> Shortly after this well-meaning intelligence, all horses were withdrawn from chaplains due to general shortages. The difficulties and dissent this caused feature strongly in Rawlinson's papers.<sup>83</sup>

This publication illustrates the rapid speed of change in this war and the difficulties of providing up-to-date information. Notwithstanding these unavoidable problems, it was a decent attempt at informing newcomers of the situation in which they might find themselves and more so given the absence of formal training. Despite this helpful publication, not all chaplains found it sufficiently comprehensive. Fr Friend OSB informed Rawlinson that: 'I have read the instructions carefully and could find nothing [whereabouts of his ecclesiastical superior to report to on initial deployment] on the subject except about matters not denominational, but nothing about reporting'.<sup>84</sup> There were pedantic chaplains, but the best did not complain or require constant attention, they were the silent majority.

There were two practical methods of receiving updates or changes. These were the informal sharing of information and tips, and a quasi-formal method of direct correspondence between chaplains and Rawlinson. It was natural that fellow-chaplains conferred with each other in the immediate vicinity, or at chaplains meetings. This information came from Fr Drinkwater who shed some light on the friendly man-to-man approach: 'Fr Milroy a new chaplain of the 11<sup>th</sup> Division came in and I gave him a few tips'.<sup>85</sup> Nobody tells them anything when they arrive in the country'.<sup>86</sup> The dissemination of advice sometimes took place between Rawlinson and his chaplains at their conferences. Fr Drinkwater recalls: 'The *Odium Theologica* was not absent re-services in wards and the use of chateau, chapels etc'.<sup>87</sup> Meetings and personal tips were useful methods of on-the-job training. The second method of

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>81</sup> DAA, 3234, Hessenhauer to Rawlinson, (9<sup>th</sup> June 1916).

<sup>82</sup> 'Information and Hints', p. 19.

<sup>83</sup> 117 letters in Rawlinson Papers refer to horse shortages.

<sup>84</sup> DAA, 3234, Fr Friend to Rawlinson, (5<sup>th</sup> May 1917).

<sup>85</sup> John Milroy belonged to the Hexham Diocese and served in the 11<sup>th</sup> Northern Division. His brother, Fr R. Milroy served in the Egyptian campaign.

<sup>86</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (28<sup>th</sup> December 1917).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 14<sup>th</sup> June 1917.

information sharing was simply a written response from Rawlinson in response to a chaplain's query.

Formal chaplaincy training was a shambles, but there was no concerted attempt to request anything better, for Catholic chaplains this was only a minor concern. Constant practice created experienced men who absorbed and accommodated lessons-learned. Individuals might adversely comment on the situation, yet in the spirit of their mission, the vast majority of priests simply buckled down employing their advantageous priestly training and generally created a good impression.

### **Catholic Education for Soldiers**

Whilst chaplaincy education was long, intense, and fairly consistent, that was not the case for ordinary Catholic soldiers. Troops derived their religious knowledge and shared expressions of Catholicism influenced by home, school, or their own parish. Where you lived and the traditions established there, found a direct correlation with the disparities between visible Catholicism across the regions in peacetime. It is unsurprising that some chaplains translated these geographical variations as a deficiency of soldiers' religious knowledge and public commitment at war. Was this a fair assessment, and if so whose responsibility was it to resolve?

Training or education for Catholic soldiers is better termed instruction. It was based on the Catechism, which formed the essential building blocks of knowledge for Catholic religious life at elementary school. Was the implementation of religious instruction at home geographically inconsistent, hence, confirming chaplains' comments, and if so what were the root causes? Dependable and repeated testimony will show that soldiers from Lancashire and Ireland, and occasional pockets elsewhere, did display an apparent superior knowledge and commitment. But were these suppositions articulated by some chaplains the correct ones? Fr Devas claimed that: '[...] outside these two holy places [Lancashire and Ireland], the contempt of generations has left its mark on Catholics – especially Catholic young men – who have always found themselves in an insignificant minority'.<sup>88</sup> What did he mean "the contempt of generations"? Was it educational indifference by the hierarchy, social aloofness, secularisation of society, or some other reason? In probability he was referring to the period since the Reformation and the slow return to something like tolerance of religious observance for Catholics.<sup>89</sup> The effects of history were only gradually being overcome leaving, in Devas's view,

<sup>88</sup> JAL, F. Devas, 'Our Chaplains Experiences' in *Letter of Notices*, 33 (1915-16) 443.

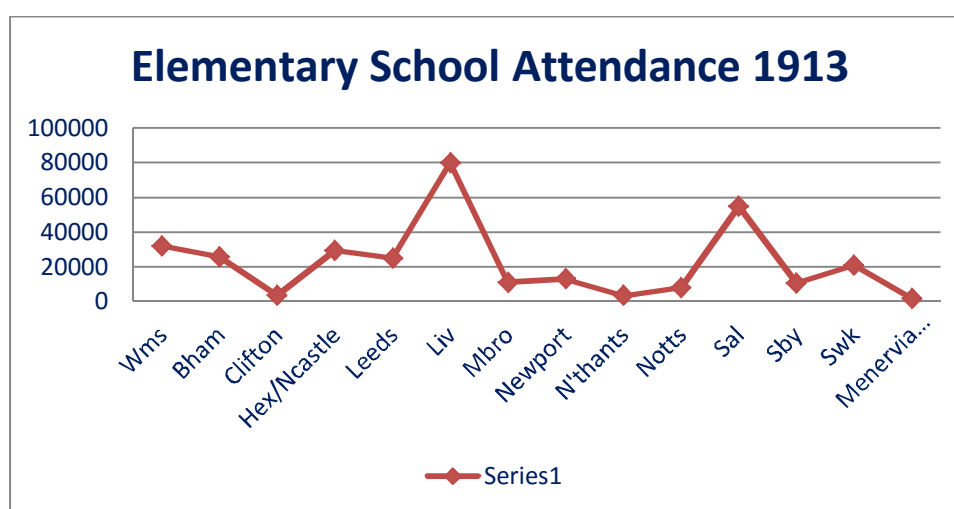
<sup>89</sup> The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1929 did much but not all to remove restrictions. See pp.54 and 94.

young men still floundering in an ‘insignificant minority’. The repercussions of this ‘contempt’ would have consequences for the troops, the reasons will be investigated.

The previous chapter examined the north-south divide and concluded that this should be properly understood as a crude demarcation. Strong pockets of Catholicism could be found throughout the country. Lancashire, and other areas with a sizeable Irish or long established recusant presence, produced active and vibrant Catholic communities. There was, nonetheless, an observable difference between soldiers’ knowledge and commitment based on regional criteria remarked upon by the Plater enquiry and chaplains’ own correspondence. What were these variations due to? Was it a failure in the determination of some bishops to provide Catholic education, based, perhaps, on the social composition of the respective congregations, or the aloofness of some bishops? This may seem a reasonable prognosis fitting neatly into the north-south divide, but it would be wrong.

The first realisation is that the entire episcopacy took the education of Catholics in general and religion in particular, very seriously. The number of Catholic elementary schools in the country rose from 99 in 1850, to 1,484 by 1874.<sup>90</sup> Elementary education ensured that the Catechism was taught daily, and any child attending such a school would have been given this foundation in Catholic education. Graph 1 demonstrates those attending elementary school in 1913, the first year all figures were released.<sup>91</sup>

Graph 1<sup>92</sup>



Significantly more Catholics in Liverpool and Salford (both then in Lancashire), attended schools than those in Northamptonshire, Minervia, or Clifton for example. This purely

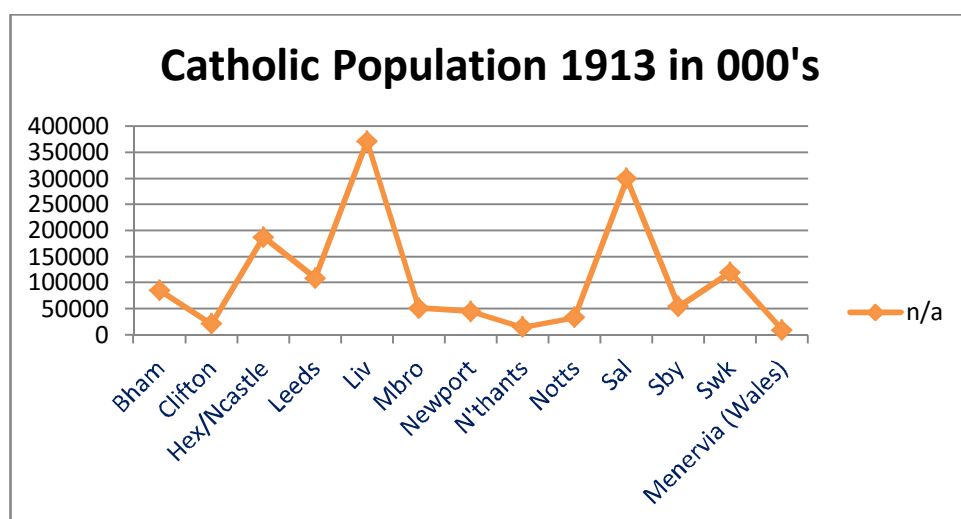
<sup>90</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 201.

<sup>91</sup> SDA, compiled from data in the *The Catholic Directories for England and Wales*, 1913.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Clifton's numbers were 3,633, Northampton's 3387 and Minervia's (Wales) 1,747.

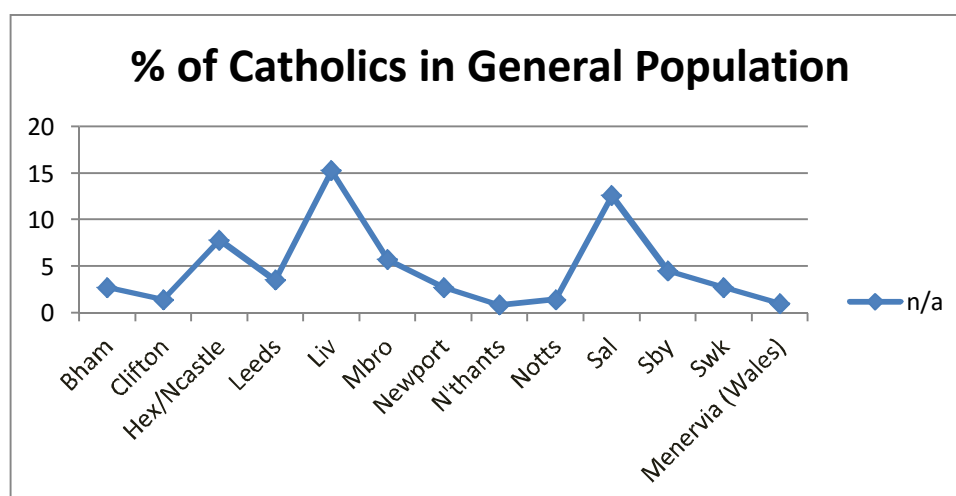
reflected Catholic populations and industrialisation in general, and demonstrates unsurprisingly, an almost identical correlation with elementary school attendances.

Graph 2<sup>93</sup>



The statistics showing the proportion of Catholics within the general population was first released by the bishops in 1914 following the 1911 general census. These clearly demonstrate the paucity of Catholic numbers in the more remote parts such as the Northamptonshire Diocese, which included Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Large and vibrant Catholic communities were more likely found in Lancashire and to a lesser extent the north-east of England, and parts of London, than elsewhere. (Southwark contained parts of south and east London but its ratio to non-Catholics remained small as it also covered the rural south-east). Westminster declined to provide data.

Graph 3<sup>94</sup>



<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

A sense of geographical isolation is emerging as a major factor in the lack of prominent Catholic communities, and by extension involvement of these Catholics' public displays of religion at home and at war.

What can be structurally challenged in religious educational policy? There was a strong and unilateral effort amongst bishops to provide an elementary educational policy, and to implement its recommendations, with religious education at the centre. The provision of elementary schools can be traced back before the restoration of the hierarchy to 1848, as reported in 1905:

Such are the following (from the all-important branch of the Pastoral office 1848): The maintenance and the management of Training Colleges for male and female teachers: official representation to the Government on questions of educational policy, and to the Education Department: the carrying out of a common scheme of religious instruction and rewards [...] the Bishops, indeed, can by no means abdicate the final and effectual control of all that relates to primary or "parochial" schools. 4 colleges have been set up, in order that we may have a sufficient number of truly Catholic teachers filled with the spirit and teaching of the Catholic Church, and thus really fitted to the educate Catholic children. Signed by all Bishops of England and Wales.<sup>95</sup>

Given this joint declaration by the bishops, it is clear that any lack of education was not though lack of direction. In fact the bishops published annual league tables of all teaching students' results in religious instruction and demanded high standards. It should be noted that teachers came from all parts of the country, but consistent with the geographical and numerical motifs established, Liverpool teachers were the more numerous. WSM = 76, Northants = 6, Nottingham = 1, Salford = 127, Liverpool = 192.<sup>96</sup>

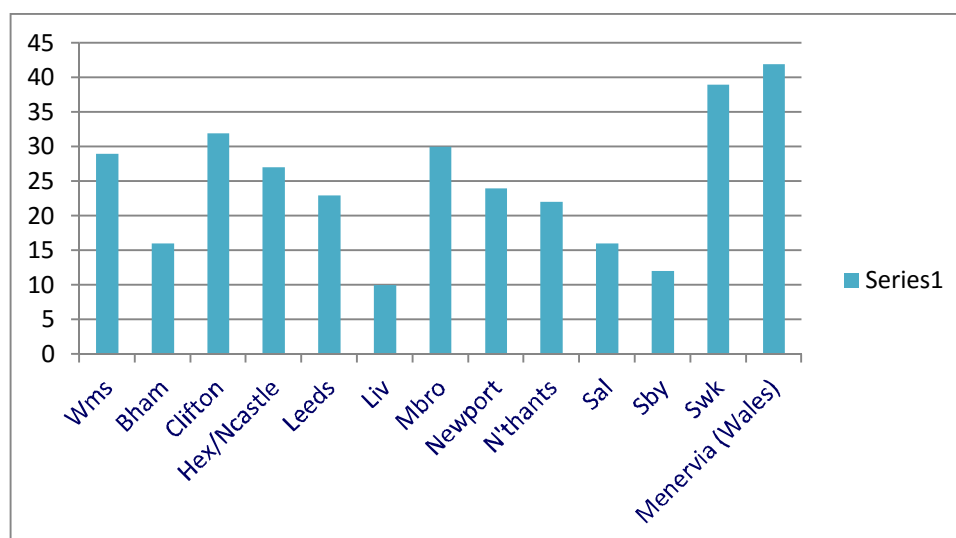
How could religious education be improved in areas with few Catholic numbers? Did bishops prioritise those areas with fewer Catholics in order to increase educational opportunity and thus to acquire religious knowledge? The figures below suggest they did. There appears to be a concerted effort to evangelise those parts of England not adequately covered in previous years. This makes nonsense of any claims that bishops were negligent or complacent.

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<sup>95</sup> SDA, *Acta Episcoporum Angliae* (1905), p. 40.

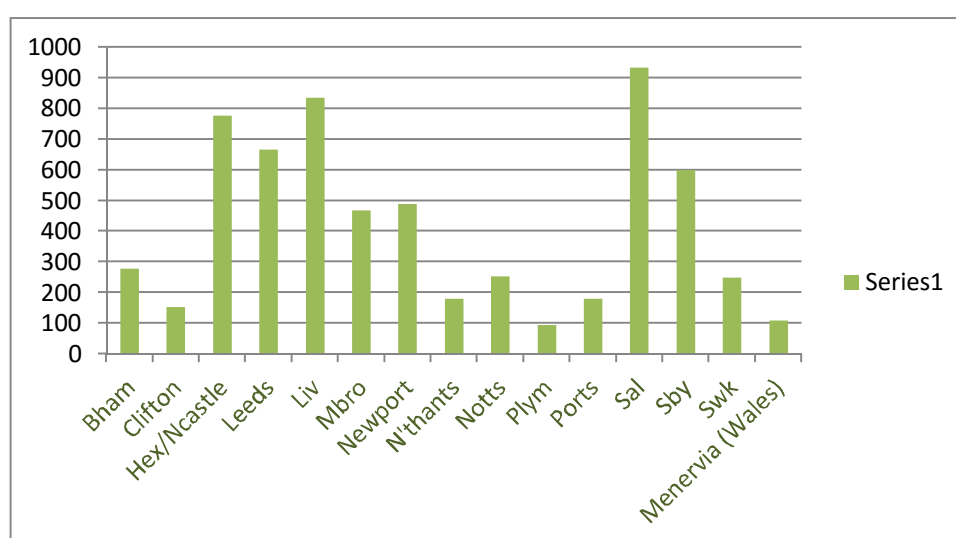
<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 'Results of Teachers at Catholic Colleges for Religious Education, 1905, pp41-3.

**Graph 4<sup>97</sup> Percentage Increase in Catholic Priests Numbers from 1901-1913**



These figures are remarkable and acknowledge the need to supply priests to areas with smaller populations, signifying a new wave of Catholic evangelisation. Graph 5 continues this theme.

**Graph 5<sup>98</sup> Catholics Per Priest in 1913**



Lancashire Dioceses were supported by a reducing percentage and numbers of priests per unit of population. In contrast, all those areas low in Catholic population were being ministered by ever increasing numbers of priests: Salford had 920 Catholics per priest and Liverpool 820, whilst Northampton Diocese had about 170, and Plymouth and Wales 100 for each. Distance had a large part to play in these figures, as did density of populations, but despite these

<sup>97</sup> SDA Catholic Directories for all dioceses between 1910 and 1913. It should be noted that Southwark included parts of London but also the rural south-east, including Kent and Sussex.

<sup>98</sup> SDA Catholic Directory 1913. Westminster did not supply figures for many of these charts.



factors, any charge of episcopal indifference is way off the mark; quite the reverse can be argued, as resources were concentrated on those dioceses with few Catholics in residence, an expensive and resource draining option.

Educational opportunity was not the major flaw in a soldier's lack of religious commitment or knowledge. There were other factors at play. First it should be acknowledged that it is impossible to measure a person's spirituality. It may be possible to attempt to measure their public displays of religiosity through attendance at Mass and the Sacraments, but even then there is no guarantee of a participant's devotion and spirituality. Additionally, it will be shown that in any event statistic gathering by chaplains at the Front was piecemeal and often disregarded. It is not surprising that chaplains took this practical stand. They must have realised that by merely competently repeating the Latin responses, or by following the correct liturgical procedures, or singing hymns for examples, did not guarantee spiritual depth. Whilst many soldiers may have been devout Catholics, others may have been there through peer pressure, habit, duress, (for instance the threat of a Mortal Sin for non-attendance), or other personal factors.

The criticisms made by chaplains later, probably owe more to their observations of a soldier's behaviour in isolation, rather than lack of knowledge or commitment, as has been claimed. It would be easy and self-sustaining to be part of a gathering of like-minded Catholics with shared regimental or battalion allegiances. It would be easier still when that unit may have men from the same town, street, or parish, with whom to share religious events and remembrances. Furthermore, a town at home, or a military unit at war, that maintained a public Catholic presence where tradition could be openly shared, would provide not only spiritual but also psychological support. The opposite also applied. Those men who in religious and emotional terms were cut adrift at home through no such opportunity, and then found themselves in a military unit with at best an apathetic regard for religion, and particularly Catholicism, or at worse encountered a hostile environment, would naturally keep a low profile. To a chaplain, where he himself received succour and encouragement from religiously demonstrative Catholic soldiers, the man from the lesser Catholic tradition might be deemed to have less knowledge and commitment to his faith, especially when compared to effusive Lancashire and Irish troops. We cannot begin to measure such subjective topics as gregariousness or confidence, which may also have a part to play.

Surely, there is a converse argument, that those troops from units with fewer Catholics who did manage to receive the religious services on offer, although numerically weak, were individually more determined Catholics as a result. Fr Gillett complained that for soldiers of a

Middlesex regiment: 'Confessions in evening at village hall. 1 poor soul turns in YAH!'<sup>99</sup> Clearly that 'poor soul' did show a determined and independent spirit. Unfortunately, in many cases there was no show at all: 'Mass at Beaumont and Contay - poor attendance - in evening Service at Molliens for 54th Brigade'<sup>100</sup> no turn up at all - yah!'<sup>101</sup> Chaplains' observations about soldiers' religious commitment are pertinent with regards to their behaviour, but as to their spirituality they remain assumptions. Personal spirituality is just that, personal.

Catholicism is based on a shared system with fellow Catholics and this sense of community is important even at the universal level. Soldiers who were used to being part of this kinship enjoyed the benefits of this approach; those from distinctly more isolated environments behaved accordingly, not due to their lack of education but through the accident of geographic dislocation at home and in the military.<sup>102</sup> Whatever the root causes three things emerge. Firstly that the bishops' strategies were not at fault: secondly that those small Catholic communities which generated less public displays of religious fervour and tradition at home, were translated into similar behaviour at war: and thirdly those chaplains who commented did so honestly, passionately, and without any apparent hidden agendas.

### Conclusion

Catholic education was not specifically designed for military purposes but was essential for the vast array of tasks which might befall a young priest throughout his life. Spiritual education was ingrained into their sacramental and devotional work and ample evidence will be provided to show its effectiveness in the military theatres. Specific educational talents were offered such as language and educational skills. In pastoral affairs, education brought benefits, but it was their experience with people drawn from their pre-war missions which also counted. After the war, those physically and mentally able could then realise their long education in a different missionary arena.

Missionary zeal and commitment assumed a great significance for chaplains. The conventional and rigid structures, so typical of the Catholic Church at home, and so much part of the educational system of which they had matured, were modified by them on their everyday chaplaincy missions. Evidence to follow, demonstrated both remarkable fortitude alongside innovation. Resilience might be expected, but how was such flexibility possible

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<sup>99</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (17<sup>th</sup> October 1917).

<sup>100</sup> 54<sup>th</sup> Brigade was the East Anglian.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., (6<sup>th</sup> October 1918).

<sup>102</sup> A caveat to this hypothesis is the occasional lack of educational facility due to distance, for example a Welsh hill sheep farmer, or a rural situation not connected to the transport system. These instances were diminishing as has been shown by increased priestly provision.

given the disciplined environment to which they had been subjected? Had the war changed these men with a conservative upbringing into radical reformers? Not at all, instead what emerged was their common-sense approach to make the best of the situations, and simply get on with the jobs at hand. This was the essence of successful missionary work. Chaplains were as pragmatic at the Front dealing with, for example, no transport or mutilation, as they would have been as missionary priests in Lagos building a church, or in Liverpool tending typhoid victims. These were all manifestations of missionary ethos despite the different physical and emotional challenges. Responsibility was owned by the priest and chaplain. This demonstrated the strength of missionary philosophy and rationale. This observation also holds true for routine concerns without compromising ancient Catholic ideals, beliefs, or solidarity. Discipline and respect for authority had been forged in the seminary. Simultaneously, the demands of mission engendered sufficient self-motivation and energy to complete their tasks. These men were able to go wherever the Church required and accepted the awaiting challenges. The circumstances of war, although unique, had their distant cousins in foreign missions, diplomatic circles, or parish life, and to some degree prepared the Catholic chaplain for the worst. Their vocation helped to complete the circle that was their mission in the British Army. These statements will become apparent as the thesis develops and will include that small number whose education and sense of mission somehow became victims in the carnage at Arras, Albert, Ypres, and a myriad of other killing fields. Their failures, real or alleged, are discussed in the last two chapters.

Criticism of the authorities for inadequate chaplaincy training is untenable. This brutal war was an unforeseen tragedy. Any criticism of lack of advanced planning for such an event by ecclesiastical authorities is unrealistic in the extreme. The Catholic Church was a traditional advocate of training priests for missionary work, but not specifically for the forces. In any event, once commissioned, the priest was effectively on loan to the Army and outside Diocesan and Religious responsibility, except through the vague auspices of Catholic GHQ. As the war progressed, better advice and instructions became available to chaplains in lieu of training. Disseminating this information was too slow and fragmented, but many thought that the war would be over by Christmas 1914. The utter confusion in those early months makes lack of activity understandable. What is not clear is if Cardinal Bourne in Westminster, or Monsignor Keatinge at GHQ in France until early 1916, had the ability, initiative, capability, or desire to produce effective training or instruction. In their defence not even the established Church of England produced much of note during the conflict. The Army cannot be blamed either, it had no remit or obligation to interfere in Catholic ecclesiastical matters. Could it

have prepared British officers in their dealing with the clergy, especially the Roman version? That would have been beneficial yet totally unrealistic, and in any event they had other pressing problems with which to deal. The training of Catholic chaplains and other religious matters were solely a Catholic responsibility. Once the war was underway, shortages of chaplains necessitated the immediate transfer of newly ordained priests to the continent, and any retrospective training initiative, even if one had been proposed, would have had little support.

Working class soldiers formed the great bulk of the army, with Lancashire and Irish Catholics troops forming an impressive Catholic vanguard on the Western Front. Here their religious certainties and social similarities promoted a public display of Catholic confidence. The lack of strong Catholic communities consistently across all areas of England meant that soldiers from areas with less Catholics, and possibly with less developed Catholic traditions, would express their public religiosity in a less exuberant manner. This led some chaplains to be fortified and encouraged by Lancashire and Irish troops, and at times disheartened by the others. Any further claims about degrees of religious or spiritual comparisons should be avoided, they are simply too unsafe and impressionistic, even if the views of some chaplains were consistent, often repeated, and profoundly held.<sup>103</sup>

Chaplains did not suffer the same sense of religious variation as soldiers. The strength and advantage of consistent Catholic education, and missionary ethos, were common features for all priests, and this uniformity assured that a northern priest functioned the same way as a southern priest, and the same applied to army chaplains. The provisions of the core religious functions of sacramental and devotional care were not influenced by geographic or any other considerations including their different personalities. They were delivered to a consistently high level from the great majority of these men, and the majority of Catholic soldiers benefitting considerably, but imperfectly, from the chaplaincy effort. Some soldiers suffered because of uneven Catholic development, and chaplaincy shortages, but chaplains were remarkably consistent in fulfilling their spiritual duties throughout the war.

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<sup>103</sup> There is no suggestion that chaplains making such observations had any motive other than a human one. They simply became encouraged by those soldiers to whom they could easily relate and share the same public values.

## Chapter 3

‘God’s mercy and goodness receives no recompense, yet  
many of these men are soon to court death’<sup>1</sup>

### The Universal Church and Catholic Engagement

### HOLY MASS and the SACRAMENTS

Catholic engagement at the Front occupies the second section in this study. This chapter forms the critical religious centre of the thesis, and defines the chaplains’ spiritual roles and functions, as their sacred mission is revealed and tested after the long preparatory years of formation. Holy Mass and the Sacraments are at the very centre of Catholic religious life. The same applied on both the Home and Western Fronts, notwithstanding vastly different environments in which to celebrate them. Chaplains strove to enable all Catholics, military or civilian, to take advantage of their presence. Twenty four died on the Western front when ministering to troops of whom twenty-two are buried there.<sup>2</sup> Despite the cost, chaplaincy spiritual endeavour was on the whole, a remarkable success.

Soldiers responded according to opportunity and personal commitment. Their religious obligations, and the spiritual and emotional benefits derived from sacramental and devotional care, were compromised by erratic levels of religious involvement reflecting the geographical variance among Catholics back home, as discussed. Religious commitment was strengthened by proximity to other Catholic soldiers who fought in the same units, which gave those troops from Lancashire and Ireland a significant advantage both numerically and as good exemplars of Catholic knowledge and allegiance. Not all soldiers, therefore, received the spiritual and emotional support they deserved.

To celebrate Holy Mass has always been a fundamental Catholic desire and requirement, and its importance cannot be over-emphasised. Its spiritual meaning for Catholics will be revealed. The spiritual benefits of celebrating Mass were also accompanied by human benefits. Bonds of kinship with fellow Catholic soldiers derived from the communion between men, chaplains, and God. The result was that the association between devout Catholic chaplains, soldiers, and faith, contributed to religious and psychological well-being which offered real benefits at war. This represented an affinity above and beyond geographical

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<sup>1</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (14<sup>th</sup> September 1916). Reporting from Raincheval during the Somme operations.

<sup>2</sup> 34 died in total in the Great War, 24 on the Western Front, of whom 2 died on their return journey to Britain. Appendices 3-6.

or regimental attachments and identities. The unique intimacy of this connection buttressed the emotional welfare of Catholic soldiers. Chaplains also benefitted from this support. Civilians relied on chaplaincy support to replace their priest-soldiers who enlisted in the Army, and German prisoners also benefitted from chaplains' efforts. Personal chaplaincy experiences give an intimate insight into the Mass and into the environment where it was celebrated. They demonstrate the universal nature of the Catholic Church in action, and the role of its priests as pilgrims completing their missions.

The successful delivery of Mass was not always that simple. Soldiers' indifference, lack of knowledge or resources, and the sheer confusion of war affected Mass attendance. The Army did interrupt the facilitation of religious services, yet when this occurred it will be shown to have been on a personal, rather than on an institutional basis. Sometimes a balance was struck and those same obstructive individuals reacted by responded supportively to chaplains in the Catholic project. The Catholic authorities at GHQ in the person of Fr Rawlinson, Senior Catholic Chaplain will also be shown to confuse matters. Rawlinson was the leading Catholic officer in the Army yet his role was advisory and administrative which did not infer spiritual superiority. However, Fr. Gill's dismissive comment that: 'The only Catholic representative we have is Fr Rawlinson, who is simply a kind of head clerk',<sup>3</sup> is hugely unfair and seems to owe more to Fr Gill's own high self-esteem than reality. Fr Grobel APC at Boulogne described Gill as: 'dissatisfied and awkward to deal with'.<sup>4</sup> In any event, the ecclesiasts at home relinquished their spiritual leadership while the chaplains got to grips with being priests in foreign countries in conflict. Authority over chaplains was transferred to local bishops who accordingly provided permissions or faculties. Together with Army bishops, *Episcopus Castrensis* Bourne (*de facto*), and later Keatinge, became the direct conduits to Rome which retained the ultimate responsibility over all priests.

Frs Gillett, Drinkwater, and Steuart, define a control group of diarists who provide the insight needed to understand the realities on the ground. Their evidence regarding celebrating Mass demonstrates the worth of eyewitness accounts. They contain daily routines, problems, joys, and disappointments, so that the value of Holy Mass to both chaplains and soldiers leaps out from these accounts, of which some are more detailed than others. Gradually, the true life of a ground-level Catholic chaplain is revealed. It is possible by this method to get close to these chaplains and to an extent the troops. By doing so it marks the difference between verbatim daily accounts and those summarised versions written after the war, many of which

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<sup>3</sup> JAD CHP1/25 (38) Gill to Irish Jesuit Provincial 27<sup>th</sup> January 1917.

<sup>4</sup> DAA, 3234, Grobel to Rawlinson, (23<sup>rd</sup> November 1914).

have been distorted. These diaries would not see the light of day in the literary sense, although as testaments of truth they are noteworthy and rare.<sup>5</sup> They also offer a range of experiences from three very different priests, reflecting the diversity of Catholicism examined earlier.

For priests at home, celebrating Mass was a routine daily experience, as the growing Catholic populations in Britain clamoured for more and more services. Newly ordained priests were busy servicing this need. This continued on the Western Front. To understand a Catholic chaplain's work and life, it is essential to emphasise that whilst recognising operational and deployment limitations, almost everything revolved around Mass. It is a quixotic image to depict Catholic chaplains scrambling over the trenches to deliver the Last Rites to a soldier dying in no-man's-land. This did happen, all too frequently, yet the mainstay of a chaplain's work was organising and celebrating Mass with as many Catholics as could be found. Mass was the basis of active Catholic chaplaincy and a powerful engine driving the Catholic faith in terms of spiritual, communal, and psychological fulfillment. It was also a means by which to confer other religious devotions, sacraments, and specifically the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Catholic soldiers and officers were divided by rank, substance, and social status, but when it came to religion they were equals in all senses. The joyous celebration of Holy Mass provided much needed respite for all in an often bleak landscape. Importantly it will be shown that the sacredness of attending Mass was not to be found, as Fr Radcliffe OP, and historian John Hilton will later claim, through the religious material ambiances at home. It was found in the communion between priest and men sharing Faith, Liturgy, the Sacraments, and comradeship. The clergy, and many soldiers, celebrated this service whenever and wherever possible.

Holy Mass is not a sacrament but it is the vehicle for that most important Catholic Sacrament of Holy Communion. Mass was part of the gift and obligation that a priest offered to his soldiers, and provided the theological, spiritual, and universal cement binding all together. Fr O'Neill explains its significance: 'It is first of all the interior activity of Christ and of his passion in the members of the Church. The grace that the heavenly Christ communicates to his members draws them into union with God'.<sup>6</sup> A Catholic was not attending Mass but celebrating Mass, hence, rejoicing his connection to Christ through the priest or chaplain. The chaplain, via the Pope and his bishops, was Christ's representative on

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<sup>5</sup> Fr Drinkwater's diaries are in the public domain at BAA. Fr Steuart's were rarely if ever consulted or written about and reside in JAL. Fr Gillett's diaries are newly discovered, transcribed by the author and available at SDA. N.B. there are copyright issues which have not been resolved, which is why the author copied from the original in pencil and then transferred to a Word document. The digitised document has been presented to the Archive and Fr Lannon should be consulted for permissions.

<sup>6</sup> Colman O'Neill, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments* (Cork: Mercier, 1964), p. 211.

earth who also celebrated this shared Mass. Partaking with fellow Catholics will find psychological expression later when the apostolic and universal aspects of Catholicism are explored, positioning Catholic Mass apart from the services of other denominations.

To celebrate Mass, the priest enrobed with the correct vestment for the occasion.<sup>7</sup> There was a need to be brief in celebrating Mass in combat zones, whilst in contrast, a more formal approach behind the lines at rest or in local parishes was sometimes appropriate.<sup>8</sup> Occasionally, Mass was celebrated at the graveside of a soldier if circumstances permitted. At other times the formal Mass for the dead, the Requiem Mass, was held. This was unusual at war, except for a special dignitary or occasion, due to the time taken and exposure to danger. They became frequent after the war's end in France, Belgium, and Germany, as part of the remembrance services for soldiers and civilians. In England the Requiem Mass was a regular event both during and after the war. An excellent example is provided by Fr George McBrearty, friend of Fr Gillett, fellow chaplain and ex-Ushaw student. On the feast of Corpus Christi in June 1919, he celebrated a Requiem Mass and laid the colours for the Tyneside Irish Battalions with whom he served, at St Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The congregation consisted of survivors, the injured, and families of the deceased.<sup>9</sup>

Celebrating Mass could be a solemn or joyous affair depending on circumstance. Of the amusing stories, Fr Steuart wrote: 'Went over to Robertson's camp, with Fisher. Said Mass at 10. Served by 2 Chinamen, one of whom spoke to me for some time in Latin! Congregation of 30 with 2 European NCO's (sic), nearly all went to Communion after singing the Confiteor in Chinese. Other Chinese hymns and prayers chanted after Mass'.<sup>10</sup> The Universal Church in its pomp, employing the universal language.<sup>11</sup> There were droll failures too: 'The Curé at Mazingarbe would not let Cohen<sup>12</sup> say a private Mass tomorrow at 08:00 because the civilians

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<sup>7</sup> Vestment colours changed to reflect the occasion. Black for a Requiem Mass, white or red for Feast or Saint's Days, violet or rose for Lent or Advent and Green for Ordinary Time. This was adhered to but only possible in those French or Belgian churches where vestments had been left by local Curés for the purpose. In the field they were not mentioned, it was too impracticable. The diaries do not report the in-field experience but available photographs suggest that they would use a simple cassock or their uniform with some method of adornment such as a simple stole. See illustration 12.

<sup>8</sup> On occasions the Mass needed to be briefer, or on grand occasions extended to a High Mass. The normal liturgy was to be used unless circumstances demanded. The Church had separate adornments on the same basic structure for special occasions. In dire circumstances, the chaplain might omit most of the ceremony and concentrate on the Eucharist.

<sup>9</sup> UCA, Research Papers, UC/P34/7.

<sup>10</sup> JAL, Steuart War Diaries, (5<sup>th</sup> May 1918).

<sup>11</sup> The mixture of Chinese, Latin, and English (with a Scottish accent), is remarkably similar to Brain Friel's excellent play, *Translations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981). A Latin speaking Irish hedge teacher, and a Gaelic audience, are thrust into proximity with English cartographers who are attempting to map Ireland, and Anglicise Gaelic place names. Chaos reigns.

<sup>12</sup> Fr J.S. Cohen, Southwark Diocese.



might take it as a precedent, and go to it, it being short'.<sup>13</sup> The liturgy was the same but the delivery, homily, and general pace of the Mass would differ. British Catholics and clergy comment on the length of the foreign Mass, as Fr Gillett will remark later: 'Golly my piety was exhausted'.<sup>14</sup>

Catholics were obliged to go to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation.<sup>15</sup> These conditions were mitigated by the availability of having a Mass to go to, ill-health, extreme weather conditions, and essential work. Conditions excluded soldier's Mass attendance in many circumstances. The numbers attending can never be accurately calculated, but the testimony of chaplains demonstrated that Mass was a regular event for many irrespective of obligation. This extract from Fr Peale SJ shows how determined Catholics were to celebrate Mass:

It was bitterly cold.... The ice was inches thick. On Sunday the 22<sup>nd</sup> November, [1917] we had Mass in a field. The altar on a pile of ammunition boxes, the sides screened from the biting wind by blood-stained stretchers. Icicles hung from the barn eaves and the water froze as it trickled on the plate. It was with difficulty that I gave Communion to 50 of my boys: the fingers were numbed with the cold.<sup>16</sup>

There was no official minimum requirement defining the frequency of chaplains offering Mass at war. It was simply as and when possible. There were maximum limitations of offering two Masses per day imposed at home. These were relaxed during the conflict in war zones, so that three Masses could be celebrated: 'Today I said my three Masses'.<sup>17</sup> Their own accounts of their time are dominated by the celebration or the organisation of Mass. These three chaplains alone recall celebrating Mass on over a thousand occasions between them.<sup>18</sup> Diaries reveal that Fr Steuart SJ said Mass on 211 occasions, Fr Drinkwater on 278 occasions and Fr Gillett a staggering 698 times which equate to 1.4, 1.6 and 4.5 times per week over the period of their time at the Front. One explanation for the variation is that these chaplains were merely replicating their routine at home. Fr Gillett was part of the large Liverpool-Irish community where Mass was frequently celebrated to satisfy the requests of an expanding Catholic population. Catholic demography implied that Drinkwater did not minister to such a large body of Catholics in his own diocese, whilst Fr Steuart, without direct parish responsibilities, celebrated Mass on mission or within the Jesuit community, requiring a lesser

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<sup>13</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (24<sup>th</sup> November 1917).

<sup>14</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (3<sup>rd</sup> November 1916).

<sup>15</sup> These are proscribed days from the liturgical calendar such as Christmas day, Easter Sunday, Good Friday, Ascension day, Feast days such as Saints Peter and Paul and so on.

<sup>16</sup> Fr John H. Peale, *War Jottings*, vol.1 (Calcutta: Catholic Orphan Press, 1916), p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (2<sup>nd</sup> November 1917).

<sup>18</sup> Mass was celebrated by Fr Gillett on 698 occasions, Drinkwater 279, and Steuart 211, collated from personal diaries.

frequency in his daily routine. The correlation between Catholicism at home and at war continues.

It has been suggested that the primary role of Army officers was: 'to ensure that his men were well fed and well clothed and comfortable'<sup>19</sup> and it was widely recognised that: 'The soldier's soul and personal happiness were also the responsibility of the diligent officer'.<sup>20</sup> If that was the case, it can be read that any difficulties which might impair religious opportunities would be derived from individuals and not from the establishment. My own research supports this reasoning. There is no substantive evidence that the Army as an institution oversaw a policy of official obstruction towards Catholic chaplains holding Holy Mass or other religious services. The answer is less conspiratorial and more mundane. Difficulties would rarely be from the top-down, but might be experienced through ignorance, maladministration, or individual idiosyncrasies somewhere along the chain of command. Simple bureaucratic blundering did affect the availability of services: 'Last Sunday apparently, the YLI Adjutant forgot the RC service and the CO made it voluntary on account of the weather. Hence, smallness of congregation'.<sup>21</sup> Some individuals in the Army had presented pockets of difficulty in the early days, and will be examined. These problems had been worked through as religious denominations and the Army became more aware of mutual sensibilities, examples surrounding burial ceremonies will demonstrate the advances made between denominations. Moreover, there was a fight for survival taking place and the intensity of war necessitated that the operational priorities of the Army were engaged elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

Mistakes, errors of judgement, and occasional bloody-mindedness did arise from both the authorities and chaplains alike. Two of the control group had no major difficulties in this area and were able to negotiate a pathway through. Unfortunately, Fr Gillett experienced more problems with red-tape and was less socially equipped in dealing with senior military authorities. This amiable and placid man became quite irascible at times:

Easter Sunday. Found notice had been passed out [for Mass] but no one turns up. Troops had all been taken out for ceremonial parade. Straffed Div HQ but no use French make a big day of Easter. Everybody dressed up and Processions the order of the day. Quite a religious feast, so different to so-called English Catholics. The Army

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<sup>19</sup> Gary Sheffield cited in Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 147.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (10<sup>th</sup> August 1915).

<sup>22</sup> The quantity of inter-denominational and Army problems reported to Rawlinson reduced as the war progressed, and by 1918 occurred only spasmodically, often because of new situations. For example in the Army of Occupation in 1919 new guidelines were needed to match the altered situation for POWs.

Godless, at least the section I have to deal with in 18th Division and 54th Brigade - too fond of other things.<sup>23</sup>

It is unusual for Gillett to criticise anyone, particularly English Catholics. His eyewitness account confirmed the geographical irregularity of English Catholicism as his troops were all from southern regiments. The lack of positive expression of faith by these men is entirely consistent with the arguments already made. Easter is the defining point in the Catholic religion through the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Gillett's account for Easter 1917 corresponded to a slack period and opportunity for troops to attend arose. All other Easter entries of the diarists' coincided with military action where attendance was not viable with one exception [Easter Sunday 1917]: 'The big church at Aire was crowded for Benediction, a lot of Portuguese there'.<sup>24</sup> Not this time Lancashire or Irish comparisons but troops from a similarly strong religious background in Portugal.

Good relationships between chaplains and the Army on the ground relied upon co-operation between individuals, not between hierarchies.<sup>25</sup> Military necessity was accepted by the clergy in general: 'Mass at 8 a.m. in the Cinema but men all too busy to come'.<sup>26</sup> It was in quieter times that difficulties became the source of acrimony. Fr Gillett: 'Trinity - Mass at Bavelincourt. Rosary and Benediction in evening. Expected a great number at Mass as units all out of line - but bitterly disappointed - men even not warned. Go up to Brigadier tomorrow about it'. Then subsequently: 'Visited units and interviewed Brigadier, and a fat lot of use'.<sup>27</sup> Fr Gillett would forever, even on his return to Lancashire, be disappointed with poor attendance at Mass.<sup>28</sup>

Rawlinson confirmed that Fr Gillett was not alone. To combat the frequency of this type of problem he suggested official procedures for their resolution. He stressed the need for

<sup>23</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (8<sup>th</sup> April 1917).

<sup>24</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (8<sup>th</sup> April 1917).

<sup>25</sup> Cooperation between Rawlinson as Principal Chaplain and Military HQ was vital, and any attempt by individual chaplains to prejudice this relationship was dealt with severely. However, on everyday matters it was partnerships between Adjutants, Brigadiers, GOCs, COs, and chaplains (sometimes involving senior chaplains) which affected provision of services.

<sup>26</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (1<sup>st</sup> November 1916).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., (26<sup>th</sup> May 1918).

<sup>28</sup> In his local parish Fr Gillett also was disappointed at non-attendance, although it was a very small and agricultural based parish. At the age of 84 and officially retired, he was: 'up at 6:30 for Mass at 7 when sometimes he is the only person in the church', [...] 'my congregation can only come at weekends. They've got their farming tasks through the week'. From an undated newspaper, *The Longridge News*, probably c 1966. Miscellaneous file on Gillett at SDA. This state of affairs does not conflict with his previous good relationships with the rank and file. His new church was quite isolated and rural and it is significant that Fr Gillett came out of retirement to offer his services there, thus freeing younger priests for the more arduous tasks. This situation is often repeated in Lancashire today, as retired priests fill in gaps during holiday's sickness, and shortages. Even in his later years the *Longridge News* reported that: 'He was very human and approachable to everyone he met. His walks around the parish were prompted by halts for a chat at the various farms he was passing, and he was ready to talk to anyone at all, from children to adults, and from farmer to local landowner'. Cited in *Lancaster Catholic Directory 1970*, (Preston: Mather Brothers, 1970.) p. 127.

tact and using the correct channels. He was a master at understanding and valuing Army procedures to achieve his ends, whilst simultaneously lifting the morale of his own men:<sup>29</sup>

The difficulties you mention are by no means a rare occurrence. We have had a good many complaints from various parts of the field, and they form some of the most difficult to contend with. As a rule it is more a matter of tact on the part of the chaplain than anything else. It is almost impossible to bring a CO or even a GOC to book for preventing Services, as they can always claim that the duties [that is secular] performed by the men are necessary. At the same time it becomes most heart-breaking after a time. Unless there is some quite flagrant case that can be officially reported, or at any rate unless the fact is established that it is rarely possible to hold Services for the RC's (sic) of your Brigade (in which case of course we could bring the whole matter before the AG) I think the only other course is to approach tactfully the GOC of the Division through your Senior Chaplain. There is one thing you must certainly not do, and that is to give up heart. Perhaps on the whole I would suggest you putting the matter before the APC of your Army, Father Hessianhauer. He will doubtless do all he can to help you, and may possibly be able to see your Brigadier, or the GOC for the Division. Fight tactfully for what you want, and you will get it in the long run. Meanwhile you have my sincere sympathy.<sup>30</sup>

Things in the 54<sup>th</sup> Brigade had not improved six months later: 'Mass at 9:30 and 11 a.m. – disappointed with turn up – all the fault of authorities and orderly rooms. Evenings are lonely',<sup>31</sup> and: 'Easter Sunday. Tramped to Thiennes for Mass where I'd arranged for the Royal Fusiliers and Northants etc - found notice had been passed out but no one turns up. Troops had all been taken out for ceremonial parade. Straffed Div HQ but no use'.<sup>32</sup> Fr Gillett's inability to make headway with the senior officers remained a problem throughout the war.

Arranging for the celebration of Mass was part of the chaplain's routine. All the diaries and many of the chaplains' letters testify to them riding or 'tramping out' to post Mass notices, usually on a weekly basis on Friday or Saturday. Not all attempts were successful. The important Catholic Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul which carried special war significance as a Universal Mass for the Pope's Intervention,<sup>33</sup> was noted by Fr Gillett as: 'Notices to troops passed over and consequently no congregation much'.<sup>34</sup> He continued to struggle but he was not alone, Fr Drinkwater: 'Mass for the Buffs in a barn. The East Surrey's didn't turn up – again!'<sup>35</sup> Fr Steuart had developed a bond with the junior military authorities, but despite having a number of Catholics in his care, he too was not immune from thoughtlessness: 'Only about 20 at Mass as the rest (without my knowledge) had been paraded for the combined

<sup>29</sup> Bellis, 'The Rawlinson Papers', 1-26.

<sup>30</sup> DAA, 3231, Rawlinson to Gillett, (5<sup>th</sup> April 1917).

<sup>31</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (30th September 1917).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., (8<sup>th</sup> April 1917).

<sup>33</sup> Essentially one of the many Pope's exhortations to prayer and the end of the war worldwide and across all belligerents, such as: 'Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum', (Appealing for Peace), 1<sup>st</sup> November 1914.

<sup>34</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (29<sup>th</sup> June 1917).

<sup>35</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (24<sup>th</sup> June 1915).

service'.<sup>36</sup> Despite these mixed experiences with the authorities for whom Fr Gillett suffered most amongst the diarists, it was Fr Fred Gillett who celebrated Mass almost three times more than Frs Steuart and Drinkwater.<sup>37</sup>

Offering Mass and satisfying the complete spiritual need of all Catholics were tasks too large to achieve, despite Rawlinson's earlier claim that: 'During the war, no Catholic man has been allowed to die without the Sacraments when there was any possibility of his being reached'.<sup>38</sup> Shortage of Catholic chaplains was an ever-present concern and restricted the amount of work that could be done. Nor were they necessarily deployed according to the laws of simple distribution. For instance, it was a political and practical imperative to keep the Irish Catholics reasonably satisfied in order to maintain their supply of priests for chaplaincy. Rawlinson assured Fr M. O'Connell of the 16<sup>th</sup> Irish Division [Fr Willie Doyle's SCF]: '... As I have always told you, I would on no account let the 16<sup>th</sup> Division go short'.<sup>39</sup> Shortages in the chaplaincy establishment were a constant concern in the Rawlinson archive and reached a hundred in 1918. Supplying chaplains where they were most needed was aggravated by the constant movement of brigades within and between theatres of war, as artillery, weaponry, and tactics became more sophisticated.<sup>40</sup> Corps soldiers were subject more than infantry to these fluctuations as they were often only temporarily attached to a unit before moving on. This meant that the Artillery, Tank, or Labour Corps and others, had less opportunity to receive their services. Being geographically dispersed and often unattached from their brigade, these Catholics presented real access problems. Matters hardly improved when the removal of their horses in 1917 caused major logistical problems. The situation became critical as the war continued: 'Field Artillery gunners, who in the late years of the war, were in continual peril from German counter-battery work, were always particularly pleased to see the priest, and were easy to induce to a simple service followed by Confession and Communion: this was more marked with them than even the infantry'.<sup>41</sup> Strategic and logistical military developments called for complex and co-ordinated manoeuvres, and chaplains were hard-pressed to respond. Fr Hessenhauer described some of the problems and his own preferred responses:

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<sup>36</sup> JAL, Steuart War Diaries, (4<sup>th</sup> August 1918). 'Without my knowledge' suggests that he was ordinarily consulted and his objections listened to, that he was not appears to surprise him, bringing his closeness with the Army into question.

<sup>37</sup> Fredericus he may have been at Ushaw, but it was always the names Fred and Harry, (Henricus), his identical twin brother, that he and his family used at all times.

<sup>38</sup> Rawlinson in a letter to Keatinge, *The Tablet*, (14<sup>th</sup> December 1918).

<sup>39</sup> DAA, 3235, Rawlinson to O'Connell from the Hexham Diocese, date illegible.

<sup>40</sup> Corrigan, *Mud, Blood, and Poppycock*, pp. 15, 263, 274-5, 300, 354, 386, 406-7.

<sup>41</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, p. 48.

The three chaplains could manage splendidly for all if it were not for the Artillery. To give the Artillery their just proportion means denying the Battalion the services they need so badly. The difficulty here is not the number of RC's (sic), (we now cater for a great deal more), but in the number of different units and the large area over which they are dispersed. For the moment we are at rest and the Artillery is six or seven miles from me and much scattered – each of us must say two Masses each Sunday to give the Battalion an opportunity. The Artillery must be left without Mass – or only with the opportunity of attending Mass (or as they call it French Mass in the village). Personally I don't like to leave the Battalions any Sunday without Mass – then no one turns up for Confessions.<sup>42</sup>

Fr Hessenhauer's experienced appraisal demonstrated how problems were resolved locally on a best-endeavours basis. He stressed the importance of saying Mass to as many Catholics as possible, but he also revealed another important purpose of Mass which was to act as a magnet drawing Catholic soldiers towards the Sacraments, particularly Confession. Fr Hessenhauer's observations are correct; the Mass was a vehicle for other sacraments, which will be examined.

Attendance figures at Mass at home were recorded but prone to error.<sup>43</sup> The Lenten statistics in Appendix 11 are a case in point. These were well-intentioned attempts to gather meaningful data with reference to Mass attendance but prone to statistical variation. The Liverpool Diocese figures were compiled church by church, usually by lay men in the congregation who were appointed for this duty by the parish priest. This method was open to human error and possible exaggeration as one parish might claim greater attendance, and hence ascendancy than the next.<sup>44</sup> However, the data regarding religious aspects, particularly the sacraments, was compiled by the clergy and being open to scrutiny can be considered reasonably reliable. Therefore, it is safe to assume that trends did reflect reality, as the increasing numbers of clergy required to satisfy these demand amply demonstrate.<sup>45</sup>

It was impossible, and largely irrelevant, to collect Mass attendance statistics in battle zones.<sup>46</sup> Many Catholic soldiers attended Mass because they had done so pre-war. There was no suggestion in the evidence examined that Mass attendance at war was uniquely inspired by France or Flanders. These men had always lived in a hard environment but had experience, to

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<sup>42</sup> DAA, 3234, Hessenhauer 142 Field Ambulance to Rawlinson, undated but evidently before 3 Masses were permitted.

<sup>43</sup> John Hilton and Peter Doyle both agree that figures were erratic, varying between geography and parish. 35% to 80% were quoted with 50% being a very rough average. What is clear is that Mass attendance was on the increase, characterised by both accelerating church building and attendance at the sacraments accelerated towards 1914 and beyond.

<sup>44</sup> Dioceses might also utilise these figures for comparisons between each other which would be useful to measure the degree of Catholic variation claimed earlier, but comparative figures were not uncovered. If they exist they will require close diocesan scrutiny in the future.

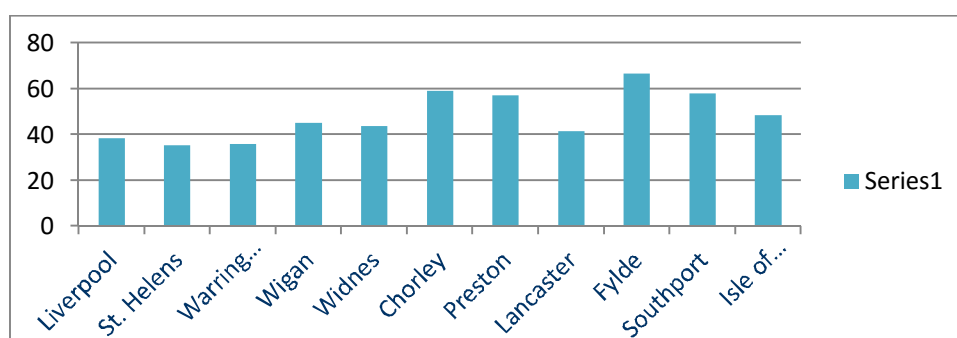
<sup>45</sup> Appendix 1 is indicative for the period 1800-1914, including regional seminarian data.

<sup>46</sup> This is where the diaries make a significant contribution in estimating attendance at war.

one degree or another, of Mass attendance at home. Despite the colourful descriptions of Radcliffe previously and Hilton to follow, there is a need for some realism. Catholics, even if devout, lived in a secular world and this alone restricted their opportunity to develop their religion. All men, but particularly working class men who formed the majority of fighting men, did not live solely for their religion, regardless of how spiritual they aspired to be. They, unlike their priests, lived in the miserable and tough conditions of pre-war Britain and all that meant. Their comradeship was not to be found in gentlemen's clubs, or the comfort of middle class tea rooms, or the quietude of the sacristy. They needed and would grasp respite. Some would find that in churches, whilst others would find comfort in the public house, more probably a mixture of the two. To slightly distort Hilton's assessment of churches as: 'lit by stained glass and candle light, as amidst clouds of incense, to the sound of Latin chant',<sup>47</sup> it would not be too difficult to translate this to stained glass and candle light, and substitute incense for clouds of tobacco smoke, and the sound of the choir for pub singer and accordionist.

A sample of regular Mass attendance is stated in the Report to Propaganda in 1887. In the Liverpool Diocese covering the West and North of Lancashire, that attendance was generally greater in the more affluent and rural areas, and less so in the towns. It should be noted that Mass attendance rose rapidly, so that between 1890 and 1914, there was a 70.5 % rise in attendance in the same diocese.<sup>48</sup>

**Graph 6.<sup>49</sup> Regular Mass Attendance 1887 as a Percentage of Catholic Population**



In Liverpool in 1887, the pattern was more marked. Little Crosby with its long recusant tradition and relative wealth achieved 82.4%, whilst the inner-city districts returned 35.2% for St Alexander's (Kirkdale, destroyed by bombing in World War Two), 28.5% for St Anthony's (Bootle), and 23.35% for St Joseph's, (Scotland Road/Everton), [these figure may be distorted

<sup>47</sup> Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 103

<sup>48</sup> Lenten returns Appendix 11.

<sup>49</sup> Compiled from data in Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 89.

for St Joseph's when in March 1876, the roof collapsed and fifteen people were trampled to death].

Public houses were an escape for many from slum conditions and back-breaking toil at home, or despair of unemployment, and it would be exactly the same for these men in the British Army. This does not undermine their religious commitment but places it into context. For men just out of battle, where the taking and giving of life was ever-present, the estaminet provided the comradeship and opportunity to let-off steam. They would change their state of consciousness before it happened all over again. It is difficult to deny these men such snatched pleasures. Naturally, pubs or estaminets provided a distraction to church attendance. Fr Gillett reluctantly accepted the reality of the situation; once more he demonstrated the value of his pre-war experience.<sup>50</sup> In the middle of the Somme offensive of 1916, he described his Brigade which had few Catholics:

Mass at 7pm then Rosary. Men billeted all around the church but few come to church. After the day's work and training they love to gather in estaminets for their beer over which they smoke and chat and the church is forgotten. Here they are, many preparing for the slaughter. Any minute they may be ordered forward. Yet thought of duties before their venture never seems to come home to them. They let slip the chances God put in their hands and have no remorse. God's mercy and goodness receives no recompense, yet many of these men are soon to court death.<sup>51</sup>

The church was a vital part of a soldier's life,<sup>52</sup> but likewise for many, so was the public house. Society was divided over alcohol questions.<sup>53</sup> Middle class morality defined the pub as bad, the church as good, but these were mostly working class men and there was no logical reason why the church and public house should be mutually exclusive. It was cogent that the public house was reassigned to the estaminet whilst away from the trenches, as would the church at home be relocated to a church in France, when one could be found part standing. The estaminet and ruined church were acceptable substitutes when there was no alternative. Reality owed little to Radcliffe's well-meant sentimentality. The Church did have competition, but not opposition, from the drinking culture among many working class Catholics.

There were subtler Army influences at play in non-Mass attendance. A contributor to the Plater enquiry suggested that the general Army culture of subordination and deference, had been imbibed by Catholic soldiers creating a sense of opting-out when taking personal

<sup>50</sup> Fr Drinkwater says little about alcohol. Fr Steuart regularly attests to supplying it for the Mess for both soldier (beer) and officer (whisky). He clearly has no problems with alcohol regularly taking wine, however, socially this was only with fellow officers of comparable rank. Fr Gillett occasionally imbibed, to which he attests in his dairies.

<sup>51</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (14<sup>th</sup> September 1916). He was referring to a southern unit in his own Brigade.

<sup>52</sup> Radcliffe, *Why Go To Church?* pp. 10-11. Here Fr Radcliffe has a more realistic approach: 'Churches remind us that we are pilgrims', and: 'they are reminders that we are on our way to our ultimate home in God'.

<sup>53</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation of Extremes: The Pioneers in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999).



responsibilities: 'They will willingly avail themselves of the help of priests and Sacraments if these helps are brought within reach. The Army system, however, does not help, and rather impedes initiative. This is shown in the matter of religion, as in all other matters'.<sup>54</sup> It is difficult to ascertain if Fr Plater's contributor's eyewitness account was credible. Discipline of the type in vogue at the time did undermine initiative: it was designed to do so. Nonetheless, Catholics with any real devotion would surely have availed themselves of services. By contrast, those Catholics from a weaker Catholic tradition, and with an Army induced lack of initiative, might find reasons for non-attendance at Mass and other services.

The Anglican Church, as the Established Church, was closely allied to the British Army. This presented some difficulties for Catholic chaplains, although not as many as might be imagined. Local difficulties did arise and examples will demonstrate that resolutions depended on cooperation between individuals with occasional requests to Rawlinson for clarification. From the Catholic chaplaincy evidence in the field, it appears that the institutional relationships between the denominations were, if not always cordial, then at least workable.<sup>55</sup>

### Sacraments

The importance of understanding and taking part in the Sacraments is established by Rafferty's observation, drawn from the Council of Trent that: '.... in the Catholic theology of the time [WW1], the Sacraments, for those who received them worthily, were the only sure means by which salvation could be attained'.<sup>56</sup> This is not to say that other denominations did not have sacramental and other devotional services and responsibilities, but not to the degree that Catholicism demanded, nor the surety of its unbroken traditions.

There are seven Catholic universal Sacraments: Holy Communion [Eucharist], Confession, Extreme Unction [Last Rites], Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage and Holy Orders.<sup>57</sup> They are listed in numerical order according to their frequency at the Front.<sup>58</sup> Opportunity to receive the Sacraments was regulated according to opportunity and desire in exactly the same way as celebrating Mass, and similarly, the Sacraments were truncated or adapted to the circumstances when under fire.

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<sup>54</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*. Anonymous chaplain, # 37, p. 47.

<sup>55</sup> Individual difficulties not to say bigotry was also generated by Catholic chaplains. These events were extremely rare on both sides but will be explored in Chapter 6. Evidence will demonstrate that whatever the religious differences, most clergy either supported or at least did not interfere, with other denominations legitimate activities. Whether that was by diplomacy or pragmatism is not clear.

<sup>56</sup> Rafferty, 'Catholic Chaplains to the British Forces', p. 35.

<sup>57</sup> Capitalisation follows the norm used by chaplains and the majority of Catholic writers.

<sup>58</sup> Given the emphasis on Catholic seminary education and the nature of war, Holy Orders were not applicable in a war scenario.

Fr Drinkwater expressed his enthusiasm for the Sacraments: 'For the hundredth time I marvelled at the Sacramental system, which enables a priest to walk into a camp, and in an hour or so get all the results worth having of a Revival or Mission, without any of the froth: and with men he has never seen before and will likely not see again'.<sup>59</sup> This is a rare insight into a chaplain's experience. He combined observations of practical religious delivery, with a summation and comparison with religious familiarisation found at home. Fr Drinkwater again displayed a human understanding of the uncertainty of war which contributed to the investigation of this chaplain's inner-most thoughts.<sup>60</sup> The Catholic Sacramental and Devotional systems added to the Universality of the Church and were yet further expressions of Catholic solidarity and distinction from other denominations, or from those with no religion.

The liturgy of the Eucharist or Holy Communion is at the heart and soul of Mass, and most Catholic soldiers had a broad theological knowledge of Communion deduced from their Catechism-based religious instruction. Depth of theological knowledge might be a different matter and cannot be demonstrated. Certainly they would not have been educated to the theological standards of their chaplains. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that the Eucharist, explained essentially in the two words, Holy and Communion, bound the community of soldiers and chaplains together: 'The Eucharist is central, it symbolises the fellowship of Christians with Christ. To eat the Eucharist is to proclaim one's union, almost one's identity, with fellow members of Christ....In a word, our union with the whole of humanity, our common destiny in Christ'.<sup>61</sup> Most troops would have been taught this at elementary school and before taking their first Holy Communion. Clerics and those who had developed their religious studies post-Catechism would understand the deeper nuances involved. Saint Thomas Aquinas is at the forefront in Catholic Eucharistic theology and stressed the apostolic value of the Sacrament or: 'What is distinctive about St Thomas is that he interprets the Eucharist's efficacy as being universal'.<sup>62</sup> The remembrance of Calvary and Christ's sacrifice of body and blood culminates in the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine at Holy Communion. Consecrating the bread and wine transforms these elements into the body and blood of Christ known as the Transubstantiation: 'The substance of the bread is withdrawn from this world and changed into the substance of the glorified body of Christ:

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<sup>59</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (16<sup>th</sup> January 1917).

<sup>60</sup> It is extremely difficult to gather enough information on most Catholic chaplains to establish solid analyses of their character or philosophies. Diarists present such an option. All three chaplains in the control group will contribute.

<sup>61</sup> O'Neill, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, p. 360.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

those who eat the transubstantiated bread are themselves drawn into the sphere of eternal happiness'.<sup>63</sup> Transubstantiation separates Catholicism from most Christian denominations and is a profound doctrine.<sup>64</sup> Holy Communion allows the recipient to experience a spiritual closeness with God and raises the experience beyond the mere rational. It is an absolute expression of Faith and a commitment of sharing with fellow celebrants. The Eucharist expresses the coming together of Catholics in Christ, and is fundamental in the conviction and tradition of the Universal Church. The intensity of this experience depended on the individual's ability and willingness to accept this gift from God. It is likely that the emotional intensity of the Sacrament was heightened under the stress of war and provided a benefit both psychologically and spiritually among troops of the same conviction.

Holy Communion was the Sacrament most received and celebrated by soldiers as the chaplains testify, and they regularly toiled in their commitment to deliver the host, either at Mass, or as a stand-alone Sacrament at the roadside, or whenever both priest and supplicant could engage. Communion featured regularly in two of the three diaries. Fr Steuart recounts offering Communion on forty seven occasions and becomes uncharacteristically, and understandably emotional when celebrating the Sacrament with a young man awaiting imminent execution. Gillett had no such trauma. He reported 89 Communions which were a representation of his chaplaincy life in general, a mixture of joy and bounty when celebrating the Eucharist with a large contingent of Catholic troops. Fr Drinkwater rarely mentions giving Communion or the Sacraments.<sup>65</sup> Catholic troops also demonstrated their devotion to Christ's sacrifice and embraced Holy Communion. It is relevant to sense the joint enthusiasm of chaplain and troops, as Fr Gillett described in 1916: 'About 3-400 men rallied for Mass - all received Holy Communion. Salutations were sung after the Consecration and at the end Faith of Our Fathers was sung'.<sup>66</sup> This Mass was celebrated by Fr Gillett and three Canadian chaplains, again strengthening the universality of the Church and the chaplaincy bonds with their men. Mass was the usual method of distributing the Eucharist, but Front line chaplains also carried the Blessed Sacrament in a Pyx, which is a small portable container holding the Eucharist, as Fr Drinkwater explained: 'Round the guns with (Blessed Sacrament) of 230 A and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p203. Fr O'Neill was Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Fribourg University, Switzerland, in the 1960s.

<sup>64</sup> Some Eastern Orthodox Christians also believe in transubstantiation.

<sup>65</sup> It should be noted that unlike the statistics on Mass, the Eucharist figures are representative only. The Eucharist is an integral part of every Mass and it can be assumed that the diarists saw no need to routinely record the fact. Also Communion was given at times without the opportunity to celebrate Mass.

<sup>66</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (22<sup>nd</sup> October 1916).

D and 231 B'.<sup>67</sup> He increasingly adapted so that: 'Have begun to carry the Blessed Sacrament always'.<sup>68</sup>

Things did not always go to plan and sometimes demand exceeded supply: 'Mass at Millencourt at 9, then rode to Baizeux and said Mass at 11. Nearly 300 at Communion, although I broke up the Hosts I was obliged to leave about 20 without Communion'.<sup>69</sup> At other times the Sacrament was given individually: 'Mass at 8am to convenience an officer with Holy Communion',<sup>70</sup> or to a few: 'Gave Communion to Daery and Driscoll. Pouring rain'.<sup>71</sup> The arrival of the American Forces gave Fr Gillett a large congregation to temporarily serve: 'Mass in Molliens - lots of USA boys - many at Holy Communion'.<sup>72</sup> The liturgy of the Eucharist, as it had been for Holy Mass, was clearly beneficial for soldiers and chaplains alike. An uncredited reviewer of Fr O'Neill's study stated that: 'There is more to the Church than the liturgy [Eucharistic liturgy] but there is nothing in the Church that does not depend on it'.<sup>73</sup> The consistency of liturgies, which were the same internationally, was a bonus which allowed and encouraged flexibility in celebrating the Eucharist. On the ground the conditions for celebrating Communion could be challenging, even in a church. In the bitterly cold winter of 1917 Fr Gillett exclaimed: 'Mass at 10:30 in Martinsart, so cold that the chalice was congealing by the time I got to the Communion and oh my poor hands!'<sup>74</sup> Fr Steuart: 'Went to Watou Hut with Doctor. Ran into a bombardment and retaliation, so side-stepped to trenches and stayed for a bit at the Field Ambulance. Buried two of the 10/11th HLI at 8pm. at the Chinstrap Lane cemetery. Found 3 RC's (sic) there to whom I gave Communion'.<sup>75</sup>

The spiritual purity of the Sacraments was impinged on by the secular. The matters of men, be it Army or clergy, and their rule-making complicated matters and polluted the intent of chaplains. For example, the rules surrounding fasting complicated opportunities to minister the Eucharist, and they also reveal the tortured communications of the period and the confusion generated by the system of chaplaincy faculties in France and Belgium.<sup>76</sup> Soldiers were exempt from fasting but not chaplains. This offers an insight into the strained relationships between GHQ and the Catholic hierarchy, and also the chaplaincy reaction.

<sup>67</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (13<sup>th</sup> August 1917).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., (2<sup>nd</sup> July 1918).

<sup>69</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (12<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>70</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (22<sup>nd</sup> January 1917).

<sup>71</sup> JAL., Steuart Diaries, (5<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>72</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (30<sup>th</sup> June 1918). It is no surprise, given the paucity of Catholics in his Brigade, and his difficult relationships with British Army Officers that he worked and socialised with many American chaplains in 1918 and 1919.

<sup>73</sup> O'Neill, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, rear cover review, author unknown.

<sup>74</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (28<sup>th</sup> January).

<sup>75</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (22<sup>nd</sup> November 1917).

<sup>76</sup> Faculties were a written confirmation of the permissions granted to that individual priest.

With regards to the Eucharist, the problems around fasting are indicative of this administrative confusion. Faculties for chaplains were over-arched by the Pope's decrees and determined by Cardinal Bourne and later Army Bishop Keatinge. They were also subject to the permissions granted for civilians by the local bishop in whose area the chaplain was operating. Chaplains informed soldiers of changes, wherever possible, yet it was an erratic system of communication. Catholic huts and clubs were one method of communication between chaplains and soldiers but these were isolated and inconsistent resources. The task was made more difficult with the sometimes literally shifting ground, with which a Front line chaplains had to contend. Sometimes the Sacraments were combined. The Easter duties, for instance, expected Catholics to receive Communion and Confession.<sup>77</sup> Fr Bartley took it upon himself to remind the soldiers of changes to the requirements at home and made their responsibilities abundantly clear. Audruicq Catholic club under the stewardship of Fr Carey provided the effective means by which to comply as this poster recognises:

1. By order of the Pope we are exempt during the war from the laws of fasting and abstinence.
2. The Easter Duties (Confession and Communion) bind under pain of mortal sin.
3. Being in a foreign diocese we must conform to the laws of the diocese as regards the time for fulfilling the Easter Duties. By special arrangement with the Bishop of Arras the period has been extended for the British soldiers in this diocese. It begins on Sunday, March 4 and ends on Ascension Day, May 17.
4. Unless notice is given to the contrary, Confessions will be heard on Saturday evening from 6 -7 in the Catholic Church, Audruicq.
5. It is the business of each to make his own arrangements about his Easter duties and endeavour to secure a Pass in case one is necessary. Those who go home on leave may go to their duties at home, and it will probably be more convenient to do so. You are reminded that the period at home extends from Ash Wednesday till Low Sunday.<sup>78</sup>

The Army was not involved with detailed Catholic matters such as fasting as these were purely internal Catholic administration concerns. The difficulties lay between the Papacy, which issued the decrees, and the local episcopacy in whose area the bishop would issue pronouncements. Cardinal Bourne as the *de facto* Army Bishop,<sup>79</sup> added to the confusion and it was left to the beleaguered Rawlinson to sort out, or at least attempt to, but as will be shown not always fruitfully. At home it was a requirement to fast before receiving the Eucharist,

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<sup>77</sup> It should be noted that a communicant had to be in a State of Grace, or free from mortal sin, every time he received the Eucharist. At Easter and Christmas it was expected and customary to combine at least Confession and Communion with Holy Mass.

<sup>78</sup> DAA, 3235, Bartley to Rawlinson, (undated but probably February 1917).

<sup>79</sup> Keatinge was made official Episcopus Castrensis in early 1918, until then Bourne assumed control as has been noted, often at the expense of episcopal agreement or consent.

whilst at war dispensation had been granted to soldiers and, therefore, should have had little or no impact on the men in khaki.

Nevertheless, the rules on fasting continued to cause confusion. Chaplains communicated change to soldiers but their own processes to receive news were blemished. In principle, those chaplains who did not have access to Catholic Clubs such as Adruicq, relied on enquiries at GHQ to clarify any changes to the rules affecting their faculties. This was an *ad hoc* arrangement supported at times by circulars. This was one rare instance where priestly education did not benefit chaplains. These were purely logistical and communication problems. The system limped along, as the following enquiries concerning the fasting requirements of non-combatant Catholics, illustrate. Despite the confusion, anything which might disallow Catholics from receiving the Eucharist needed attention, and clarification was rapidly sought. Catholic nursing sisters, for example, were they exempt from fasting? The response in a letter to Fr Brookfield OSB from Rawlinson's deputy Fr Young OSB was plain but unendorsed: 'All folk, in any way attached to the Army, and in particular nursing sisters, are included in your faculties. I can't find for the moment a pamphlet which gives a decree which I would like to quote, but what is quoted in this paragraph is quite certain'.<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, some six months later Fr Scannell OMI at a CCS asked the same question about dispensation: '....do you think it may be extended to sisters working in CCS's (sic)? Personally I do not think so, but as another opinion, I believe, exists, may I ask your opinion in this matter for guidance'.<sup>81</sup> Another factor might be described as communication ambiguity. One telegram sent to all chaplains (undated) attempted to clarify the situation regarding the fasting régime for soldiers, but because of local conditions or interpretation had the opposite effect. Fr Byrne OSB wrote: '....the telegram from the PC's office has stopped me procrastinating [reference fasting before Communion]', but then he became confused: '....in the case of men [under shell-fire] who cannot come to Communion fasting, I do not hesitate to give them Communion *'per modum Viatici'*, can I treat all these men as at the Front?'<sup>82</sup> Fr Byrne was referring to those not actually fighting but busy with other military duties and was clearly unaware that all soldiers were exempt.

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<sup>80</sup> DAA, 3234 Young to Brookfield, (28<sup>th</sup> April 1917), the pamphlet was not in the archive. It is notable that he refers to 'attached to the Army'. This excludes all civilians as they are covered by the faculties derived from the local bishop. POWs and allies were presumably not covered either as the dispensation refers to 'the Army' and not the Armies. Such confusion exemplifies the inability of the Church authorities to relinquish their conventional parochial control and aspire to creating a common understanding for all Catholics at war. Hardly the actions of the Universal Church.

<sup>81</sup> DAA, 3235, Scannell to Rawlinson, (28<sup>th</sup> October 1917).

<sup>82</sup> DAA, 3234, Byrne OSB to Rawlinson, (undated).

These ambiguities appear to be localised and isolated instances, the product of logistical shortcomings. There is no evidence that this Sacrament was not available to any soldier or non-combatant because of failing to fast. Chaplains found fasting difficult when also conducting their duties, especially on Sundays where they frequently celebrated three Masses.<sup>83</sup> They too were subject to fasting from midnight before receiving the Eucharist. In practical terms this period spanned the early Mass at 8am, until sometimes an evening Mass at 6pm, a total of possibly 18 plus hours. They did have a champion on their behalf in the shape of Rawlinson who now endeavoured to assist, but they also had his antithesis in Army Bishop Keatinge.<sup>84</sup> Rawlinson was a man aware and capable of delivering episcopal ambition. Despite these qualities, he was sometimes harshly treated by his ecclesiastical leaders connected to the Army. Rawlinson was on occasions, jettisoned by Keatinge, a technique he would adopt himself later with Irish chaplains, and others. He was the conduit between the hierarchy at home and chaplains at the Front but his position is a little more complex. He was defender, and yet at times agent provocateur, to both Catholic chaplains and hierarchy. This can be viewed as being concordant with Karen Armstrong's term *coincidentia oppositorum*, which she describes as: 'During a heightened encounter with the sacred, things that normally seem opposed coincide to reveal an underlying unity'.<sup>85</sup>

Rawlinson would sometimes bear the brunt of chaplaincy frustration and often his work for chaplains went unnoticed. His mission with his chaplains was sacred; his remit with the hierarchy a mixture of sacred and secular. An exchange of opinions with Keatinge is illustrative of his support for his charges, a support that was not always reciprocal. In response to the question of asking for special fasting privileges for these men, Bishop Keatinge launched a surprisingly provocative attack on chaplains in general. Rawlinson's spirited and patently angry, if diplomatic response, repudiated such calumny:

I note that the Bishop does not feel inclined to ask for any privileges [from Rome] with regard to the question of fasting until he is more convinced than at present for the need for them. Personally I am fully convinced that it would assist to a very high degree the work and efficiency of the chaplains in the field. Although it may be true that "some chaplains at times, are perhaps less inclined that they should be, to suffer occasional hardships in the execution of their duty" I hardly think that this accusation could be made against more than 5% of those out here. And it is not from such men that the application for saying Mass non-fasting has ever come. The men I would plead for are the other 95%, many of whom are suffering from the strain of three or more

<sup>83</sup> Dispensation to say 3 Masses was given by Pope Benedict XV: 'Incruentum Altaris', (10<sup>th</sup> August 1915), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/la/bulls/documents/hf\\_ben-xv\\_bulls\\_19150810\\_incruentum-altaris.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xv/la/bulls/documents/hf_ben-xv_bulls_19150810_incruentum-altaris.html), accessed September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013. When this became effective at the Front is uncertain.

<sup>84</sup> Keatinge was promoted to this role in early 1918 and ought to have known the difficulties and hardships chaplains were experiencing. He had been Principal Chaplain on the Western Front before Rawlinson.

<sup>85</sup> Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God: What Religion Really Means* (London: The Bodley Head, 2009), p. 37.

years constant work in the Front line, their nerves racked through gun fire by day and bombs by night, and who are then called upon to say two or more Masses every Sunday for units some considerable miles apart, and generally without proper means of transport, if any at all. It is from these most self-sacrificing and zealous of priests only that a desire for a dispensation has come very frequently during the last two years, and never from those few would-be drones. It must not be forgotten that many priests have been in the Front-line between three and four years uncomplainingly who would certainly have had well merited rests at the Base had not the shortage of priests out here prevented it. Three hundred men are doing the work of four hundred. I would, therefore, strongly recommend that the dispensation be obtained if possible, and I feel sure it will prevent the breaking down and casualties of many of our ranks which we can ill afford. The application for such a dispensation might be worded for those only in the Front line and for the second Mass only to be non-fasting'.<sup>86</sup>

Peter Howson's argument that organisational chaos proliferated,<sup>87</sup> which he described as 'muddling through', gains ground when recognising the hierarchy's apparent distance from reality; but in the Catholic experience it was hardly chaos and more a result of learning as they went along, a fairly normal experience at war, if not ideal or normal at home. Geography determined that it was the Bishop of Arras who extended the time period by which to complete the Easter Duties for soldiers, but not for civilians. It was the Pope who granted soldiers the exemption to fasting and abstinence. When the surprisingly distant and unsympathetic *Episcopus Castrensis* Keatinge is added to the equation, then the muddle is hard to dispute, but the vagueness in these particular cases appears to have been isolated and hence, hardly chaos. Taken out of context they show over-elaboration and parochialism; in context they show consistency and functionality. Nothing further was reported in diaries, correspondence, or the Plater survey. This is important because it enhances and confirms that the diaries provide consistent evidence, thereby avoiding the distortion that can occur when individual correspondence is analysed in isolation. Thus, the value that chaplains placed on the Eucharistic Sacrament, and the problems surrounding fasting for a few chaplains, are located into their rightful, balanced, context. The truth can be established not as a misrepresentative 'muddling through', but as a successful implementation albeit in a long-winded manner. Despite the logistical problems, not of the chaplains own making, the frequency of celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion provided ample evidence that they were more than willing to supply the needs of soldiers, civilians, and fellow clerics.

The general response from chaplains to instructions on fasting from GHQ throws some light on their core values and poignantly defines their relationship with their senior chaplain. They confirmed that they were a product of a well-disciplined, conservative, patriarchal, and

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<sup>86</sup> DAA, Bishops Correspondence, (14<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>87</sup> Howson, *Muddling Through*, an argument consistent throughout his book.



hierarchical Catholic institution. This reiterated and endorsed the evidence presented through the study of their seminary training with its emphasis on discipline. Fr Rawlinson was respected as the Senior Catholic clergyman in the field. However, his remit was restricted to non-spiritual matters, confirming the assuredness of Catholic missionary ethos established earlier. In the case of Father Wrafter discussed later, Rawlinson had issued a change in local procedure to prohibit civilians from receiving Mass. This was a ploy by Rawlinson to circumnavigate army displeasure, but it also indicated the strength of chaplains. Rawlinson carried the weight of office, but not of Divine Office, and chaplains knew where to draw the line. In spiritual matters, priests were answerable only to bishops through their faculties and not to Army rank, even a Catholic Colonel and Benedictine priest. Hence, the rules on fasting were decreed to chaplains, and their revision became part of their latest priestly faculties. Decrees came from the Catholic hierarchy, and could not be overlooked, and even less overturned. These were not open to discussion.<sup>88</sup> What at first looked like unnecessary red-tape and unworthy of a Universal Church, now begins to make perfect sense from a chaplaincy standpoint. Chaplains were on the whole pragmatic men, and if they were not confronted with a challenge to their principles, as with fasting, then to comply would simply be the sensible option and demonstrate the conformity with which they were familiar back home. Ordained priests understood that whilst they were perfectly qualified to perform as priests within the diocese in which they were practicing, they needed the bishop's permission to do so. There was only so far chaplains could go when confronted with not only their disciplined and obedient training, but also the combined forces of clerical procedure and possible non-approbation by their ecclesiastical superiors. Chaplains were not, and could not have been expected to be radicals, and far less revolutionaries.

The importance of the Sacrament of Confession to Catholic soldiers had two distinct and complementary purposes. In its own right it conferred all the spiritual graces described below, including the removal of the stain of sins. To die with Mortal Sins, not cleansed and absolved, condemned the non-penitent to eternal damnation. These theologies were repeated through the Catechism and soldiers would be in no doubt as to the options available. Its other practical purpose, after a State of Grace had been established, was to enable other Sacraments to be celebrated. Communion, for example, was denied to those in Mortal Sin. As with Holy Communion, priestly training demanded the knowledge of the Church's theology of the

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<sup>88</sup> Priests were ordained and able to perform their duties anywhere provided they had the episcopal blessing from the bishop in whose area of responsibility they were attached.

Sacrament of Confession.<sup>89</sup> It is a complex topic which in the context of this study finds practical relevance in the purpose of the Sacrament and the soldier's commitment to it. Unlike other Sacraments, Confession is a decidedly private affair between the two Confessors and God.

Confession is an often misunderstood Sacrament. It unequivocally does not mean committing a sin with automatic forgiveness and at liberty to commit sin again. What it does require is a genuine act of contrition, an acceptance and sorrow for offending God's will, a serious intention of not repeating the sin, and importantly an act of atonement through penance. If all these conditions are met then a full act of forgiveness will be received enhanced with the Grace of the Sacrament. The final part of the Confession requires the recipient to forgive others as he has been forgiven. As stated, it is deemed vital by Catholics to receive the Sacrament of Confession to ensure that when they died they would be in a 'State of Grace', with all that implied.

Catholic soldiers believed that their soul and everlasting life, were more precious than mere mortality, and did everything to protect it but they did not always succeed. Despite forebodings, some soldiers were reluctant to take advantage of the benefits of Confession, the second most celebrated Sacrament for soldiers. The Plater survey quotes an anonymous chaplain whose observations are borne out by research:<sup>90</sup>

The majority, unless strongly urged, don't come often to Confession: the reasons being shyness, shame, ignorance, forgetfulness of method of going, fear of reproof, and long absence, but they were eager for Absolution all the same, for almost every man would come to Holy Communion after a General Absolution. They were, however, very amenable to 'Easter Duties'.<sup>91</sup> Before going into action, more would come to Confession than usual, and were genuinely contrite: others were not moved, but they were none the less glad to know that a priest was not far away, and if you met them in the dressing-station they would always make themselves known.<sup>92</sup>

The above statement raises some interesting points. The soldiers needed urging to overcome a range of human resistance. This suggests that Confession was seen as less of a Sacrament in its fullest and singular sense, and more a necessary obligation before receiving Communion or the Last Rites.<sup>93</sup> Despite some general reluctance, the commitment to partake of the Sacrament was marked in strongly Catholic units. Fr Peale SJ records his time with the

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<sup>89</sup> For a theological explanation, 'Penance and Sorrow in Christ', in O'Neill, *Meeting Christ in the Sacraments*, chapter 11, pp. 275-291.

<sup>90</sup> That is the frequency and delivery of the Sacrament. We rely on Plater to suggest motivations which seem wholly candid. The Plater survey known as *Catholic Soldiers* is discussed in methodology.

<sup>91</sup> Catholic commitment to attend Confession, Mass, and Holy Communion at Easter for fear of Mortal Sin.

<sup>92</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*. Anonymous chaplain 23, p. 48.

<sup>93</sup> This is understandable given the insistence of the Church to make 'Easter Duties' mandatory which included Confession.

Connaught Rangers: 'Confessions were numerous. Looking over my diary I note for these days 60-20-111-354-21-29-100. The grand total for the first year was 3,200 Confessions',<sup>94</sup> whilst Fr Gillett on the June 9<sup>th</sup> 1917 reported: 'Arranging for Sunday Mass. Met a Lancashire Labour Battalion and arranged for Confessions - not seen so many RCs for a while'.<sup>95</sup>

One reason for better attendance at Confession was resources. Fr Carey benefitted from having the Adruicq Catholic Club adjacent to his church:

In the Church (or seminary chapel) attached to the club, it was the same story every evening. Six or seven of us would plant ourselves out of earshot of one another and cope with the queues waiting for confession. Another directed operations from the altar rails giving Communion at regular intervals.... Father Devas, a later arrival, loved this exhibition of religious licence and threw himself into it - he and his inseparable dog - who wouldn't, for all the efforts of the army, be thrown out of the Church but squatted happily beside his master and must have become an expert in military confessions.<sup>96</sup>

The Catholic Club provided an experience reminiscent of home for those in the locality, and helped overcome the human reluctance to confess.

American troops, according to the testimonies of Frs Gillett and Fitzgibbon, were pious Catholics. Fr Gillett marvelled at the higher proportions of Catholics in their ranks:

Holy Mass. Visited the Yanks and found out their chaplains. Confessions at Molliens again, later helped the American chaplains, five were going up to 11pm - the boys were lined up in queues - the chaplains and I sat in a tent each - phew! Some Confessions - Never heard so many in 3 years with British troops.<sup>97</sup>

The American commitment to the Sacraments including Confession emphasised the universal nature of the Catholic commitment to war. Fr Jack Fitzgibbon SJ, MC, from the Irish Province was also struck by the influx of Americans:<sup>98</sup>

The Yanks are all around us now and last Sunday I had hundreds of them at Mass and Benediction in an old farm, some miles behind. The Benediction started at 7 o'clock and with Confessions and Holy Communion I was not finished until after 10 o'clock and then I had an hours trek back to my little grey home!<sup>99</sup>

Whether or not the strength of American Catholics is due to the traditions of European or other ethnic migrants is unclear, but Catholicism in America was somewhere around fifteen

<sup>94</sup> Peale, *War Jottings*, vol. 2, p. 16.

<sup>95</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (June 19<sup>th</sup> 1917).

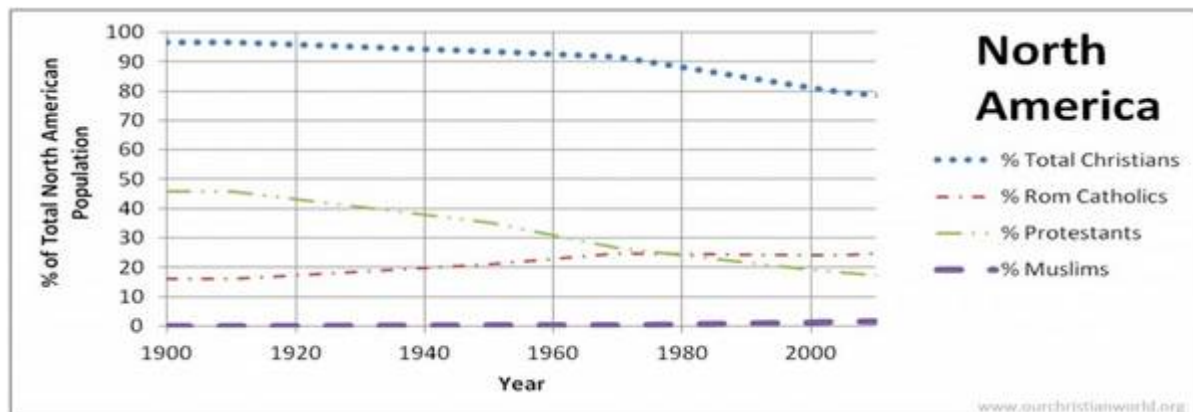
<sup>96</sup> K. Finlay, 'British Catholic Identity during the First War: The Challenge of Universality and Particularity', (unpublished master of philosophy thesis, Oxford University, 2004), p. 239. Her brief case studies of Devas and Drinkwater, reveals an outline of their personalities, and is a welcome inclusion into Catholic chaplain historiography.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., (October 15<sup>th</sup> 1918). *Irish Jesuit Chaplains*

<sup>98</sup> Stephen Bellis, 'Fr J Fitzgibbon SJ', in Burke, *Irish Jesuit Chaplains*. Jack Fitzgibbon was killed praying with a German POW in September 1918 although it is not known if he was providing a Sacrament.

<sup>99</sup> JAD, CHP 1/21 (18), Jack Fitzgibbon.

per cent of the population during the war and roughly in line with Liverpool Catholicism, significantly higher than the English national average. **Graph 7<sup>100</sup>**



German prisoners of war widened the international congregation and were also accommodated. Fr Steuart's diaries show his commitment and knowledge of the German language. Here he reported that: 'December 1918. Midnight Mass pretty well attended. Mass again at 9am & at 11:30 at 311 POW Camp. Heard nearly 80 prisoners Confessions. Benediction at 5:30'.<sup>101</sup>

Chaplains were also obliged to go to Confession to a fellow chaplain. Gillett, whilst serving with the occupation forces in 1919 recounted his own need for contrition: 'Ash Wednesday - Holy Mass - put in a day's devotion - sort of day's retreat and in evening go to Confession and rehearsed my army life and not before time!'<sup>102</sup> Participation at Confession was vital and applied to soldiers, civilians, and the clergy alike.

Unlike Holy Communion, and the other Sacraments, defining the willingness to confess was complicated by many factors. Confession was a profoundly direct and personal engagement between the chaplain, soldier, and God. Apart from the Sacramental Graces, Confession had the potential to free the Communicant from an eternal life in Hell. By Confession, he would not be assured a place in Heaven, but he would have a fighting chance. Such were the stakes and it seems incomprehensible that more Confessions were not accepted. There was no such hesitation from chaplains, who were painfully aware of the significance of the Sacrament and in all its theological nuances. Nevertheless, testimony was confusing. Confessions were reflected in the views and experiences of both Plater and the diarists, but there were many variables at play. It was noted above that Plater had assessed danger as a motivator. Given the unimaginable sanctions that would apply if Catholics died in

<sup>100</sup> [http://ourchristianworld.org/?page\\_id=13](http://ourchristianworld.org/?page_id=13). Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2015.

<sup>101</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (Christmas Day 1918).

<sup>102</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (5<sup>th</sup> March 1919).

battle in a State of Mortal Sin, his comment that: 'Before going into action, more would come to Confession than usual, and were genuinely contrite', is surely an understatement. Fr Gillett after experiencing a few months on the Somme concurred: 'Several priests to hear Confessions and how willing the lads turn in - they realise the value of the spirituals in their uncertain life'.<sup>103</sup> The understandable anonymity granted to contributors in the Plater enquiry disallows further geographical analysis, but there is nothing to suggest that the theory of geographical variations in Catholicism established to date is flawed. Repeated diary entries confirm that those areas defined as exhibiting a stronger Catholic identity, and especially with the help of supportive pals, would not only be visible at Mass but also be sustained across the Sacraments and Devotions, although the anonymity of Confessions excludes that Sacrament from this observation.

Not one letter or private diary-entry during research gave any intimation of disclosure by the clergy from within the Confessional. The assurance of secrecy and anonymity was inviolate. It was a testimony both to chaplains and the sanctity of the Sacrament, that when irregularities and misbehaviours were alleged outside the Confessional, even for those eventually proven guilty, there was never any Confessional evidence given either directly or indirectly to others, or for that matter, requested. Secrecy remained between the two Confessors and within the Sacrament of Confession. Chaplains could be proud of their commitment to the men and to the Sacrament's integrity.

Absolution, either general or personal, is the remission of sin but is not a Sacrament. It is closely linked with Confessions which makes this an appropriate place to discuss this occasionally ministered priestly gift. Absolution does not confer the blessings of the Sacrament of Confession and is not intended as its permanent replacement. Rather it is a method of remission of sin which allows soldiers to be free from sin temporarily, and is either ministered *en masse* or individually. Absolution was given by chaplains when death was imminent, or when they could not be certain of the fate of the recipient, for example, when soldiers were going 'over the top'. It was also given if there was no time to hear the Confession of individual penitents. If the soldier survived, they were obliged to seek Confession as soon as practicable.

General Absolution of sins is a Catholic expedient in times of great danger so that numbers of men could be absolved in desperate situations. The most celebrated and dramatic example of General Absolution is the painting below of: 'The Blessing of the Munsters', and

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., (12<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

shows Fr Gleeson raising his hand to deliver and bless the Absolution. Fr Gleeson's involvement was not an isolated event yet illustrated the reverence and respect between the chaplain, troops, the religious act itself, and in this case the Army too.<sup>104</sup>



**Illustration 11**<sup>105</sup>

Ministering General Absolution in battle or in preparation for battle, was gratefully received and a practical, albeit provisional substitution for Confession. Fr Gillett testified: 'General Absolution was given and all received Holy Communion. Salutations were sung after the Consecration and at the end Faith of Our Fathers. The Altar was the Grand Piano and very handy and roomy it was'.<sup>106</sup> Fr Gillett, in his typically understated fashion, played-down the dangerous circumstances which required General Absolution. The previous day saw fierce fighting at Memetz Wood, a short distance from the Grand Piano, during the latter stages of the Somme offensives of 1916. The men were to march that night back into the trenches.

Absolution was also given on an individual basis when circumstances demanded. Fr Steuart provided evidence and justification for individual Absolution. In the first instance one dying man did not have time and probably the wherewithal for Confession: 'A bomb fell in the

<sup>104</sup> 'Under the command of Lt-Colonel VGH Rickard, 2<sup>nd</sup> Munsters marched again towards the Front. Rickard halted the Battalion. The chaplain (Fr Gleeson) held his right hand and intoned general absolution'.

<sup>105</sup> Painting by Fortunio Matania, frontispiece on *The Stonyhurst Association Newsletter*, 301 (September 2010). Fr Delaney SJ replaced Gleeson later, before Gleeson returned.

<sup>106</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (22nd October 1916).

courtyard just across the street from me and killed two men. One was not quite dead and I had time to give him his Absolution'.<sup>107</sup> Another Catholic received Absolution because of his physical condition: 'A New Zealander killed near us in the trenches. He was an RC and I was able to give him absolution, tho' he probably never recovered consciousness. RIP. Boche still shelling Monchy'.<sup>108</sup> In the next example he delivered Absolution individually as the probability of gathering the troops collectively impractical and the danger imminent:

I went round the three battalions and saw each RC individually and gave them absolution. No longer had we advanced over the ridge above the Amiens-Albert road than the Boche opened a frightful barrage on us. Lt Forsyth was badly wounded [and died a few days later at Warloy],<sup>109</sup> Mackenzie slightly, and many men killed or wounded. MO, Tomkin, Sgt Henry, Cpl McLellan and I got into a hole by the roadside and attended to the wounded. Very heavy crumping all the time'.<sup>110</sup>

These examples of Fr Steuart neatly define the reasons for individual Absolution. He describes one man dying, another unconscious and in his last moments, and the final one because of time limitations. Clearly in the last example, the men were readying for battle which made collective General Absolution impractical, hence his visits to each Catholic individually.

After the Armistice chaplains were still in demand. Steuart in 1919 was confronted by a situation where a Catholic officer committed suicide:

On coming back from the 9:15 Mass I find that Hody has tried to kill himself with morphine & has been taken to hospital. Went to see him. He is unconscious & they are giving him oxygen & artificial respiration. It was evidently deliberate, as he left his will & letters etc. & in a long letter to Gooddy tells him categorically what he has done & asks him to 'camouflage' it to his relations as an accidental overdose. He died this evening at 6 o'clock. I was able to give him conditional absolution. Gooddy is almost off his head.<sup>111</sup>

This was a difficult situation as suicide was a Mortal Sin.<sup>112</sup> He overcame this religious dilemma by giving conditional Absolution, presumably leaving the validity of such an action to a higher authority. The sense of loss of his fellow Catholic officer affected Steuart, but he overcame any emotional dilemma by the same sort of camouflage adopted by fellow officers to hide the truth from relatives. The stiff upper-lip characteristic of his background and class was in evidence. Fr Steuart was distant at times, and socially estranged from the bulk of chaplains as has been demonstrated, but he was also a consummately devout priest and never shirked his spiritual responsibilities. Absolution has been shown to be diligently given in situations where

<sup>107</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (26<sup>th</sup> December 1916).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., (13<sup>th</sup> September 1917).

<sup>109</sup> This was retrospectively added by Steuart and emphasised with an asterisk.

<sup>110</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (27<sup>th</sup> March 1918).

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., (15<sup>th</sup> June 1919).

<sup>112</sup> Doctrine still describes suicide as a Mortal Sin, it also acknowledges that the person must have an informed intellect and give full consent. [Catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/reo123.html](http://Catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/reo123.html) – Accessed June 6<sup>th</sup> 2014

Confession was impractical ensuring that Catholics would make their final journey as prepared as possible.

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction is also referred to as the Last Rites or the Anointing of the Sick. It is a crucial Sacrament for Catholics to receive, and the reason why so many chaplains were killed in forward areas providing it.<sup>113</sup> Its purpose was to prepare the soul for its final journey, contained a remission of sins, and gave the dying spiritual strength and health. Extreme Unction's fortifying powers were well understood by Catholics who knew what was expected of them despite its brief and inadequate description in the 'Penny Catechism of the Catholic Church'.<sup>114</sup> Catholics had a clear knowledge of the preparation required for death and the soul's journey into the after-life. There was also an understanding that further purification might be needed to enter heaven, and that purgatory would provide that opportunity if the great prize could not be immediately secured, and by extension there would always be hope of salvation. The Sacrament was distinguished by first Confession, then Communion, and finally the physical anointing of oils to the sensory organs by a priest when death was imminent.<sup>115</sup>

The Last Rites highlighted the disadvantage that soldiers, who did not attend Mass or the Sacraments, and particularly those in southern units with few Catholics, experienced. The unevenness of Catholic representation in geographically defined units had an impact on both soldier and chaplain alike. The reason is purely one of recognition, that is, who was a Catholic and who was not? It was more practicable to perform the Last Rites for a Catholic soldier from a company who had a known Catholic configuration, for example from the 16<sup>th</sup> Irish Division, or the Liverpool Irish Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment.<sup>116</sup> In a battle scenario of chaos and carnage, it was hardly feasible for chaplains in no-man's-land to stop and try and distinguish which dying man was a Catholic. No Catholic, troop or clergy, carried any external Catholic identification.<sup>117</sup> In practice this situation was alleviated by assistance from fellow soldiers, of whatever religious complexion, trying to help their comrades. In predominantly Catholic units, chaplains stood a better chance of recognising and anointing men, through

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<sup>113</sup> Catholic Last Rites was also a differentiator between the denominations and the reason for some commentators to proportion bravery to Catholic priests. For a critique of comparative bravery between Catholic and non-Catholic chaplains see Madigan, *Faith Under Fire*, pp. 1-11 and p. 14.

<sup>114</sup> Catholic Truth Society, *The Penny Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Catholic Truth Society 1912), pp. 65-68.

<sup>115</sup> Post-Vatican 2 its use can be extended to the very sick or terminally ill.

<sup>116</sup> The initial religious or regional composition was difficult to maintain as casualties were replaced by whoever was available.

<sup>117</sup> Chaplains' uniforms did indicate being a member of the British Army Chaplains department, but did not differentiate between the denominations. A soldier may have an amulet or carry details in his pay book, but neither was allowed to be in public view for operational reasons, such as target practice from snipers.



past acquaintance at Mass and the Sacraments. Conversely, those with only a small number of widely scattered Catholics would expose themselves to great danger with little chance of success. Remarkably, that did not always act as a deterrent. On the first day of the battle of Gommecourt, a diversionary battle in the operations on the Somme, reporting from Foncquevillers, Fr Drinkwater describes the confusion of identification:

They evacuated about fourteen hundred by the afternoon. At night they went out to get those that were overlooked or inaccessible before. There were a good many, all stretcher cases in our place, and I was on all night again. No Catholics, except one that I missed.... The village has got much hotter, both shrapnel and bullets, and two shells burst just outside my dugout.<sup>118</sup>

In these scenarios chaplains usually decided to anoint when death looked imminent or had just taken place. This usually meant at Regimental First Aid Posts or Advanced Dressing Stations, which themselves were often in the thick of the action as Drinkwater demonstrated. Ideally, they attempted to confess or absolve the men before battle. As late as 30<sup>th</sup> September 1918, there was no let-up in the demand for Extreme Unction.<sup>119</sup> Fr Steuart noted: 'Moved off to re-join battalion. Zandvoorde and Ten Brielen taken, and we are now attacking Weuire. On the way met Sgt O'Shea, very seriously wounded in the stomach. Gave him absolution and Extreme Unction. Fear he has a very small chance'.<sup>120</sup> Fr Steuart again fulfilled his duties with admirable stoicism, and with a hint of humanity which occasionally broke through his stern façade.

Catholic chaplains were dedicated and single-minded men in order to succeed in their mission. They were not alone. The medical staff also shared similar motivation and determination to ply their professional trade and care for the troops. Regardless of how the former were spiritually motivated and the latter physically, their shared devotion could also lead to conflict, although there is ample evidence to show that these relationships were mutually respectful and even cordial.<sup>121</sup> It is relatively simple to imagine the mayhem and urgency when a fresh intake of casualties arrived at the medical facility. Chaplains were not qualified to assess or confirm the death of soldiers unless the evidence was undeniable, and sensibly worked with the Medical Officers, or played safe. Drinkwater gave one such example: 'Ballieul. Anointed a gassed man, (French priest fetched me) but I think he was dead

<sup>118</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (1<sup>st</sup> and 2nd July 1916).

<sup>119</sup> Although they are surprisingly only mentioned three and four times by Gillett and Steuart, respectively. Priests in CCSs were more in demand by the nature of the occasion of the Sacrament.

<sup>120</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (30<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>121</sup> Frs Steuart and Gillett both had friendships with MOs and Steuart continued his relationship with the Highland Light Infantry doctor (McKenzie) until December 1919 when his diary ends.

already'.<sup>122</sup> It was not, understandably, all plain sailing. Local difficulties encountered by priests when offering the Last Rites had to be quickly overcome. They sometimes occurred in CCSs where the medical concerns frequently outweighed the spiritual:

Two deaths occurred on Wednesday and Friday nights without me having been informed at all of their condition. Accordingly I called on Major Donne and asked him if he could kindly give orders for the orderlies or sisters that they should inform one at once if a case of an RC patient being in a dangerous condition. He at once said he could not give such an order as I had no official connection with his clearing station.<sup>123</sup>

This unfortunate case is similar in nature to the red-tape which interfered with chaplains' efforts to celebrate Mass earlier. Whilst medical reasons may have been the underlying purpose, it was Army protocol or personal lack of administrative innovation that proved the larger obstacle.

Others, like Fr Paul Brookfield, OSB, a regular contributor to the Rawlinson Papers, took the initiative himself in his usual eccentric manner: 'I have arranged with the nurses that I am to be called if any bad RC cases turn up day and night. I was called at 5a.m. yesterday and anointed three poor mangled creatures, 1 has since died. So now that I have given the Sacraments to one dying man, it won't much matter if I am popped off'.<sup>124</sup> Forever sarcastic, Brookfield also played light in such distressing scenarios and probably survived as a result. Although evidence will emerge that he was suffering mentally at the end.

Not all chaplains were able to satisfy their own aspirations, citing practical difficulties for not delivering Extreme Unction. There was only one case of chaplaincy ineptitude with regard to this Sacrament. Fr Prevost railed about most things and was unhappy being with the troops in battle.<sup>125</sup> He described his inability to perform the Last Rites as: 'a dreary spiritual inactivity, men are either killed on the spot or are taken miles back before one has time to get near them, during the whole long time in the trenches I would only give Extreme Unction once ....there is nothing but funerals'.<sup>126</sup> He was complaining about being at the Front generally. His total self-absorption and lack of drive and initiative were completely against the grain of chaplaincy endeavour. For most of his colleagues, Extreme Unction was the reason they were offering their own lives for the troops. Fr Prevost had serious concerns above and

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<sup>122</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (21<sup>st</sup> June 1915).

<sup>123</sup> DAA, 3235, G.L. Smith to Keatinge, 23rd Field Ambulance, 7<sup>th</sup> Division, (6<sup>th</sup> June 1915). The difficulty centred on red tape, that is he was not officially attached to that Ambulance even though more or less permanently working there at this time.

<sup>124</sup> DAA, 3234, Brookfield to Rawlinson, (26<sup>th</sup> April 1917). They were long friends and shared a peculiar, almost schoolboy sense of humour, perhaps exaggerated by the conditions which they were experiencing.

<sup>125</sup> Prevost was not a 'typical' chaplain, exhibiting a fragile character whose faith and endurance was questioned by his superiors, indeed he appears to have lost faith completely, and then almost as quickly recovered to end the war strongly.

<sup>126</sup> DAA, 3235, Prevost to Rawlinson, (23<sup>rd</sup> May 1916).

beyond being with the troops, which included his assertion that he never wanted to be a priest, and that he had lost his faith. He was the exception to the rule in temperament, background, and religious commitment.

Conversely, when everything went to plan, chaplains could be well satisfied with their endeavours and soldiers found a way of thanking them. Fr Mulhall SJ with the East Lancashire Division<sup>127</sup> wrote to his Provincial: 'Then I visit the hospital here. I have anointed two men since I came. One of those kissed me gratefully when I had finished. He died about an hour and a half later'.<sup>128</sup> For Catholic chaplains death was the pivotal moment when human life gave way to the spiritual as the soul began its final journey. Priests from a long-standing spiritual tradition were satisfied that their vocation had assisted a fellow Catholic on his journey towards salvation. Later, prayers or the celebration of Mass for his soul, were often conducted.

This war caused injuries never seen before. The use of poisoned gas was new, as were flame throwers and frequent aerial bombings, all of which caused horrific injuries. Shells and bullet wounds were well-known, but never before with such intensity and delivered with such increasing technical advancement. Fr Denis Doyle described the practical difficulties of finding a suitable body part to anoint, in this case a bad, yet common, facial wound:<sup>129</sup>

Another was brought in with his jaw blown away by a bullet. He could not speak though quite conscious and anxious lest I should not know he was making his act of contrition. Again and again he mumbled and struck his breast as if to draw my attention. When he saw me make a big sign of the cross over him he was content, and put out his hands together to be anointed.<sup>130</sup>

This badly hurt soldier emphasised the desperate Catholic need to be prepared sacramentally for death and also brought him some touching respite. It is a valuable observation as the emotional benefits derived from the Sacraments, and particularly the Last Rites, often get lost in the hurly-burly of the situation and rarely feature in the evidence collated. Clearly this Catholic soldier knew what to expect from the chaplain and what was expected of him in return.

Chaplains knew full-well the importance of this Sacrament and any requests from civilians, and soldiers, from whatever nationality, were satisfied. The need had to be pressing for Extreme Unction to be ministered and that applied to civilians too. Fr Steuart tended a

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<sup>127</sup> Mulhall wrote incredibly long, mundane, and dull letters to Rawlinson. He was also accused by fellow officers as being mean with money, not sharing in mess expenses and not tipping his servant, the usual practice being one shilling a day. His retort that Jesuits don't have their own money was factual but misleading – other Jesuits paid their way and gave the balance to their Order.

<sup>128</sup> JAD, CHP 1/45 (6) Mulhall SJ to Provincial, (21<sup>st</sup> February 1916).

<sup>129</sup> Iain Gordon, *Lifeline: A British Casualty Clearing Station on the Western Front 1918* (Stroud: History Press, 2013) p. 161. 15.5% of injuries from whatever source treated at this CCS were facial, head, or neck.

<sup>130</sup> JAL, *Our Army Chaplains Experiences* (4<sup>th</sup> April 1916) 440.

French citizen: 'Mass at 10. Had to have Communion afterwards to some 30 men who had been unable to get in. Called by Tomkin in evening to an old woman from Avelgham who had been gassed. Gave her Absolution, Viaticum, and Extreme Unction'.<sup>131</sup> Here as part of the Last Rites, Fr Steuart gave Absolution and not Confession which was the norm. It is possible she was too weak to Confess, or time was too short. He was a fluent French and German speaker so that was not the impediment. The Universal Church was again highlighted through the sacraments which were the same everywhere and for all nationalities.

Chaplains in or out of uniform received Extreme Unction themselves. Serving the needs of soldiers awaiting demobilisation and their chaplains in 1919, Fr Daniel Roche SJ informed the Principal Chaplain that: 'Fr Timothy Carey SJ was brought in here on Sunday last [Calais] suffering from an acute attack of influenza. I saw him immediately he was admitted. He was so ill on Monday that I gave him all the Last Sacraments. Though everything possible has been done for him his case is now regarded as hopeless. p.s. Fr Carey died later at 12:30 p.m. RIP'.<sup>132</sup>

German soldiers too received this Sacrament. Fr Myerscough SJ from Preston described a bizarre and confusing situation at the Battle of Cambrai where the armies had blundered into each other. Myerscough stumbled into a group of German infantrymen. Identified as a Catholic priest, he was not captured or put under arrest, instead he was simply ushered towards one of their dying comrades: 'I was led to a group of Germans, who opened for me – I passed into their midst. Here I saw a German soldier lying on the ground mortally wounded. There I received a devout Confession, gave Extreme Unction and administered viaticum with the Last Blessing'.<sup>133</sup> This commitment to serve a dying man, regardless of nationality and at great personal danger, indicated how men could rise to the occasion despite his rather difficult earlier life: 'It was not generally known that from his youth, Fr John was unduly conscious of his small stature, so that he always felt on the defensive'.<sup>134</sup> It might be added that his German language competence was gained at Ushaw before he joined the Society of Jesus at a later date.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>131</sup> JAL, *Steuart Diaries*, (3<sup>rd</sup> November 1918).

<sup>132</sup> DAA, 3235, D. Roche SJ at Calais to Rawlinson, (27<sup>th</sup> February 1919). Carey ran the Catholic Club at Adruicq.

<sup>133</sup> DAA, *Ephemera*, Post-war Recollections: a contribution made by priests after the war in response to Rawlinson's request to publish. The project seems to have fizzled out by 1925. Normally this type of material has not been employed in this thesis. An exception is made here because it is evident that Myerscough seriously played down the adventure or triumphalist nature of his work.

<sup>134</sup> JAL, *Remarkable Men of the English Province*, obituary 1938, p. 212.

<sup>135</sup> Interestingly, Myerscough did not join the priesthood directly after Ushaw. Instead he became a railway engineer in Horwich before receiving his calling three years later.

Men 'shot at dawn' were not forgotten by priests, or denied the Last Rites by the authorities: 'Cemetery. There I see the grave of the poor man Fr Grobel had attended in the very early hours of the morning. He had been shot at 4:30 am - resigned and had received all the Last Rites of the Church. Mass was said for him in his cell - at it he Communicated'.<sup>136</sup> It was not for a Catholic chaplain to pass judgement on the correctness, or otherwise, of any legally derived sentence. His concern was the condemned man's soul. There were other testimonies such as Frs Gill and Steuart which will be delved into in detail later.

Extreme Unction provided the perfect example that chaplains were priests first and officers second. They metaphorically ignored the khaki and re-donned the soutane. Extreme Unction was the ultimate spiritual responsibility of chaplains, as for priests, at home. The reasons were not to emphasise the Catholic distinctiveness with other denominations in sacramental provision, or to infer consequential bravery, but simply because it was the Sacrament by which to expedite a soul to God. It was the last rite of passage from the natural to the supernatural world, the chance of epitomising Catholic fulfillment. Nothing could change this position, and even allowing for Rawlinson's requirement to pacify Army sensitivities for political considerations, there is no possibility that he would have been party to any compromise when it came to the Sacraments and particularly Extreme Unction. There was a tipping point and Rawlinson, despite his heavy responsibilities, was still a priest and monk. It would never have crossed his mind to jeopardise the spiritual well-being of any Catholic.

As Extreme Unction defines the end of Catholic life on earth, Baptism, signifies the start. A simple definition of Baptism is: 'Baptism is a Sacrament which cleanses us from Original Sin, makes us Christians, children of God and Members of the Church'.<sup>137</sup> Baptisms are expected to be undertaken as early as possible in the life of the child. It follows that all Catholic troops were baptised except those that were Catholic in name only. Therefore, little is reported on Baptism as a singular event, although it was part of the conversion process. Baptism was, and is, the first Sacrament to be received, and the mandatory precursor for the other Sacraments. However, Baptismal statistics were inconsistently recorded and never properly collated, reflecting the marginality of Baptism. Instead, occasional statistical purges appear to have taken place which coincided with attempts to highlight conversions. Fr Scully wrote in response to a request to bring statistics up to date: 'Returns. George Peter O'Leary

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<sup>136</sup> SDA, Gillett's Diaries, (25<sup>th</sup> July 1916).

<sup>137</sup> Catholic Truth Society, *The Penny Catechism*, pp. 56-57.

baptized in the Convent at Armentieres on July 5<sup>th</sup> 1915'.<sup>138</sup> When statistics were recorded they did not include non-combatants, including French civilians.

Nonetheless, Baptism was compulsory and should be finalised quickly for those wishing to become Catholics. Fr C. Smith advised: 'I am baptizing Corporal Evans this evening and he is making his first Communion tomorrow. He has already received some instruction & is in excellent dispositions, & as he has not been baptized at all, I did not like to delay longer'.<sup>139</sup> As Smith demonstrated, it was urgent to baptize a Catholic, or prospective Catholic, into the Catholic Faith. The doctrine of the day warned of the dangers of death to an unbaptized person whose soul was Limbo-bound as a result. Not an attractive proposition in a world of high infant mortality at home, or one where death could be on its way even as troops knelt in prayer. The same precarious situation for French and Belgian infants required the assistance of a chaplain. Fr Drinkwater: 'Good congregation at Gosnay at 9.a.m. They brought a French baby for me to baptise in the evening – François Vallet'.<sup>140</sup> Chaplains fulfilled their true function as Catholic priests in place of the many French priest-soldiers away fighting. It was a benefit to the local population and demonstrated that French Catholicism was far from dead.

Confirmation is a Sacrament which deepens and strengthens the graces received at Baptism. At home, young men and women usually between the ages of eleven and fourteen, Confirmed their Faith directly to the bishop as part of a larger ceremony, possibly arranged by school. It was another public display of reaching a stage of Catholic maturity. As such it was something of an after-thought in the pandemonium of war. Only a bishop could confer Confirmation, yet there were simply more pressing matters requiring less logistical dexterity than prising Bourne or Keatinge from their episcopal strongholds. Confirmation for British soldiers was performed by Bourne on his rare visits, in what appears to be a very *ad hoc* way: 'The Cardinal will in no doubt lunch at Arras, and if you have any people to be confirmed, he will be ready to do it'.<sup>141</sup> There is no evidence of Keatinge Confirming. Local bishops could Confirm soldiers as could their bishop at home whilst on leave. Chaplains were not directly involved in Confirmation, although an enthusiastic Fr Gillett observed the situation in a French village which provided ratification that a local bishop could officiate in Confirmation of the British troops:

<sup>138</sup> DAA, 3235, Scully to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> July 1917).

<sup>139</sup> DAA, 3234, Evans to Rawlinson, (date unclear).

<sup>140</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (21<sup>st</sup> July 1917).

<sup>141</sup> DAA, 3235, Rawlinson to Scannell at the Arras Catholic Club, (17<sup>th</sup> October 1917).

Village all astir - Bishop coming to confirm. Kiddies all in white and early about crowding in from villages - huddled together in traps and carts of a sort. 9:30 a.m., Bishop rides up in a motor car. 10am Mass - 2 soldiers of mine are confirmed but soon were killed RIP. Vicar General examines the children, the Bishop addresses them, then Holy Mass. After dine with the clergy - a great spread. In evening Bishop addresses my soldiers and I interpret for him and then after gives short Benediction. He speaks of the impression the English Catholic soldiers have made in France and thanks the brave men for all they are doing.<sup>142</sup>

Fr Gillett is obviously both comfortable with the episcopacy and impressed by the Bishop of Arras of whom he is describing. What is also noticeable is that after only some ten months at the Front, Fr Gillett a man with a particularly humanistic approach to soldiers, almost dismissed two soldiers recently Confirmed, and who almost immediately were killed. The diaries are of course limited in space and time but it is striking that none of the control group interject the sacramental meanings into any of their accounts. One might have expected Fr Gillett to have made some religious comment about the benefits of being Confirmed when they died, after he had taken the trouble to add to his original entry when he received news of their deaths.

Marriage requires little introduction and the Sacramental Graces need not be explored given that few, if any, marriages were conducted. When Fr Young claimed that: "There seems to be a "marriage epidemic" among the men of this regiment [3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry]";<sup>143</sup> he does not provide evidence to support his statement, so presumably he is referring to soldiers on home leave. There was at least one proxy marriage:

I believe you have got almost abnormal and super archiepiscopal powers – so I have got a job for you. A man in the Manchesters (our Brigade) wants to be married to a girl in England, by proxy. How do you do it? It was all fixed up for him to get married before coming out – but we started sooner than expected – and the proper time for the marriage lines had not quite expired.<sup>144</sup>

The response was complex but boiled down to 'ensure the customary safeguards'. This was the only example discovered.

There were no calls for British Catholic chaplains to conduct the Sacrament of Marriage, although, Fr Gillett did witness one: 'St Georges Day - no recognition. After, witnessed French marriage. Sung Mass, only a few friends there - very quiet but devotional',<sup>145</sup> Fr Drinkwater was also an interested observer of local customs: "Talmas. Went to a wedding this morning. Two things I liked about it: they scattered money to the children on the church

<sup>142</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (26<sup>th</sup> June 1917).

<sup>143</sup> DAA, 3234, Young SJ to Freeland, (29<sup>th</sup> May 1917).

<sup>144</sup> DAA, 3234, Berkeley to Rawlinson, (27<sup>th</sup> July 1915).

<sup>145</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (23<sup>rd</sup> April 1917).

steps, and sang the '*Veni Sancte Spiritus*' at the Offertory'.<sup>146</sup> As there were no requests for conducting a Marriage, their role, if any, was administrative. Fr Drinkwater assisted a local clergyman: 'A Belgian priest came and asked me to help him look into a soldiers intended marriage',<sup>147</sup> then the trail goes cold. Steuart also tantalised:

Snowing this morning. The anteroom leaking in many places. Last night Sgt F. Warburton 19th DLI came with a Millam woman, Lydie Maeght, to arrange for a marriage. The Curé is rather opposed to it. The girl is the same as the CO of the School told me of, whom a young officer tried to marry but was stopped by him.<sup>148</sup>

Apart from putting out notices, Steuart did not mention this proposed wedding again as he prepared to move to Germany. The chaplaincy function with respect to marriage appears more investigative and administrative than sacramental.

The Sacraments were celebrated in the traditional way when conditions allowed. Not a replica of the exact conditions at home admittedly, nonetheless, their provision sustained the bond between chaplains and soldiers, regardless of rank. Some Catholic chaplains were able to leap-frog protocol and mix with 'the boys' at a social level. This confirmed the success by which the Sacraments contributed in strengthening the chaplain-soldier attachment at the human level, replicating associations established at home, whilst recognising the deferential nature of such interactions. This was not always without foibles.<sup>149</sup> Fr Gillett, perhaps the quintessential diocesan priest and chaplain:

After Mass went to hear Confessions at Domvast and in evening at Marcheville. Midnight Mass and a very good turn up of men. Many went to their Duties. Singing was glorious and very hearty. After Mass entertained the boys to coffee and Cognac in café opposite the Church. Two canny fellows pocketed a bottle of Cognac each.<sup>150</sup>

Not all chaplains had the same background, culture, ability, or desire to mix with the ranks. Steuart's diaries painfully expose his awkwardness when dealing with lower ranks, and he rarely mentions them.<sup>151</sup> Drinkwater appears to be able to associate with anyone, regardless of status, although never to any depth. These men represent the complete class spectrum. Nevertheless, their religion and training prepared them to consistently deliver the Sacraments, thereby satisfying the Sacramental requirements of Catholic troops, officers, and many civilians.

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<sup>146</sup> BAA Drinkwater Diaries, (28<sup>th</sup> December 1915).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., (29<sup>th</sup> May 1915).

<sup>148</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (20<sup>th</sup> March 1919).

<sup>149</sup> PRO, WO 374/34134. This could have its dangers. John Holiday injured his left knee playing football in France and had his cartilage removed. His Medical Officer described the injury as 'attributable to military service'. It appears he endured pain for some months before having the operation immediately after demobilisation, and subject to a Medical Board because injury occurred on active service.

<sup>150</sup> SDA, Gillett's Diaries, (24<sup>th</sup> December 1916).

<sup>151</sup> Soldiers on five occasions compared to Gillett's thirty seven, and troops on sixteen occasions compared to Gillett's ninety nine.



The same spiritual bonds between soldier and chaplain existed for all chaplains. That was not negotiable. It should be remembered that frequently a chaplain from another unit celebrated Mass, consistency was not guaranteed, such was the mutability of war. As a result the attachment between chaplain and brigade or battalion was not always stable, and whichever chaplain was available sufficed. That being the case, personality was not the deciding factor in the chaplain to soldier relationship. Naturally it was better to know your chaplain, but as long as the soldier and chaplain shared the same liturgy and beliefs, then the background of the chaplain celebrating Mass was largely immaterial with regards to spiritual affairs. As a contributor to Plater's enquiry insisted: 'Accessible to a priest? The priest being an officer makes no difference. He is 'Father' and not 'Sir'....the immediate rapport is the result of faith on both sides'.<sup>152</sup> Outside of Mass, the help given by soldiers to repairing chapels and the provision of facilities for chaplains to conduct their business has been attested, suggesting that the chaplain-soldier relationship was strong outside of the Sacraments when circumstances allowed. A soldier's relationship with his priest at home would, in the majority of cases, have been a deferential one. Nevertheless at the human level, it is difficult to believe that the natural tendency of the majority of soldiers for emotional support would not lean towards a chaplain with whom they could more easily relate. This was not a matter of religion but one of human relationships and had no effect on the spiritual bonds between cleric and soldier. But in times of stress the familiar is comforting.

With respect to the Sacraments, the Army have been shown to have kept a respectful distance. The Sacraments were resolutely the *raison d'être* for Catholic chaplains and totally inviolable. They were essential to the religious health of all Catholics at war, including chaplains of whom the majority worked, suffered, and some died, to ensure that Catholics received Sacramental graces. Chaplains' ambitions were not selfish and they did not normally aspire to sainthood. Fr Doyle was the exception and he wrote in his diary: 'Did I ever tell you, even as a child I was convinced that one day God would give me the grace of martyrdom? When I was small I longed and prayed to be a martyr and I have done so ever since'.<sup>153</sup> Normally, chaplains were not motivated by such grand aspirations but by the provision of the Sacraments to the best of their ability. It was the continuation of their vocation for the priesthood and their vows of chastity, obedience, and for Religious, poverty. This they achieved, and did so with the humility and tolerance that their Faith demanded. The vast majority were a credit to their Church, religion and chaplaincy. Their efforts were outstanding,

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<sup>152</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, p. 139.

<sup>153</sup> O'Rahilly, *Father William Doyle SJ*, p. 215.

but the statement that: 'During the war, no Catholic man has been allowed to die without the Sacraments when there was any possibility of his being reached',<sup>154</sup> whilst true in spirit, is somewhat difficult to prove. Chaplaincy shortages alone challenge that over-optimistic statement which probably owes much to post-war euphoria. There were difficult chaplains, some of whom brought pre-existing idiosyncrasies with them to war, and others who found the situation too trying and the ministry too difficult to fulfil. Succeeding chapters will show that they were in a small yet painful, minority.

### **Catholic Regional Variation on the Western Front - Soldiers**

Irish and Lancashire soldiers attracted the highest and most consistent positive responses of all Catholics in the conflict from chaplains. There is undisputed corroborative evidence from them to confirm that those areas with a higher pre-war Catholic tradition continued to publicly demonstrate their religion at war. Those from less durable Catholic backgrounds were exposed to chaplaincy scrutiny and many were found wanting. From the study of the Sacraments and Devotions, one of the tragedies which emerged was the vulnerability of soldiers who did not have the benefit of a rigorous Catholic communal tradition. It was a mirror-image of active Catholicism at home. In the case of isolated southern Catholic soldiers, the majority of whom were working class, it may have had terrible spiritual consequences.

Chapter two investigated educational opportunities for Catholic soldiers and concluded that disparities between the regions were more likely to be generated by distance or a lack of established Catholic communities in the location. It was also suggested that conspicuous public displays by both Irish and Lancashire Catholic soldiers were enthusiastically reported by chaplains, as a perfectly natural response to a heartwarming display of shared values by their coreligionists. They alleged an obvious disparity between perceived religious knowledge between the regions. An anonymous chaplain reporting to the Plater enquiry stated: 'I should say that roughly 95 per cent in the North of England are fairly well instructed. In the South of England, perhaps 70 per cent. In Ireland practically everyone, in Scotland fully 90 per cent'.<sup>155</sup> Fr Francis Devas SJ concurs:

Lancashire and Irish Catholic soldiers were not in the least ashamed of it being known that they were Catholics. That may seem a queer thing to say – and one which Irish people and Lancashire people may hardly understand. But outside these two holy places, the contempt of generations has left its mark on Catholics – especially Catholic young men – who have always found themselves in an insignificant minority.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Rawlinson in a letter to Keatinge in *The Tablet*, (14<sup>th</sup> December 1918).

<sup>155</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*. Anonymous chaplain #24, p. 35.

<sup>156</sup> JAL, F. Devas, 'Our Chaplains Experiences' in *Letter of Notices*, 33 (1915-16) 443.

Chaplains repeatedly praised Lancashire or Irish units. Fr Page SJ observed: 'The men, as a rule responded, especially those from Lancashire. They were easily the most satisfactory of all I had to deal with'.<sup>157</sup> Further, it has been claimed that soldiers brought up in Lancashire and Ireland would have a stronger knowledge of their religion and be more apt to seek out Catholic Sacraments and Devotions:

99 out of a 100 Irish would explain correctly Immaculate Conception, difference between Resurrection and Ascension, who was Pontius Pilate, how do you baptize – in fact anything. The English often don't know these things, or say they don't, not being sure. I except Lancashire men, who equal Irish in all aspects, and exceed them in Apostolic zeal. Lancashire's are always bringing up lapsed Catholics or try to convert Protestants. Lancashire men have no shame.<sup>158</sup>

It was not just Catholics who commented. An Anglican officer with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dublin Fusiliers, shortly before being killed, wrote to his Anglican clergyman father in England:

We had no service of our own today. I went to the Roman Catholic service. But my! It's wonderful how these [Irish] Catholics cling to their religion. It does mean something to them, and look what it does for them. And the life we are living out here seems to make them more devoted to it. They are the finest set of fellows I have ever come across, and better still, the cleanest living men that I ever mixed with or lived amongst.<sup>159</sup>

The density of Catholics in military formations affected the provision of Mass and the Sacraments. Chaplains attached to nominally non-Catholic units and assembled from areas poorly represented in terms of Catholic populations suffered, and many requested to move. Those soldiers exhibiting weaker Catholic knowledge dictated that more time was expended on their development through instruction in the field. Nevertheless, religious instruction had clearly worked to some extent, and Fr Drinkwater affirmed later in his life that: 'although the war had left me with an overwhelming desire to improve Catholic religious education [for troops of his own Midlands area].... the schools had [nonetheless] given our Catholic soldiers a real religion to which they could return to when they needed one so desperately'.<sup>160</sup> There were other pockets of relative Catholic strength, including the Tyneside and London Irish, and some Scottish regiments who also shared similar virtues to their Lancastrian and Irish co-religionists. One chaplain reported to Plater, when asked about soldier's expressing saintly demeanour replied: '[...] they are mostly Irish or Scotch-Irish, but there are some English as

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<sup>157</sup> DAA, Ephemera - War History Material 103-1085, Page to Rawlinson. This is a post-war report in the archive. Page had an interesting chaplaincy career, ending up as he says: 'the first Jesuit to set foot in Russia since the banishment of Jesuits'.

<sup>158</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, p. 36.

<sup>159</sup> Morrissey, *From Easter Week to Flanders Field* pp. 19-20.

<sup>160</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, [Addendum to diary by Drinkwater], 'War Medals', (18<sup>th</sup> June 1981).

well, and, as usual, I exclude Lancashiremen who count as Irish'.<sup>161</sup> Advantages, even for chaplains attached to strong Catholic units, need to be moderated as Catholic soldiers were still very much in the numerical minority compared to their non-Catholic counterparts.

There were constant requests by chaplains for a move into Lancashire or Irish units. Deployment changes could take advantage not only of Catholic numbers, but also pre-war connections. Fr Brown SCF suggested a change for his 55<sup>th</sup> West Lancashire Division:<sup>162</sup> 'Fr Higgins is just the type of chaplain we want here at present. He knows many of the Liverpool lads and he would be attached to the Liverpool Irish, many of whom are from the district in which he worked before the war'.<sup>163</sup> He omitted to say that Higgins was also from the same poor working class background which would give him a significant advantage with these men. There are many cases of priests who wanted Irish or Lancashire Regiments. Fr Philip Devas, a young Franciscan priest aged 29, is typical.<sup>164</sup> Attached to the 1/6<sup>th</sup> Gloucester Regiment with a moderate amount of Catholics, he pleaded: 'I should like if possible – I suppose we are all wanting the same thing – to be transferred to some Lancashire or Irish unit where I should find some Catholics and so have more directly religious work'.<sup>165</sup> Some months later he was offered promotion and a change to the 57<sup>th</sup> Division: 'I have no wish to become a SCF – I don't know whether the 57<sup>th</sup> Division contains a larger number of Catholics than my own. Unless I get to a Lancashire Brigade I should much prefer to remain here'.<sup>166</sup> Here he expressed ignorance of Army formations yet need not have worried. The 57<sup>th</sup> was the Second West Lancashire Division and his remit, the 2/5 Kings Own (Royal Lancaster) Regiment had a strong Catholic element within. Fr Drinkwater had commented as early as the June 11<sup>th</sup> 1915: 'With 5<sup>th</sup> Kings Own, charming boys from Lancashire',<sup>167</sup> and two days later: 'Good Communion at Ryfield (5<sup>th</sup> Kings Own) and at Winnezele. Pretty good attendance in the evening'.<sup>168</sup> Fr Philip Devas, the brother of Francis wrote again on May 2nd 1917 after being granted his wish: 'I am settling down again quite happily and getting along very well – It is a great thing to be with a Lancashire Division'.<sup>169</sup> Father Devas, a Londoner by birth, was duly promoted to SCF and won the Military Cross in May 1918. It is worth noting that all of these chaplaincy requests, without exception, argue their reasons as being to be able to do more

<sup>161</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, p. 55.

<sup>162</sup> Lecture series, 'The Faith of Our Forebears: A Religious History of Lancashire 1500-1850', Dr Alan Crosby, Lancashire Record Office, Preston, (November-December 2013) confirmed that West Lancashire had historically the strongest representation of Catholics within Lancashire, itself the strongest county in England.

<sup>163</sup> DAA, 3234, Browne to Rawlinson, (7<sup>th</sup> June 1917).

<sup>164</sup> His two other brothers represented the Society of Jesus [Francis], and the Dominicans [Raymond].

<sup>165</sup> DAA, 3234, Devas to Rawlinson, (16<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., Devas to Rawlinson, (1<sup>st</sup> March 1917).

<sup>167</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (11<sup>th</sup> June 1915).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> DAA, 3234, Devas to Rawlinson, (2<sup>nd</sup> May 1917).

effective Catholic work. Fr Looby an Irish chaplain from the Liverpool Diocese expressed the thoughts of many: 'I feel keenly disappointed as a young priest to be in a Brigade [53<sup>rd</sup> Norfolk Brigade] where there is so little of a priests work to perform'.<sup>170</sup> Fr Looby was posted to the Northumberland Fusiliers and was the first man of his brigade to be killed in no-man's-land at the second Battle of Passchaendale, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1917.<sup>171</sup> These men took their mission and vocation seriously. They had every desire to become involved in those units with a good number of Catholics which exhibited strong Catholic knowledge and involvement. The empirical evidence supporting the earlier theories of the geographical variation at home is overwhelmingly consistent. As has been noted, this is not to claim an individual's own spirituality as being superior or inferior to another, rather that tradition and community sponsored collective public demonstrations of their faith. These were attractive and self-sustaining propositions for chaplains.

### **Church Buildings, Emotional Support, the Universal Church, and Bureaucracy**

Chaplains needed to provide themselves and their troops with the means to celebrate recognisable and popular religious services. Consequently, Mass was celebrated in the open, in a ditch, a cave, a tent, in a barn, in the trenches, in an abbey, in fact anywhere that could serve the purpose. Understandably, churches, chapels, and convents were the preferred venues to say Mass, simply because they were traditional and for the most part offered suitable and familiar facilities and environment. They were usually, but not always, outside the line of immediate fire. Fr Gillett recalled: 'Fixed up the red chapel again in a convent there, [Le Cateau] where 3 nuns had held on. Sisters delighted - Mass regularly, Blessed Sacrament reserved again and Benediction and Rosary each evening, and as the chaplains were many that passed through, they had sometimes 3 or 4 Masses of a morning. Busy'.<sup>172</sup> This was war, and facilities ranged from the grand to the humble. Some churches were untouched but many were damaged and ruined. Some facilities were erected by the men themselves: 'a chapel has been erected in the sacristy of Beaulencourt Church, some 4 kilos from Bepaume. Though only capable of holding some 20 to 30, it will be a great convenience, as there is no place at all for Confessions or Holy Mass'.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>170</sup> DAA, 3234, Looby to Rawlinson, (8<sup>th</sup> June 1916).

<sup>171</sup> DAA, 3234, Young to Archbishop Whiteside, (2<sup>nd</sup> November 1917).

<sup>172</sup> SDA, Gillett's Diaries, (31<sup>st</sup> October 1918).

<sup>173</sup> DAA, 3825, Edward Rockliff SJ to Rawlinson, (27<sup>th</sup> February 1918). Born in Liverpool, of an English father and German mother, was a difficult situation.

### Illustration 12 - Mass in the open<sup>174</sup>



Priests possessed a portable altar and this was pressed into action. Fr Drinkwater mentioned his first experience using one: ‘Said Mass on a portable altar for the first time this morning at the farm’.<sup>175</sup> Below is an example of an unknown chaplain’s portable altar retained at Ushaw College. It is complete with altar stone which often had a small piece of a relic attached or embedded. Fr Jack Fitzgibbon SJ, MC, lost two of these altars and other kit as he escaped temporarily with his life with the 6<sup>th</sup> Division, 16<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance after retreats at Cambrai 1917 and the German spring offensive 1918, before being killed by a shell in September of that year.<sup>176</sup>

### Illustration 13 a/b<sup>177</sup>



A Catholic’s respect and deference towards his chaplain or priest formed a significant bond when attending Mass. Fr Denis Doyle SJ provides a simple example: ‘My Mass I said in a stable open at the side. The men had to stand ankle deep in mud the whole time. Yet someone

<sup>174</sup> SCA, ‘Mass behind a Trench’ in *The Stonyhurst War Record*, (1925), p. xxiii (23).

<sup>175</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (26<sup>th</sup> May 1915).

<sup>176</sup> Bellis, in Burke, *Irish Jesuit Chaplains*, pp. 53-55.

<sup>177</sup> An example of an unknown ex-Ushaw trained Catholic chaplain’s portable altar. Taken at UCA, July 2013.

always finds a piece of carpet or sacking for the priest to stand on'.<sup>178</sup> Even in dangerous and uncomfortable circumstances soldiers volunteered to rejoice in the Mass. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to conclude that apart from the spiritual dimension, they also received psychological and emotional comfort from both their fellow soldier-Catholics, and also from the paternal relationship that existed between priest and supplicant. Soldiers could trust their chaplains in abnormal times where other certainties were vanishing, and where their own lives may be only minutes away from ending. Fr Gillett expressed this paternal relationship. Gillett, a conventional Ushaw trained diocesan priest, found familiarity between his working class congregation at home and troops. He regularly expressed an affinity with 'the lads'. What better way than feeding them? 'Mass, troops on the way to Steenvoorde - but the party I was with lost directions and we trudged and trudged and at last finally sat down wearied out. The details had neither food nor water so Brooks and I squared some estaminet and we finally got them fed. In evening returned to my billet at Abeele'.<sup>179</sup> The next day he recognised the soldiers' boldness in expressing their faith, which illustrates the confidence that the priest and troops had with each other in both practical and spiritual spheres: 'On to Steenvoorde after Mass to look up the troops. Confessions at 6:30 in the Steenvoorde Church and Holy Communion - addressed a few words to them and read them prayers after Holy Communion. What devotion in those big, strong lads and how they shout out their prayers - the future has little fear for them: their trust is in Providence and they have faith like children'.<sup>180</sup> He was closer to their feelings than the other diarists and understood their needs and privations. That the other diarists do not write in this vein reflects their pre-war formation, diarist style and empathies.

Chaplains were educated men and many displayed cultural appetites as will be shown, churches were not merely material structures. The proliferation and grandeur of the church building phenomenon at home represented the strength of a rapidly expanding Catholic Church. They were presented with new opportunities to see for themselves the Catholic religion in different countries through its religious buildings and surroundings. Also in religious-political affairs to assess how the French religion was coping with secularism.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> JAL, Fr Denis Doyle in 'Our Army Chaplain's Experiences', 23 (1915-16) 125. Fr Denis Doyle SJ not to be confused with Fr Willie Doyle SJ. The former was born in South Africa and volunteered from the English Province. The latter, was the notable Irish Jesuit.

<sup>179</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (24<sup>th</sup> July 1917).

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., (23<sup>rd</sup> July 1917).

<sup>181</sup> Stephen Bellis: 'The Paintings and Sketches of Fr Leslie Walker SJ, with occasional references to the War Diaries of Fr Fred Gillett and Fr Robert Steuart SJ', presentation to the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Conference, Amport, July 2013. Fr Walker's paintings depicted the hopeful return of a Catholic revival in France. He proposed a book of his paintings with historical guidance whose proceeds would go to the rebuilding of the churches and thus the rebuilding of French Catholicism.

France was officially a secular state since the forming of the Third Republic and the enactment of the 1905: 'Separation of the Churches and State Law'. At the cultural level, and particularly in rural areas, France retained its strong Catholic identity. Gillett, a keen eyewitness and admirer of the French judging by numerous diary entries, observed local resistance to government interference which was not always passive: 'Mass at 7:30am - sung it - a lovely church [l'Abeele] - Mass sung regularly at 6 and 7:30am. Church is packed and a very reverent congregation. French attempted to collar it when their cruel laws were passed but the civilians all turned out and drove the wretched officials back - after they were left in peace'.<sup>182</sup> The diarists, and others, will contribute to their wider interest in French Catholic history to follow. Whilst, the close connection between men and their chaplains remains true, significant differences between their education and tastes meant that the built environment with its cultural, architectural, and historic importance, could be more readily appreciated by chaplains. Ironically, the very desire to educate priests succeeded, and consequently their personal development often went into different directions from their congregations and soldiers. This is not to imply a deliberate distancing, one from another; on the contrary, it was an inevitable consequence of the educational process.

It might be assumed that comfort for chaplains away from home was found in the many churches and wayside crucifixes and shrines, particularly those from Ireland where public displays of Catholic worship proliferated, recreating the Irish wayside scene. Yet it will be demonstrated that chaplains responded according to their own proclivities. Fr Walker's paintings can be interpreted in a way which suggested that the destruction of churches and crucifixes caused him not only pain, but also propelled him towards supporting their restoration after the war. How would Catholics adapt to French churches and chapels, what difficulties would they face, above all did they inspire chaplains and bolster their resolve? Our three diarists and painter, Fr Walker, evoke a range of reactions and observations. Consequently they offer a unique insight into their world of the Catholic religious built-environment and what it meant, or did not mean, to them and by extension chaplains in general.

Fr Gillett represented the Lancashire contribution. His delight in French ways and customs supported his fascination with Catholic history. He frequently referred to churches, holy places, and crucifixes. Fr Drinkwater occupied the middle-ground between Fr Gillett and Fr Steuart, showing some interest in the built religious environment and Catholic history. Fr Steuart's fascination with religious buildings and objects is minimal. His historical interest

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<sup>182</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (5<sup>th</sup> July 1917).



remained undeclared. Their diary entries reflected their cultural prioritisation, personalities, and diarist style. In other words the paucity of religious representation in Fr Steuart's accounts does not reflect his lack of piety, but rather his sense of separation from main stream life. It will be Fr Gillett, therefore, who will provide the richest material for studying this topic. When taken together, the diarists offer something that the singular or multiple letters in the Rawlinson files, can never emulate. Rawlinson did not find his chaplains over-personal in their correspondence to him, and letters concerning religion or cultural aspects, other than the practicalities of delivery, were scarce in the extreme'.<sup>183</sup> Fr Leslie Walker added an artistic dimension which provided, like Fr Gillett, a sense of colour to the stark realities of war in harmony with the richness of Catholic devotional tradition.

Some chaplains were energised through the historical appreciation of religious places, artefacts, buildings or places. For example the Church of St Nicholas at Guarbecque allows an insight into both Gillett and Walker. Gillett: 'Arrived at Guarbecque about noon - after an hour's march from detraining station. What a pleasure to feel one is going to have a few days in civilisation again. An old 11th century church here'.<sup>184</sup>

**Illustration 14 - Church of Saint Nicholas at Guarbecque**<sup>185</sup>



Walker's introduction to his painting simply states: 'Guarbecque Church. 12<sup>th</sup> Century'.<sup>186</sup> The base of the wall contains a plaque dating back to the time of Charlemagne whose daughter

<sup>183</sup> Bellis, 'The Rawlinson Papers', 1-26.

<sup>184</sup> SDA, Gillett's Diaries, (28<sup>th</sup> March 1917).

<sup>185</sup> JAL, Walker Paintings, 'Guarbecque's Church', (February 1916).

<sup>186</sup> A visit to the church in 2012 confirmed that it was 11<sup>th</sup> century.

lives near Guarbecque and built the first church there'. Both men celebrated their historical knowledge and interest, reflecting their educational inheritance.<sup>187</sup> The painting dates to January 1916. This imposing church, which survived hostilities, clearly provided inspiration for Fr Walker, and Fr Radcliffe's 'civilisation' for Fr Gillett.

Churches took on the mantle of sites of interest, and also as geographical and military signposts for chaplains in much the same way as trenches or battlefields did for the army. Cross-referencing three diaries and the paintings also illustrated the mobile nature of war for chaplains. They all served in the same theatres of war and often mention the same churches although they never met.<sup>188</sup> This provides an almost ethereal sense of time and space. They drifted between churches and between places at different phases in the war, reflecting their own personal involvement. The examples to follow are a window into their personalities and interests. For instance, St Omer, a historic place for Jesuits whose college was located there until 1762, was ironically in 1917, the centre for the Church of England's chaplaincy training school,<sup>189</sup> and is situated near the large and imposing Notre Dame Cathedral. The cathedral was not mentioned in Fr Steuart's 22 entries of the town over a two year period 1917-1919. Restaurants, clubs, hotels, and shops represented the everyday routine that Fr Steuart sought fit to report on. Gillett by contrast enthused: 'Mass at Broxeele and then went into St Omer - *bien magnifique* - and replete with English history - the Cathedral is lovely and I visited the Old Jesuit College where priests were educated during the Reformation to return to England for their martyr's crown'.<sup>190</sup> His delight is based on the beauty and historical symbolism of the Cathedral and Jesuit College, in sharp contrast to Fr Steuart who despite being a Jesuit, failed to pass comment even on the Society of Jesus's strong historical connection. Fr Drinkwater represents the centre position, having recently arrived in France he said Mass at the cathedral yet made no further comment. He repeated that in September 1917: 'Motored with the Major to St Omer: bought some things at the ordnance store. Went to Benediction at the cathedral'.<sup>191</sup> Notre Dame clearly did not inspire Drinkwater, or interest Fr Steuart, but did rouse Gillett. Cultural and historical differences within the control group are included to help understand their personalities and attitudes. Any further inferences need to be approached cautiously, but nonetheless add to the person centred aims of the thesis.

<sup>187</sup> As noted, history was an essential part of a priest's seminary training.

<sup>188</sup> Steuart and Gillett did meet once on Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> October 1916 at the Catholic chapel in the house of Madame Arty at 51 Rue d'Amiens, as Fr Steuart recorded. This meeting did not appear in Gillett's diary which included the following entry for that day: 'Battalion dawdles down from the line in a shocking condition - clothes one mass of mud and everybody wet-through to the skin - poor lads it was pitiable'. However, they were both in Albert so Gillett's failure to record was probably decided by prioritisation.

<sup>189</sup> The year Jesuits were expelled from France <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13365c.htm> accessed 27/02/2014.

<sup>190</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (17<sup>th</sup> August 1917).

<sup>191</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (13<sup>th</sup> September 1917).

This theme continued through the heritage and beauty of the Abbey of St Riquier, built on the grounds of a 7<sup>th</sup> century monastery.<sup>192</sup> Fr Steuart did not visit this abbey; but the experience brought both Frs Drinkwater and Gillett closer in harmony. Fr Gillett wrote: 'Arrived at St Riquier about 1 pm midday, just before the lads moved in. A glorious old abbey church there - with convent alongside, now in possession of the wretched French Government. Attended Vespers here, but was not edified - scarcely anyone there. The Church looked as though it had recently been renovated'.<sup>193</sup> Fr Drinkwater meanwhile: '...rode to St Riquier and went to see Joan of Arc's dungeon at Druggy Ferme - it was full of turnips'.<sup>194</sup> The church (sic) of St Riquier is very fine and light: it was a Benedictine monastery before the Revolution. Sir Thomas More came to St Riquier, hence the Rue des Anglais'.<sup>195</sup>

**Illustration 15 - Abbey of St. Riquier, Picardy**<sup>196</sup>



Here any connection reflects individual tastes and probably educational influences. Fr Gillett impressed at history at Ushaw and had a naturally inquisitive nature for culture and tradition. Clearly chaplains were aware and proud of the French Catholic architectural heritage, even in the humblest of places. Fr Gill reminds the reader of his diaries, that it was the treasures within, by which he was referring to the spiritual and not the material, which held the greater import. After admiring the Benedictine Monastery at Fecamp, he delivered a pure and simple summary of the value of Catholic churches for Catholics: 'And yet is not the humblest Catholic

<sup>192</sup> The public information plaque at the base of the abbey.

<sup>193</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (26<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>194</sup> Both Drinkwater and Gillett had defined interest and thirst for knowledge of historic monuments and events, Jean d'Arc features in both diaries.

<sup>195</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diary, (9<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>196</sup> Photograph taken by author June 2013.

Church in the poorest village more surely worthy of our veneration and devotion, for the Hidden Treasures there contained is guaranteed by a greater assurance than any human history! We may not dwell any longer on this attractive subject'.<sup>197</sup>

Churches may have been places of beauty but as the war continued they often became places of ruin, dirt, and desecration. Priests either rolled up their sleeves to restore church buildings to a serviceable condition, or simply became discouraged and recoiled in disgust. Fr Drinkwater belonged to the former: 'I got some spades and barrows from the Monmouths and cleared up the debris with the help of Downward, Wood, and the Frenchwomen etc. The statues were not injured except Our Lady's hand and St. Francis' knee: windows weren't broken even. The shell must have burst in the roof'.<sup>198</sup> A fortnight later: 'To Soustre again. Sullivan and Felkin helped me clean up inside the church. Found bits of second shell'.<sup>199</sup> It is interesting that this chaplain worked with others to achieve his ends. Fr Gillett would have no difficulty adopting this hands-on approach, noticeably without assistance:

In afternoon went to Arqueves to get church ready for Sunday. The Curé had gone to the war and the church was in an awful state. Had been previously used to settle our wounded in. Spent an energetic 2 hours cleaning it out - the sacristy was appalling - the sacred linen was all over the place everything going to rack and ruin. The poor old church was actually falling into ruin. An occasional Requiem had been held there, but no double [server] to put things away after me. The villages seem to be apathetic about it.<sup>200</sup>

Fr Steuart was firmly in the disgusted category:

This is the dirtiest I have ever seen. Altar-cloth stained, dust & candle grease. The vestments soiled, crumpled and greasy so that I shudder as I put them on. Everything about the church (with is otherwise rather good) is grimy, broken, repulsive. And the churchyard is a disgraceful sight. No wonder no one has any religion in France.<sup>201</sup>

A year later, Fr Steuart appears to have undergone something of a minor transformation. Unlike Drinkwater who enlisted the help of willing troops, and Gillett who tackled most jobs himself, Steuart enlisted his servant for the purpose: 'Found the remains of a chapel just behind Belgian chateau with altar & stone etc., complete. Cleaned it up with Brennan & will use it to-morrow'.<sup>202</sup> Fr Steuart's desire to help was laudable as he had shown little aptitude for the rough and tumble of manual labour elsewhere, the conversion was welcome. Brennan or

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<sup>197</sup> JAD, Gill Diaries, p. 196.

<sup>198</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (14<sup>th</sup> January 1917).

<sup>198</sup> JAD, Gill Diaries, p. 196.

<sup>198</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (14<sup>th</sup> January 1917).

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., (9<sup>th</sup> February 1917).

<sup>200</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (16<sup>th</sup> September 1916).

<sup>201</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (February 20<sup>th</sup> 1917).

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., (5<sup>th</sup> October 1918).

Fisher, two of his four servants in the war, would surely have been surprised.<sup>203</sup> Possibly his reluctance for manual work stemmed from the comfort of his earlier life which is so amply illustrated in his diaries, particularly on leave. At war, his servants too were treated in line with a gentleman not used to doing things for himself: 'Fisher away at Poperinghe so had to do my own packing'<sup>204</sup> and: 'Fisher called me too late, so couldn't say Mass'.<sup>205</sup> These are not serious examples of a pampered life, but are indicative of a man used to having things done for him, and at odds with the other diarists.

As has been noted, history and tradition were essential elements in Catholic identity. Echoing historical precedence, the desecration of religious places and objects pained many chaplains. On his journey to France Fr Gillett passed through Canterbury which evoked unpleasant Catholic reminiscences of persecution and desecration:

Dear old Canterbury, what Catholic memories it recalls. The wee Catholic Church now doing service under the shadow of the once Catholic cathedral. There one visits St Thomas's deserted shrine - St Dunstan's church retains the head of the once Chancellor of England (Blessed Thomas More) and in this church Henry II disrobed and did penance for the murder of St Thomas. St Augustine's Abbey - the Kings conversion - the Queen's chapel - all now Protestant temples.<sup>206</sup>

What understandably angered Catholic chaplains was the wanton and sacrilegious defilement of church and religious objects, Fr Rockliff reported gratuitous damage to a convent:

A large convent of the Sisters of Charity through which I wandered, every door in every room had been pulled out and the contents up-turned on the floor. It is the same in the sacristy, a perfect litter of vestments and altar linen covering the floor. An ornamental hood at the back torn off and missing. There are empty chalice cases....in a village the outer brass doors of the tabernacle had been wrenched and twisted off its hinges.....men played the harmonium and roaming around with absolute freedom.<sup>207</sup>

Another remarked: '....the locks were all smashed off, the chalices stolen, the vestments all trampled on'.<sup>208</sup> As early as 1<sup>st</sup> October 1915 Fr Drinkwater commented: 'Walked to Noyelles and made enquiries about the church there but the Curé lives in Annequin now. They say the church has been looted twice now by the troops'.<sup>209</sup> These examples contain many of the elements which upset chaplains who were used to respect for religious places and objects back home. Malicious damage, theft, and callous irreverence, were made more upsetting because in

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<sup>203</sup> Fr Steuart diaries reveal that he had a number of servants. His regular was Private Fisher whom he mentioned frequently. Later, Fisher declined to serve for Steuart for reasons that are unclear.

<sup>204</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (8<sup>th</sup> August 1917).

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., (27<sup>th</sup> March 1917).

<sup>206</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (26<sup>th</sup> June 1916), on the way for embarkation.

<sup>207</sup> DAA, Rockliff to Rawlinson, (25<sup>th</sup> September, [no year given but probably 1916]. This is an abridged version, many more examples and from other priests attest to this type of behavior from British troops.

<sup>208</sup> DAA, 3238, anonymous chaplain to Keatinge, (7th April 1915).

<sup>209</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (1<sup>st</sup> October 1915).

many cases British troops were to blame. These experiences do not support Snape's claim that: 'Protestant Britons encountered a Catholic landscape... but there was little or no animosity towards a symbol [Catholic symbol]'.<sup>210</sup> The motivation for such vandalism towards Catholic symbols cannot, however, be proven. It might have been general mischief, iconoclasm, theft masquerading as the spoils of war, fatigue of war, or some local and unknown provocation. The quantity of vandalism that chaplains observed and recorded does not suggest endemic anti-Catholicism in the British Army, nor are the specific culprits mentioned. Nevertheless, it is difficult on balance, to repudiate the chaplains own beliefs that Catholic symbols were targeted by Protestant, or at least non-Catholic British troops, as above. Was this sectarianism reappearing at war? Catholic troops, under pain of Mortal Sin for this type of desecration, notwithstanding the iniquity of such actions, and the almost certain retribution that would be meted out to them from co-religionists, must surely be removed from the equation when assessing culpability. As has been noted there is no evidence that soldiers who practised their own religions would be any more likely to offend than Catholics. Those of no religion, those nominally called Protestant, or those who were anti-religious or iconoclastic were more likely culprits.

British troops were not alone; the French and German troops also vandalized church property. Fr Drinkwater: 'Mont St. Eloi church is in ruins of course. On the Lady Altar etc. there are many little inscriptions in pencil such as, '*St. Marie, protegez moi*', with soldiers signatures'.<sup>211</sup> Presumably these are seen as mocking Our Lady; to good Catholics this desecration was repugnant. Drinkwater confirms malicious intent: 'The sculptured faces of Our Lord (on the stations) are smashed, also by French soldiers'.<sup>212</sup> There is a sense of helplessness in dealing with the situation. Fr Rockliff suggested a range of disciplinary measures including intervention by the British military and French ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>213</sup> Rawlinson's response was that in reality that there was very little that could be done, unless culprits could be determined and times established. With so much turmoil the Army could not be expected to act with any vigour. This practical reaction was hardly likely to assuage the senses of religious men. Rawlinson's dual-purpose response typified his desire to balance army and chaplaincy sensitivities, whilst retaining a sense of the bigger picture. In this case it was difficult to create an alternative that would suffice both army and clergy. In any case the horrors of war have to be factored in at the human as well as at the religious level. Upsetting

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<sup>210</sup> Snape, *British Catholicism and the British Army*, p. 341.

<sup>211</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (14<sup>th</sup> March 1916).

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., (14<sup>th</sup> March 1916).

<sup>213</sup> DAA, 3235, Rockliff to Rawlinson, (25<sup>th</sup> September 1916).

as it was to the fundamental beliefs of Catholics, and more so priests, this was a brutal war fought by men who themselves had become brutalised, many of whom led a tough life of theft, brawling, and basic survival. Violence and religion are brought into sharp conflict through the destruction or theft of simple devotional objects.

When Fr O'Connor, chaplain to the 16<sup>th</sup> Highland Light Infantry, sent his concerns to Rawlinson, they were of a religious and military nature and give an insight into Rawlinson's stewardship of the Principal Chaplain's department in these areas: 'I regret to inform you that I discovered that the Catholic chapel attached to the Chateau at Auroir has been, and apparently still is being used for Protestant religious services. Also, that the Catholic Church at Germaine has been used by the French and is at present used by our troops as an observation post'.<sup>214</sup> Rawlinson, whose policy to retain military cooperation at the highest level in France has been established, replied in consistent and expected fashion to the last query: 'I need hardly point out that it would not do interfere with military operations, and if it is considered necessary to use the church in this way we can hardly object, and if we did, we should only be turned down'.<sup>215</sup> In any event, many months later, Fr O'Connor subsequently reported that: 'the chapel was no longer being used for Protestant services'.<sup>216</sup>

Fr Fitzmaurice attempted to understand the German military position with regard to damaging churches by interrogating a captured officer who replied: 'If you will insist on placing your guns in or near churches, what do you expect from us, to throw jam at them?'<sup>217</sup> Fr Walker painted the church at Vielle Chapelle in December 1915 and proved that it was definitely not jam that was being thrown, by either side: 'The enemy occupied the church in October 1914. They were driven out three days later by British troops. The church, in the tower of which machine guns had been placed, was destroyed by British shell fire'.<sup>218</sup> A brief analysis of Fr Walker's paintings reveals his grief at the broken structures, but in his other paintings and sketches, the repositioning of Christ on the crucifix suggests that it is God and not buildings which occupies his thoughts. He was, however, keen to rebuild French churches after the war. He wrote to Rawlinson with a detailed plan on how he proposed to bring a scheme into fruition: '... a collection of sketches of the ruined churches of France and Belgium should be made with a view to publishing them, the profits accruing to go toward the restoration and rebuilding of same'. At the end of the letter he wrote: 'I mentioned this matter

<sup>214</sup> DAA, 3235 O'Connor to Rawlinson, (4<sup>th</sup> June 1916).

<sup>215</sup> DAA, 3235, Rawlinson to O'Connor, (11<sup>th</sup> June 1916).

<sup>216</sup> DAA, 3235, O'Connor to Rawlinson, (13<sup>th</sup> April 1917).

<sup>217</sup> JAL, Fr Fitzmaurice, 'Our Chaplains Experiences', in, *Letters and Notices*, 33 (1915-16) 157.

<sup>218</sup> JAL, Paintings of Fr Walker SJ.



in a private conversation with the Bishop of Arras, who at once offered to place all available information at my disposal'.<sup>219</sup> It is not known if Walker succeeded but it is ironic that having confiscated Catholic churches, the secular French authorities retained the responsibility for their repair after the war.<sup>220</sup>

**Illustration 16** <sup>221</sup> Vielle Chapelle



The use of French Catholic churches by other denominations was not a problem for some priests, as Fr Francis Devas explained [The use of a ruined church by a Church of England chaplain]: 'I had no need of it myself as I have a good chapel, ...when asked if I minded them using it, I said as they had already used it I didn't think it mattered. I don't know what Canon Law says about ruined churches. If you care for my opinion I don't think the present case matters, Ypres is a ruined town'.<sup>222</sup> Alas, Rawlinson's reply has not survived so it is not clear whether Devas was correct in his obliging and sensible gesture to his Protestant opposite number. Fr Drinkwater, working in the operations of the Somme on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1916, assumed a lower-key approach to sharing a Catholic church with an Anglican chaplain. He conceded wearily: 'Richmond came in; he said the second push was starting today. Casualties since July 1<sup>st</sup> – a hundred and twenty thousand. Onthwaite called about using the chapel at

<sup>219</sup> DAA, 3235, Walker to Rawlinson, (18<sup>th</sup> March 1919).

<sup>220</sup> Even today that is the case. A visit to Chartres Cathedral in July 2015 demonstrated that the renovation, costing 14 million Euro's, was part funded by the French Government with commercial partners and the European Union. A tourist attraction but also a working and active catholic church.

<sup>221</sup> JAL, Fr Walker's paintings. Sketch of Vielle Chapelle, (October 1915).

<sup>222</sup> DAA, 3234, Francis Devas to Rawlinson, (undated).



Bellacourt: I couldn't very well object'.<sup>223</sup> Drinkwater's attitude is civilised and confirms the earlier suggestion that he was developing his humane instincts through the war.

These individual responses, which go fundamentally against the grain of Catholic Canon Law, say much about chaplains and their leader. Rawlinson was the voice of sanity in a world which was turned upside-down. He was also a cautious man who harboured a desire to strengthen English Catholic relationships with the authorities, but he also talked common-sense when irrationality threatened to take hold. He delivered pastoral care for his chaplains through his calmness and sagacity. Rawlinson's life has not been studied at depth, yet his career at GHQ will unfold and reveal a man of complexity, a man bearing heavy responsibility, and one who was firm but relatively fair.<sup>224</sup> He balanced the desires of both chaplains and episcopacies, although the consistency of this equilibrium will be challenged, particularly in the Irish context.

Chaplains' attitudes reflected their varied personalities. Francis Drinkwater demonstrated again that despite his war-weariness, he retained clarity of thought, which percolates throughout his memoirs.<sup>225</sup> Agreeing to share a Catholic Church with an Anglican was against convention: 'At no time from the days of Christ has it been held allowable for Catholics to grant the use of their Churches for the worship of the sects. The reason of the principle is loyalty to Christ'.<sup>226</sup> Drinkwater used his common sense to diffuse a situation which was not ideal and might have caused offence to many Catholics, but in conscience he could not fail to acknowledge a fellow Christian's plight in a time of crisis. This act typifies the way Fr Drinkwater conducted himself, it is unlikely that this would have been a common response from many Catholic chaplains.

Fr Devas handled the same dilemma with common sense and initiative. His assertiveness in decision making without reference to headquarters is conspicuous. This is not surprising given his families pedigree as chaplains. Fr Francis Devas was a Jesuit from the English Province. His brothers were Peter a Franciscan, and Raymond a Dominican, all three became successful chaplains. Peter was promoted to SCF and Major, Raymond won the

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<sup>223</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (22<sup>nd</sup> July 1916). It should be recalled that this was the period when Fr Drinkwater was disgusted by war and was considering being a conscientious objector.

<sup>224</sup> Bellis, 'The Rawlinson Papers', pp. 1-26, is a synopsis of his time at GHQ.

<sup>225</sup> This is the strength of the diaries as testimonies. There was tacit collaboration between the denominations which could be safely entered in a personal memoir but did not appear in official letters to the Principal Chaplain whom we have seen, understandably took the approved line in matters of definition whether ecclesiastic or military.

<sup>226</sup> DAA, Ephemera, 'The Use of Catholic Churches by non-Catholics', was an instruction and advised that it had been reprinted from the *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*, p. 3.

Military Cross and Francis was awarded the DSO,<sup>227</sup> promoted to Major and Senior Chaplain, and in 1919 awarded the OBE.<sup>228</sup> He was one of nine children brought up in London. His father became a convert whilst at Eton, henceforth they lived a comfortable life, but all that changed after ordination. His exploits besides surviving Gallipoli and the Western Front, were augmented by his pre-war work as manager of the St. Wilfrid's Boys Club, Preston: 'I love the men from Lancashire. Who wouldn't or couldn't that was two years in Preston'.<sup>229</sup> This is an example of a southern priest being enthused by the novelty of Lancastrian religious fervour which he was clearly happy to embrace.

It is unsafe to offer analysis for Fr C O'Connor. Born in Cork he was a Redemptorist but as there were at least seven other O'Connor's, none of whom left substantial records, there is an identification problem. He did leave over twenty letters to Rawlinson but apart from his concerns with the chapel at Auroir, his other papers are mundane and routine and do not offer any insight into his personality or upbringing.

A simple investigation into church usage has brought into vision a selection of chaplains. This demonstrates that the Rawlinson Papers are a valuable addition to our diarists by widening the scope of the survey into their attitudes and behaviour. A certain amount of individual chaplaincy profiling has commenced. The key message is that chaplains were a collection of characters from the fragile and timid, to the poised and spirited. They were also operating at different places, different times, and hence differing stress levels.

The emotional or psychological benefits of Mass and the Sacraments have been explored but what of the built environment itself? Churches and other places of worship brought emotional benefits at home as Fr Radcliffe argues:

When Irish Catholics flocked to cities such as Liverpool in the Industrial Revolution one of the first things that they did was to build vast churches. The English often thought this a waste of money and showed how priest-ridden they were. But it was a sign that they were not as they might seem, mere members of the urban proletariat, but *citizens of the kingdom*. They were fellow citizens of the saints whose statues filled the churches, God's own children. Their houses might be slums but their church was heaven.<sup>230</sup> [Author's italics].

He neatly postulated that escapism and even glamour defined the contemporary attitudes to churchgoing at home. Could his analysis be applied to battle zones with damaged buildings and statuary, and little in the way of vestments or other colourful adornments? No,

<sup>227</sup> *The Liverpool Catholic Herald*, (6<sup>th</sup> January 1917), announced Fr Devas's DSO.

<sup>228</sup> JAL, *Our Dead*, 53, (1938).

<sup>229</sup> JAL, Fr Francis Devas, 'Our Army Chaplains Experiences', in *Letters and Notices*, 33, (1915-1916) 325.

<sup>230</sup> Radcliffe, *Why Go To Church?* p. 11.

because he was alluding to Catholic society at peace with congregations comprising of men, women, and children. War separated men from women and children. In a male environment at war, Radcliffe's view of celebrating the church and its adornments at home did not transfer to soldiers away from their normal environs. There were real and tangible, emotional and spiritual, advantages from the Mass, Sacraments, and Devotions, derived not from sentimentalising about church buildings, but from religious engagement. Many soldiers assisted in repairing churches and helped in atrocious conditions: 'We had to dig our church and cover it with bags... men knelt on the frozen snow all during Mass'.<sup>231</sup> Clearly wistful explanations are drowned out amidst the horrors and practicalities of war. Catholics troops had concerns other than the building where Mass was celebrated and they were not particular as long as they could attend Mass somewhere. This is important. It strengthens the clear argument made earlier that men went to Mass for spiritual and emotional sustenance, which they obtained not from materials or adornment, but from the chaplain, the service, and each other. Where Mass was said, bore no correlation between the optimistic interpretations at home and the reality at war.

The concept of the Universal Church requires some explanation. There are useful insights from Radcliffe's comments. By emphasising that Catholics were: 'not mere members of the urban proletariat, but citizens of the kingdom', he was referring to the Universal and Apostolic Catholic Church. In the Catechism,<sup>232</sup> the Apostles Creed states three simple definitions: 'The word Catholic means Universal': 'The Church is Catholic or Universal because she subsists on all ages, teaches all nations, and is the one Ark of Salvation for all', and: 'The Church is Apostolic because she holds the doctrines and traditions of the Apostles, and because, through the unbroken succession of her Pastors, she derived her Orders and her Mission from them'.<sup>233</sup> Catholic soldiers were very aware of these definitions, but it was at war where they experienced the true strength and depth of the concept and the reality of the Church's universal reach and significance.

Fr Gillett supported Radcliffe's observations with reference to the concept of 'citizens of the kingdom' through services he and others provided to the local communities. His witness from Boulogne: 'Mass at 13 Stationary Hospital then at Detention Barracks. All morning the bells are chiming away, calling God's creatures to pay their homage'.<sup>234</sup> The

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<sup>231</sup> JAD, CHP 1/21 (16). Fr J. Fitzgibbon SJ was killed in action on 18th September 1918.

<sup>232</sup> The Catechism was the basis for elementary religious instruction. The education system in general was based on repetition, and religious instruction was no different. The catechism was recited daily, given as homework and examined, in much the same way as arithmetic tables or geometric theorems.

<sup>233</sup> Catholic Truth Society, *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2013), pp. 23-4.

<sup>234</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (6<sup>th</sup> August 1916).

community in this instance consisted of a range of Catholics including: Allied soldier-civilian patients at the hospital, Allied and German soldier-detainees at a military barracks, and French civilians in Boulogne. Fr Gillett also worked with American, Canadian, Chinese, and other nationalities, sharing these experiences with many Catholic chaplains. As citizens of the kingdom they were part of the Universal Church, and could draw strength from being a Catholic and being part of the true Apostolic Church, sharing a lineage back to Saints Peter and Paul. The soldiers' attendances at Mass were a sure way of reinforcing this understanding which was borne out of extensive catechism-based education, and familiarity with missions back home.

Publicly defining oneself as a Catholic and a churchgoer, and being part of the same faith and the same army was one thing, yet the knowledge that they exclusively shared with other Catholics across the world gave an enriched sense of universalism which rendered Catholics unique among denominations. A Catholic Bavarian, a Catholic West Indian, or a Catholic American, might have different cultures and backgrounds, but they shared common beliefs within the Universal Church despite the anomalies. In this world war they were integral members of the Universal Church, and part of an identity greater than the British Army. Soldiers and chaplains could make the simple inter-connection with French, Belgian, and other nationalities through the built environment: '[...] the sacred landscape of Northern France and Belgium, a region that was thickly planted with roadside calvaries',<sup>235</sup> but more importantly this extended universalism encompassed people. Catholic soldiers' faith was increased by the evidence around them: 'He felt that he was in a Catholic country and in the back areas and towns his presence at Mass was proof of his 'feeling at home''.<sup>236</sup> This was a spiritual connection and no way diminished their corporal duties, if an enemy's eyes had to be gouged out there was no apparent conflict or prevarication.<sup>237</sup>

French civilians would have been excused if the concept of the universality of the Church, threatened by a subtle subterfuge by Rawlinson, had gone awry. Providing Mass for civilians was not, according to Fr Rawlinson, official policy. In August 1917 he provided a blatant example of his politicking. Concerned that a priest may upset the military, and thereby his own grand plans as representative of the English hierarchy, he issued a strange and

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<sup>235</sup> Snape, *God and the British Soldier* p. 42.

<sup>236</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, p. 15.

<sup>237</sup> The war has been in many ways sanitized. The Albert WW1 Museum, at the northern side of the Albert Basilica, reveals the hand-made weapons that each side made for trench raids. They were constructed to cause massive facial damage and were widely employed by both sides before grenades became in regular supply. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of Christian morality and barbarism is a contentious one, however, evidence of Catholic soldiers' moral turmoil is elusive.

impractical instruction to Fr Wrafter SJ. According to Rawlinson's clear advice the duty of a Catholic priest was unequivocally with the troops only: 'You are out here solely for the British troops, and have nothing whatever to say to the French civilians. Therefore, with regard to where you say Mass, this will depend entirely on where you can get the greatest number of men together, leaving civilians out of your mind altogether'.<sup>238</sup> This is at first a perplexing statement from Rawlinson. To suggest that he either ignored or was unaware of the reality that Mass was being regularly celebrated with French and Belgian civilians, as later examples testify, was preposterous for a man in Rawlinson's position. Rawlinson was an experienced chaplain, bright and intelligent, without any acrimony towards other nationalities.<sup>239</sup> At first it seems to be an ill-judged response to Wrafter, but mystifying as Wrafter had been serving in France since October 1915. Rawlinson was under extreme pressure in relation to shortages of priests and ill-judgement might have been understandable, or it may have been a simple error in interpretation. It may have been a guarded reaction to what Bourne had written in 1903: 'The faculties granted to the Commissioned Chaplains are exclusively in favour of the soldiers and their wives and children, and the Chaplains are bound to observe most strictly all the clauses and *monita*<sup>240</sup> contained in these faculties'.<sup>241</sup> Without knowing the precise details of the faculties granted, the wording: 'in favour of', suggests that a sense of prioritisation rather than exclusion was appropriate. Bourne was responding to a theoretical situation immediately after the South African war and did not predict that future wars might take place in Catholic countries. All Catholics, civilian or military, shared the identical desires of spiritual succour with British Catholics, and no prelate could ever deny that inviolable right, regardless of secular considerations.

With many of the French priests away fighting, civilians could not possibly be ignored. The Universal Church could not, in all decency, have it both ways by excluding foreign Catholics from services, and at the same time claiming to be universal. It was against all Catholic instincts to deny the Sacraments or Mass to any Catholic. That was resolutely not the reality, and there is a more credible explanation shaped by Rawlinson's proximity to senior Army officers within Army Headquarters, and is consistent with his dual spiritual-secular approach embraced throughout. The Army were funding Catholic chaplains and any misrepresentation of their duties, which included support to foreign civilians as it might be construed, could cause embarrassment to the Catholic hierarchies. Unfortunately, Fr Wrafter's

<sup>238</sup> DAA, 3235, [filed in error under 'Rafter'], Rawlinson to Wrafter SJ, (27<sup>th</sup> August 1917).

<sup>239</sup> Except for Maltese chaplains as will be examined.

<sup>240</sup> Discreet instructions which might be relevant in a particular circumstance for a priest.

<sup>241</sup> DAA, Bishops Correspondence, 28/1/31, (4<sup>th</sup> May 1903), p. 1.

response, if it ever existed, has not survived. Rawlinson's correspondence falls short of a general directive and was not mentioned with reference to any other chaplain, or any other incident, in the evidence collected. This renders it as an instruction to one priest only which may suggest that it was a personal matter. There is no reason to substantiate this option. It is against Rawlinson's personality with no supportive evidence. Instead, there is a subtle twist to interpreting this letter to Wrafter. It is more likely to be the result of a man appealing to the gallery, which was the non-Catholic officer élite, in which Rawlinson necessarily mingled at GHQ and where he occasionally shared non-Catholic administrative assistants.<sup>242</sup> In typical Rawlinson tradition he placated any potential disquiet from the Army, and at the same time minimised damage to Catholic bonds and friendship: 'a skilful operator supreme'.<sup>243</sup> The recipient, Fr Wrafter, does not mention the matter again and continued to be a successful chaplain winning the Military Cross. It is a fundamental truth that despite Rawlinson's need to promote the Catholic ambition, it was the spiritual mission promoted by chaplains that was unshakeable.

Nevertheless, this example shows that keeping the Army satisfied was a political imperative for Catholic ecclesiastical strategy in the war, regardless of the consequences for the individual chaplain. This is not an isolated example, more will follow. For Rawlinson, whose instincts were to support the wider Catholic ambition at home, it marks the start of his willingness to control the conduct of chaplains, and in doing so avoid conflict with the Army and hence foster episcopal ambition. In this case Rawlinson was able to test the water with Wrafter. In the event, he was able to diplomatically resolve any friction. Akin to the military leaders, Rawlinson was developing tactics and building a team around him of trusted men. This affair with Wrafter was the forerunner to much later developments where he showed his increasing determination to jettison any individual chaplain, if it served the larger cause. Future Irish chaplains, particularly those not from Religious orders, would bear the brunt of this English Catholic aspiration.<sup>244</sup>

To judge Rawlinson as sycophantic towards the Army is, therefore, extremely short-sighted and wrong. Rawlinson not only understood Catholic ambition, he understood Catholic tradition, and it was Catholicism he was protecting not the Army. He knew how far he could go with the authorities, and he intuitively knew how his chaplains responded. He did not need

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<sup>242</sup> Mingling with these elite has to be taken cautiously. From cordial letters to him from senior officers it is clear that all their correspondence was polite and businesslike. It is difficult to imagine Rawlinson on close social terms with GHQ but certainly tactful diplomacy was assiduously pursued. He may well have been under scrutiny through censorship or simply by the physical proximity of a Senior Army Officer.

<sup>243</sup> Bellis, 'The Rawlinson Papers', pp. 1-26.

<sup>244</sup> Chapter 5.

to know each one personally. The result was that Rawlinson's edict had no effect whatsoever, and was not intended to; he was effectively producing his own smoke screen. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Wrafter was pre-warned or informed at any time. Rawlinson knew his own men would not create a fuss, he instinctively recognised how they would react. Whilst the letter may appear unduly devious and tenuous, it clearly did not lead to a contretemps between the two clergymen. The Army and non-Catholics at home would surely question the misuse of chaplaincy funding; whilst the Catholic public and clergy would equally recoil at the prospect of denying fellow Catholics access to Mass and the Sacraments. The letter was an effective device to evade bad feeling with the army and thereby generate a general British public backlash. However, it was a risky ploy which would have caused anger and calls for recrimination by Catholics worldwide. It is mysterious why Rawlinson simply did not make any response in writing and instead visited Wrafter personally, was he under scrutiny himself? Nevertheless, this ruse succeeded because of Catholic intuition, a claim difficult to substantiate, yet equally, difficult to deny, it is:

This apparently invisible continuum between bishop and chaplain [and between the clergy] is such a rich, understated, and misunderstood element of Catholic culture and cohesion. This continuum functions almost like a sleight of hand; each component operating independently of the other, yet functioning effectively.<sup>245</sup>

These sentiments are in assonance with Armstrong: 'During a heightened encounter with the sacred, things that normally seem opposed coincide to reveal an underlying unity'.<sup>246</sup> The bonds between the clergy were formed from seminary and continued throughout their lives as clerics. Intuition may develop in most walks of life through familiarity, but is intensified by a Catholic priest's relatively closed environment. Chaplains were priests first and officers second, although this did not always meet with favour with the Army: 'I believe he has not been sufficiently an officer and too much of a priest'.<sup>247</sup> However, Plater puts the officer-priest relationship into perspective: 'A few of the chaplains had too much of the officer about them, but that was not general'.<sup>248</sup> In the final analysis, a chaplain was not answerable to Rawlinson on spiritual matters. Only the *Episcopus Castrensis* working through the Vatican if necessary, or a local bishop if ministering to civilians in civilian churches, as God's representatives on earth, could command spiritual obedience. Rawlinson was a Catholic Benedictine priest and a British Army Colonel, and no more than that. He knew what his mission was, and if not the seclusion of Downside Abbey or the Bermondsey Boys Club, then trying to sort out the

<sup>245</sup> Bellis, 'The Rawlinson Papers', p.8.

<sup>246</sup> Armstrong, *The Case for God*, p. 37.

<sup>247</sup> DAA, 3825, signature indecipherable. 42<sup>nd</sup> Division H.Q. to Rawlinson, (28<sup>th</sup> November 1918), referring to Fr Myerscough SJ.

<sup>248</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, p. 138.

disarray that confronted him at war whilst simultaneously shaping the spiritual and corporal outcomes.

In the field, the instruction to Wrafter appears to have gone unnoticed, it was an isolated event. Chaplains continued to serve the Universal Church. In large towns, generally at the edges or outside direct conflict, sharing Catholic chaplaincy duties with civilians was not unusual. There is ample evidence in the diaries. This situation was repeated on a smaller scale in villages behind or amongst the battle zones, at least those which retained some of the original population. Fr Drinkwater testified: 'The Assumption. Said Mass for the civilians of FOSSE 3 at 7:30',<sup>249</sup> and: 'Ascension Day. Mass for civilians at 08:00 and Stafford's at 09:30'.<sup>250</sup> Fr Gillett confirmed the civilian commitment: 'No Mass - too early, on the move - however heard Mass at Neuville whilst troops passed on to St Riquier only a few miles away. It was a sung Mass - but between the kiddies and the cantor it was altogether edifying. Church very full with civilians'.<sup>251</sup> Fr Steuart did not report saying Mass for civilians but that is not unexpected given his lack of fellowship with ordinary people, or he may simply thought including civilians in his records inapposite. He did perform his sacred duties for civilians when called upon, celebrating Communion he abruptly recorded: 'Number of confessions, civilians as well'.<sup>252</sup> His obituarist hints at either his aloofness or possibly xenophobia: 'he neither asked too little or too much, especially from "foreigners"'.<sup>253</sup>

The ecclesiastical relationship with local bishops was important when dealing with civilians in Catholic churches. It was necessary to receive permissions or faculties from the bishop to minister their ordained functions. Cardinal Bourne as: 'Ecclesiastical Superior of all Catholic Commissioned Chaplains, and delegate of the Holy See in all that regards the spiritual care of the Catholic soldiers in the British Army',<sup>254</sup> had been at the forefront in establishing ground-rules with the Army. At war he reiterated an earlier proclamation ratified by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, he announced that:

The chaplains are reminded that they retain no kind of ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the local clergy. They may not approach any of the local clergy with a view to obtaining their assistance save through the local Ordinary [usually the bishop], to whom in all matters they must show the greatest respect, obedience and deference....In the event of a chaplain unfortunately incurring suspension or withdrawal of faculties, either *ex informata conscientia*, or in any other form, he must at once submit to the judgement of the local Ordinary and abstain from all duties forbidden by that judgement....He is

<sup>249</sup> BAA Drinkwater Diaries, (5<sup>th</sup> August 1917).

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., (17<sup>th</sup> May 1917).

<sup>251</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (26<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>252</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (25<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>253</sup> Appendix 14

<sup>254</sup> DAA, Bishops Correspondence, #28/1/31, (4<sup>th</sup> May 1903), p. 1.



bound *sub gravi* and *sub poena nullitatis* where jurisdiction is concerned, to obey the commands of the local Ordinary'.<sup>255</sup>

Cardinal Bourne was tacitly responsible for chaplains' faculties on service to the Army. This duty was later transferred in 1918 to *Episcopus Castrensis* Keatinge, formerly appointed by Rome in late 1917 but effectively taking office in early 1918. Disputes were rare, but when they occurred each chaplain's response will be gauged, and conclude that in the crucial matter of dispensing their priestly role, not even disingenuous authoritarianism interfered with their vocational mandate. They obeyed bishops or else relied on their highly-honed consciences.

Rawlinson at GHQ had problems acting as the buffer between chaplains and episcopacies. He was becoming sceptical of episcopal effort in the area of recruitment. In relation to an unsuitable priest, the Rev. T. Scott of Southwark, he despaired: 'He is a naturally objectionable, cantankerous fellow, and I feel sure sent out here by Bishop Amigo for *all the usual reasons*. He is quite unsuitable for a chaplain'.<sup>256</sup> The inference is that 'all the usual reasons' equates to sending priests that the bishop does not particularly want at home. This may be unfair without an analysis of Bishop Amigo and the difficulties within which he was operating, but there was certainly tension between the bishops and Bourne over episcopal boundary changes and the forming of the Brentwood Diocese in 1918. Bishop Frederick Keating of Northampton, later to become Archbishop of Liverpool, described Bourne as: 'an autocrat of the most Prussian type, who consults no one but himself and wishes to stifle all opinion opposed to his own'. Bishop Amigo agreed adding: 'that whenever Bourne wanted something, he discovered it was the will of God!'<sup>257</sup> Distrust of Cardinal Bourne continued, frequently upsetting the Irish episcopacy: 'It is quite clear that the Irish hierarchy resented the interference of Cardinal Francis Bourne. The Irish received support from Pope Benedict XV. [Over the issue of providing Irish chaplains for Irish regiments]'.<sup>258</sup> This was hardly the mood conducive to open cooperation. Neither was it an isolated experience as this anecdotal reference about the English Jesuits ability or willingness to oblige suggests. Drinkwater claimed that: 'Fr Harper SJ came in and says the Society did not send those who asked to go, [into Army chaplaincy] but did send those who didn't ask'.<sup>259</sup> The transfer of less popular priests was not a new experience. The Nottingham Diocese had earned a reputation pre-war as a *refugium peccatorum*<sup>260</sup> under Bishop Bagshawe.<sup>261</sup> The quality of its priests was not a new

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>256</sup> DAA, 3231 Rawlinson to Keating, (29<sup>th</sup> November 1918), my italics.

<sup>257</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, pp. 104-5.

<sup>258</sup> Aan de Weil, *The Catholic Church in Ireland 1914-1918: War and Politics* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003), p.

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<sup>259</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (8<sup>th</sup> September 1916).

<sup>260</sup> Refuge for sinners.

problem for Nottingham: ‘....some 25 of the 82 secular clergy were said to be unsatisfactory by the closing years of the century [19<sup>th</sup>]. 11 of those had been hastily ordained at the diocesan seminary because of the urgency of the pastoral need’.<sup>262</sup> Frs Tonge and Richmond to follow, confirm Nottingham’s problems.

### Conclusion

Holy Mass was central to building Catholic relationships, both spiritual and psychological. It became a conduit connecting God, chaplains, civilians, soldiers, and other Catholics together. Through interconnection with allies, members of the public, and belligerents, it reinforced the Universality of the Catholic Church and strengthened identity, which in turn fortified these men spiritually and emotionally through extraordinary stressful conditions. Mass carried the promise of extra sacramental sustenance with Holy Communion the main gift. Confessions too could be grafted on to Mass and provide the rare time a soldier might get the opportunity.

Many of the above benefits set Catholics apart from other denominations, not in a triumphalist spirit but as mark of distinctiveness. Sectarianism, as explained, could create if not a beleaguered mentality then a defensive one. Catholics were a minority in England, a majority in Ireland, but at Mass at the Front they were as one, joined together across nationalities and united beyond other worldly boundaries. They would fight and die for the country, but their souls and spirit were not negotiable, they were reserved for their own Faith. The wide range of religious services which constitutes Catholicism was adapted by chaplains on the Western Front to replicate the experiences Catholics might receive at home. It was a daunting and in many ways an impractical mission, still they attempted to achieve this and mostly succeeded. The war made its own chilling demands. Civilians and prisoners of war, amongst others, may have demonstrated the universality of the Church but they also drained valuable resources. To the chaplains credit, that was never an issue, repeated diary entries confirm that chaplains ministered to civilians, prisoners of war, and any nationality of Catholic.

Chaplains did encounter difficulties in conducting their legitimate services at times. Considering the chaos of war, and the fact that that Catholics were a minority in the British Army which itself contained varying elements of ambivalence, lethargy, or opposition to religion, the degree of tolerance they benefitted from was remarkable. When the established Church of England representing most Christian believers in England is factored in to the

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<sup>261</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 79 discusses the belief that many priests had this notion due to particular recruitment difficulties in Nottingham at the time.

<sup>262</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 202.

equation, it demonstrated the relaxation of anti-Catholic feeling within the common project of winning the war. Chaplains were able to carry out their ministry with relative success. If anything Catholics caused their own problems. Rawlinson's need to keep the authorities satisfied was accomplished, even if confusion was sometimes the result. The largest obstacle to providing more services was Cardinal Bourne's inability to attract more priests as chaplains. Those out in the field worked heroically to redress the numbers shortage.

It is not surprising that many chaplains with their extensive education relished the opportunities on hand to explore the historical significance of the Catholic legacy in France and Belgium. Equally, it is not surprising that soldiers had more pressing things with which to contend. Troops apportioned time between the estaminet and church. To their credit it was the Mass and services and not the religious buildings that were important. Harking back to days when such buildings were either unavailable or a fascination and luxury for the majority, the soldiers' attitudes can be interpreted as refreshing, and perhaps point the way forward for alternative forms of worship in the future.

The British Army was not the correct vehicle to accommodate the conventional Catholic mission, the two were fundamentally incompatible. The Catholic control of missionary placement was weakened somewhat by the practicalities of war. Instead, the Catholic *mission became individualised* by each chaplain drawing on his seminary training and sense of conscience, in whatever situation he found himself in. Priestly missionary ethos, that important method of matching resources with need, was now outside the control of the Catholic authorities at home. Apart from the moral struggle between Christianity and violence which occupied Fr Drinkwater, there was also the new experience of developing one's mission within a Protestant environment. Social background was ruthlessly exposed at times. These were novel experiences for both diocesan and religious priests and innovative adjustments were required. There were casualties and some chaplains' backgrounds ill-prepared them for change. Fr Steuart was isolated and left stranded without knowledge of the working class or the Protestant senior officer class. His background, instead of providing social advantage by which his mission may have been more successful, became a hindrance. It is worth noting that class was not derived from being a Jesuit, rather his family background. For example, Fr John Delaney SJ lived on Strand Road Dublin, his father was a coachman and John received elementary education with the Christian Brothers. As a working class family they were unable to afford the fees to educate John for the priesthood. Instead, he was sponsored by the Society of Jesus and educated at Mungret. He went on to win the MC and enjoy a successful

chaplaincy with all classes and all denominations.<sup>263</sup> In Fr Steuart's position, he was the victim of personal cultural circumstances which was exacerbated by shortages of chaplains, hasty recruitment, and deployment which was out of place for his experiences and temperament. Like others, there were insufficient chaplaincy vacancies which may have suited their pre-war dispositions and social advantages. Nonetheless, chaplains had their basic priestly functions to perform and Fr Steuart succeeded in his spiritual vocation.

Religious and military histories, together with social and psychological perspectives, have been employed to unravel the relationships between different strands of clergy and with soldiers. Soldiers' outlooks from working class backgrounds have been accommodated. This is a considerable shift in focus from a singular middle class evaluation. The togetherness of the majority of Catholic soldiers is self-evident and its unique properties explained. This is supplementary to the fraternalism that men experienced when thrust together in the common cause of the war. Back home society was not equal or fraternal, this also applied to Catholic society. The war situation was unique, and yet the key elements of celebration, faith, universalism, and chaplaincy paternalism were retained. After the war ended, the togetherness between chaplain and soldier, now expressed as priest and laity, was continued as Catholic numbers continued to swell. The importance of the Mass and Sacraments did not diminish for Catholic fighting men, but it is hard to imagine that the intensity which war added to the bonding process could ever be replicated. If World War One did anything, it surely removed the naivety and innocence from all that took part. In that sense the whole experience of celebrating Mass reached its zenith for both celebrant and suppliant, in the ditches and abbeys of France and Belgium on the Western Front.

The variations between English and Irish Catholicism may have been different if Cardinal Manning had succeeded earlier with his earnest and well-intended attempts to bridge the gaps between the Irish and English episcopacies, the Irish influence might have permeated further into the English South: 'His objective was to re-establish a union of sentiment and action between the English and Irish Catholic Churches'.<sup>264</sup> This suggests that such a dialogue between English and Irish Catholics was possible. By the time of the Great War, the 'Irish Question', was not the issue within northern Catholicism. The real problems were rooted in the social and demographic differences between English regions. Soldiers were numerically drawn from the working classes, whose communal development was strengthened in the North through industrialisation. The resultant large towns and cities

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<sup>263</sup> Morrissey, *From Easter Week to Flanders Field*, p. 9.

<sup>264</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 272.

aided Catholic development and encouraged the absorption of all classes of both Lancashire and Irish strands. In the South, the social disparities between Catholics were more pronounced, and the irregularity of Catholic communities in numbers alone, stunted development.<sup>265</sup>

Two fault lines impaired the successful delivery of services at the Front, and neither of these was within the remit of chaplains to resolve. The first was the shortage of sufficient chaplains to fulfil all of the demands. This failure occurred throughout the war and was purely the responsibility of the total Catholic episcopacies. The second reason revealed and confirmed the frailties within Catholicism in parts of England, which now impacted on the Front. It was not Catholicism in Britain at fault, as Ireland did not share the geographical disparities evident in the English variant, nor in Lancashire which had invested in building up strong Catholic communities. The southern bishops had invested in education and a degree of evangelisation to the more remote parts of England, but insufficient progress had been made for Catholic soldiers by the time hostilities commenced. The Irish influence was sadly lacking.

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<sup>265</sup> This is not to suggest that northern Catholicism was somehow a working class, religious, Utopia. It had the similar class based discrimination as in the south. The difference in the North was that it had accommodated the Irish and working class, as well as the middle and upper classes by 1914, as described in Chapter One.

## Chapter 4

‘Not the Kind of Life to Select as an Amusement  
But there will be plenty to do’<sup>1</sup>

### The Universal Church and Worldly Engagement

### DEVOTIONAL, PASTORAL, and SECULAR

The words of Fr Gill introduce the final part of section two, which explores Catholic chaplains’ engagement with the realities of war. At home, Catholic priestly lives were generally enclosed in the surety of Catholic seminary, parish, and missionary environments. At the Front as British Army chaplains, whether celebrating Mass or the Sacraments, they also worked exclusively within the Catholic community. Immediately they left this environment their mettle would be tested. As they ventured into an unknown world of temporal activities dominated by both an Anglican and military ethos and etiquette, how would they cope? Their extensive education and missionary intent had not prepared them for war and as Fr Gill found: ‘It is certainly not the kind of life to select as an amusement but there will be plenty to do’.<sup>2</sup> This chapter answers this question and reveals the extra spiritual, pastoral, and secular services which they provided, thereby deepening an understanding of chaplains activities and thoughts. Diaries are an important benefit in this regard, whilst the letters to GHQ from chaplains help define the boundaries of Catholic responsibility, the extra commitment required, and personal idiosyncrasies.

Catholic chaplains had four distinct types of duties. Supplementing the spiritual provision of the Sacraments, were devotional and pastoral care, and secular obligations. The first three were products of their priestly formation. The Sacraments were to an extent, obligatory for chaplain and soldier alike, the Devotions were optional for both, whilst pastoral care was solely the responsibility of the chaplain. A secular role was a different experience altogether. It did not reflect their Catholic world at home and moreover was conducted in alien conditions outside all previous experiences, even those who had been chaplains in the South African war such as Rawlinson. Secular engagement between chaplains and the authorities inevitably led to confrontation or disagreement. This chapter will determine the extent of their duties and responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> JAD, Gill Papers, Gill to Provincial, (5<sup>th</sup> December 1914).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

To authenticate the role of a Catholic chaplain, it is beneficial to first ascertain what the role was not: 'I went to Barles trenches with Grieve at night to be at the gas carrying,<sup>3</sup> a silly, dangerous, and useless business'.<sup>4</sup> Fr Drinkwater was clearly conducting an occupation with which he did not approve. His remarks after his sojourn with the military, anticipate a misunderstanding of Catholic chaplains' responsibilities. It should be appreciated that they were not in the business of conducting: 'silly, dangerous, and useless business', neither was his concern the distribution of Woodbine or Carroll's cigarettes,<sup>5</sup> nor of delivering morale boosting sermons, nor of acting as makeshift medical assistants.<sup>6</sup> They were not social secretaries, or involved in the plethora of peripheral comings and goings, they were priests in khaki. This position was succinctly made by a chaplain to the Plater enquiry on religion: [the men did not want their chaplain to be] 'a society entertainer or a vendor of buns and cigarettes'.<sup>7</sup> Chaplains regularly experienced danger but that should be restricted to conducting their priestly duties and obligations.<sup>8</sup> If an auxiliary task was required, it was only possible when circumstances allowed, and then by personal choice which appears to be the situation with Drinkwater.

Chaplains representing other faiths, whose backgrounds were steeped in social and welfare charitable provision, and without the depth of Catholic Sacramental duties to perform, would willingly execute a range of useful temporal tasks together with their own religious responsibilities, with no apparent confliction. Reverend Studdard Kennedy, known as 'Woodbine Willie', was the recognisable symbolic leader of that tradition. In the Lancashire experience, the work of Reverend J. O. Coop is revealing. A eulogy from All Hallows Anglican Church, Leeds, after his death in 1928 described him as: 'a true soldier priest'.<sup>9</sup> Continuing the emphasis of military over spiritual, as senior Anglican chaplain he wrote a book about the 55<sup>th</sup> West Lancashire Division, which in essence is a regimental diary. It has its merits as such, but never once mentioned the spiritual role of the chaplain or even any reference to the spiritual dimension.<sup>10</sup> Given that it contains one hundred and seventy eight pages these omissions are in stark contrast to any of the works of Catholic chaplains, which for all their faults emphasise

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<sup>3</sup> Gas carrying referred to gas shells. It was a dangerous job and blurred the lines between what constitutes combat and what does not.

<sup>4</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (6<sup>th</sup> July 1916).

<sup>5</sup> 'Woodbines' and 'Carrols', being among the most popular brands for English and Irish soldiers respectively, reflecting their pre-war popularity. Carrols were manufactured in Dundalk and Liverpool.

<sup>6</sup> JAL, 'Our Army Chaplains Experiences' p. 441. This did happen as Fr Denis Doyle noted: 'The men like to see me around, especially if I am carrying cigarettes'. This was the only occasion discovered.

<sup>7</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, p. 140.

<sup>8</sup> Encountering danger was a common experience, but he was not expected to run the risk of danger lightly – chaplains were too few on the ground.

<sup>9</sup> [http://allhallowsleeds.org.uk/?page\\_id=1785?replytocom=4005#respond](http://allhallowsleeds.org.uk/?page_id=1785?replytocom=4005#respond) accessed 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

<sup>10</sup> J. Coop, *The Story of the 55th: West Lancashire Division* (Liverpool: Liverpool Daily Post Publisher, 1919).

God in the trenches before guns. Clearly there is a sharp delineation between denominations in the understanding and application of chaplaincy duties becoming one of the factors in the development of post-war propaganda.<sup>11</sup> Cope was clearly an officer first and clergyman second.

This was not the Catholic position. Bishop William Frederick Keating of Northampton wrote some of the most pertinent Pastoral Letters during the war.<sup>12</sup> In his 1916 Lenten Pastoral he concluded that the priest's role at war:

Whether at home or in the field, there is for priests in war-time (sic) abundant and necessary work of military value which only priests can do. On the lowest ground of mere expediency, it would be folly to deplete the thin ranks of our Clergy for other deployment. But we take our stand on the higher ground of principle, deprecating with all the force at our command any departure from the traditional Christian attitude, that in war as in peace, in the army as in civil life, the most useful and only fitting occupation for priests is God's business; and that, although a priest might expose his own life, and will cheerfully do so at the call of duty, to call him to take the life of another is an outrage on the sanctity of his profession.<sup>13</sup>

This does not imply that the Church of England encouraged its chaplains to take up arms, but rather that the lines between officer and clergyman needs clear delineation. Keating was ostensibly referring to the suggestion that the Catholic Church in England should not follow the French example of soldier-priests. His treatise is perhaps the most lucid expression of the relationship between the State and the Church, and from this extract, which separates 'God's business' from the mere secular, the classic Catholic chaplains' stance at war is confirmed.

For Catholics there was no room for prevarication. Chaplains and their soldiers saw their primary role as that of ordained priests, whose principal responsibility was to deliver all aspects of Catholicism to Catholics. They remained Father and not Padre. Religious roles were sacrosanct and merely reflected their pre-war *modus operandi*. This was indicative of a remarkable lack of ambiguity amongst Catholic circles as to their professional deportment, which contradicted the methodology employed by other denominations. This was not an era of ecumenism. Good will and cooperation were the norm but operated within clearly expressed denominational boundaries of individuality and distinction. Despite these demarcations, it was possible to achieve a positive ambience with other denominations. Fr Keane CSSR demonstrated what could be achieved, albeit with his usual sense of irony: 'Everything here [36 CCS] goes well, no one fights anyone else and the spirit that prevails is

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<sup>11</sup> For example Robert Graves, *Goodbye To All That* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929).

<sup>12</sup> Ironically representing the diocese with very few Catholics but who was to become Bishop of Liverpool after Whiteside's death in 1921.

<sup>13</sup> SDA Lenten Pastoral Letter of Bishop Keating 1916, pp. 360-61.



conducive to the mutual understanding of each other's religious differences, so the C. of E. padre says!<sup>14</sup> However, determination to confirm their Catholic ethos could land chaplains in trouble with the authorities, to whom their roles were sometimes a mystery.

The homily or sermon is part of Mass but is dealt with in this section because it affords a good example of the disconnection between the Catholic Church and authorities. Their relevance and content will be assessed in both the Catholic and British Army context. For centuries, story-telling had been the major method of disseminating information, ideas, and history for illiterate peoples.<sup>15</sup> By preaching sermons and homilies, the spreading of the Gospel helped Christians to inform and educate its flocks over the centuries. By the First World War, basic illiteracy had been largely tackled by successive education reforms in Britain. The homily began to grow in importance in Catholic circles as a way of interpretation of the Bible rather than instruction through sermons.<sup>16</sup> Periodically at Mass the homily was replaced by the Bishop's Pastoral Letter as a means of marking Lent or Advent, with a key message and a review of the diocese. Nevertheless, there were priests particularly adept at preaching, and religious orders like the Redemptorists had a particular rousing part to play in, for instance, Spiritual Retreats. Despite this there was no evidence that they continued their pre-war activities at the Front, rousing sermons of a religious context were not a feature of Catholic chaplaincy, especially for military purposes. The British Army had principally learned to respect this difference, if not fully comprehend it. In part this was a result of their own Protestant religious upbringing: 'a significant proportion of regular army officers [were] the sons of clergyman'.<sup>17</sup> As a result, Catholic chaplains were not under undue pressure from the military when deciding the content or manner of delivering a sermon. Catholics had long established their freedom to determine their own appropriate religious practice, and chose sermons or homilies whose themes were according to their own sense of spiritual or educational needs.

The military authorities' influence over Church of England and other denominational chaplains was evident in the war. Comments made about Reverend Charles Taylor, a United Methodist chaplain, demonstrate how the Army expected chaplains to operate. They stressed the importance of inspiration gained from appearance, preaching, and in this case political conviction: 'He is not suitable in a fighting unit: he has not inspired officers and men with

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<sup>14</sup> DAA, 3238, Keane to Rawlinson, (7<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.druidry.org/druid-way/what-druidry/what-druidism/what-bard>. Accessed 2nd November 2014.

<sup>16</sup> *The Penny Catechism* and religious instruction at school facilitated this change.

<sup>17</sup> Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 59.

confidence and is a pacifist both in appearance and opinion'.<sup>18</sup> These remarks by his CO are endorsed by the HCO: 'He is lacking in the necessary formality to influence troops'.<sup>19</sup> Clearly chaplains were viewed as an extension of Army morale. The emphasis on preaching sermons to benefit the military can be observed through the testimonial of Reverend Thomas Davey of Liverpool. This Church of England chaplain left with a glowing reference with the emphasis on preaching: 'He has done magnificent work and is a fine influence. A good preacher and instructor, an able lecturer'.<sup>20</sup> The content of his preaching is not revealed but the emphasis is clearly on influencing morale. Fr Drinkwater confirmed this situation: 'The GOC told the C. of E. chaplains to preach fighting sermons and to take them from the Old Testament'.<sup>21</sup> These instructions owe more to the perilous military situation following the German spring offensive than any desire to exercise undue authority over the Established Church. Nonetheless, they highlight the military belief and trust in the morale boosting powers of the clergy.<sup>22</sup>

If Catholic chaplains were expected to follow suit then this misconception was quickly dispelled. They ignored, or were unaware of secular intervention when delivering their discourses after the Gospel, tending to prefer homilies than sermons. The difference between a sermon and a homily is small, yet it is indicative of an approach which is less Biblical and more behavioural. Catholic priests often used homilies derived from texts in the Bible but tailored the messages to the current situation, and with less emphasis on literal interpretations.<sup>23</sup> Selecting a text, particularly from the Old Testament to fit military expediency, was an anathema for Catholic chaplains.

If they were unlikely to make rousing or morale boosting sermons, it was common-sense that they should not have made sermons or promoted attitudes which might have had a detrimental effect on the troops. Fr Hugh Reid, later APC Boulogne, wrote to Keatinge on November 8<sup>th</sup> 1915 that: 'Fr Wilson is not very well-suited for work among troops at the Front, simply from the point of view that in his public utterances he is always so gloomy, for example in his sermons'.<sup>24</sup> The writer recognised that: 'Wilson is a fine and devoted priest' and added: 'it is not always possible to be cheery in these days at the Front but it has to be done'.<sup>25</sup> He

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<sup>18</sup> PRO, WO 374/67151.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 374/18015.

<sup>21</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (30<sup>th</sup> April 1918).

<sup>22</sup> For an Anglican perspective, Reverend Middleton-Brumwell's, *The Army Chaplain: The Duties of Chaplains and Morale* (London: Black 1943).

<sup>23</sup> That is not to suggest that the same does not apply, to varying degrees, within other denominations particularly at home. To interpret the Bible for military purposes went against the grain for Catholic chaplains, although those homilies which emphasised good behaviour would deliver secondary military benefits.

<sup>24</sup> DAA, 3235, B. S. Wilson to Keatinge, (undated).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

recognised the need for a more optimistic person and asked for Wilson to be moved, but it was the mood and not the content that was the concern.<sup>26</sup> This time an APC anticipated the need to appease the Army and is interesting as it shows that this message, which assumes greater import later, was disseminated to chaplains lower down the chain. Given that Wilson was an Assistant Principal Chaplain he was closer to Rawlinson than most, but whether he was advised of Rawlinson's dual mission with the English Catholic hierarchy, or whether it was intuition, is not clear.

Catholic chaplains did preach during Mass but frequency and content are hard to evaluate as little has been recorded. The diaries and an occasional letter to the Principal Chaplain provide what sparse evidence there is. Fr Steuart preached regularly at Mass but left no clue as to content. He attended sermons from other preachers and reported on a mixed-bag: 'Went afterwards to the Cathedral to hear the famous Fr Dionyins, a Franciscan preacher. Very fine'.<sup>27</sup> He was less complimentary about a colleague: 'Mass at Club at 9:30. McGrath preached the evening, a terrible, long and dry sermon'.<sup>28</sup> Fr Gillett preached less frequently than Fr Steuart yet made similar observations about other preachers: 'Mass at Busnes at 10:30 a lovely church about 20 mins from Elceme. The Curé a famous preacher. Fair numbers of men at Mass. Children sing very lustily. Attended Vespers'.<sup>29</sup> Yet his over-riding concern was the length and tedium of French and Belgian preachers and in typically honest language remarked: 'At 8pm close of Exposition in St. Nicholas' - a huge long sermon - then procession - all men and very numerous. A very tiring service',<sup>30</sup> and continued with some wit: 'Exposition in Drucat church, attended Vespers in afternoon but never again - too long - Vespers - hymns - sermons and the French sermons are some length - more hymns - in all 2 hours. Golly my piety was exhausted and it was freezing in the Church'.<sup>31</sup> When Fr Gillett did preach, although he only bumped along the bottom-rung of academic achievement in the French language at Ushaw, he had more success in real-life: 'Prepared a French sermon *'pour les agonisants'* tomorrow being the month of the Precious Blood',<sup>32</sup> and: 'Mass at 8 and 10:15. Preached in French and delighted the people, on direction for the dying. In afternoon sang vespers'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> This is surprising. Wilson, a Redemptorist, was used to preaching fiery sermons on retreats and was an experienced orator. Transferring from a religious to military rationale might easily have made him 'gloomy'.

<sup>27</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (7<sup>th</sup> September 1919).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., (10<sup>th</sup> March 1918).

<sup>29</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (22<sup>nd</sup> April 1917).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., (13<sup>th</sup> August 1916).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., (30<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>32</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (30<sup>th</sup> June 1917).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., (1<sup>st</sup> July 1917).

Agony and dying were his themes, but his detailed homilies have been lost in time.<sup>34</sup> This linkage of Christ's suffering with those at war was not restricted to the Great War and this description taken from Chungkai Prisoner of War Camp in the Far East in the Second World War is instructive:

Here was a working-man, yet one who was perfectly free....they has sought to destroy him but they had not succeeded....True he had been suspended on a cross and tormented with the pain of hell: but he had not been broken. He had remained free and alive, as the Resurrection affirmed. What he was, what he said, all made sense to us.<sup>35</sup>

Early in the war, when denominations and the Army understood less of each other's protocols, the opportunity for one-upmanship could not be resisted by some. In this example, a sermon provided an opportunity which the querulous Fr Francis Woodlock, no stranger to strong opinions and controversy, could not resist. After being invited to a mixed service, which as a Catholic he was forced to exclude himself, Woodlock smugly and vacuously informed Keatinge that:

I did not see any theological objection to addressing an audience of unbelievers... at the end of their service I gave them a sermon on their Duty of praying to God their Creator. Then I stepped aside and all sang 'God Save the King'. At the end of my sermon I got all to recite slowly and aloud the 'Our Father'.... The Church of England chaplain was not upset by the occurrence when he heard my topic was not 'Anglican Orders' or 'The Church of England washing her face' or anything controversial.<sup>36</sup>

Fr Drinkwater delivered a sermon during Mass at Locon: 'Preached a sermon on the Pharisaism of irreligious people'.<sup>37</sup> Although he left no details, it is possible to investigate further. Pharisaism is neatly if basically condensed as: 'Hypocritical observance of the letter of religious or moral law without regard for the spirit: sanctimoniousness'.<sup>38</sup> What was Drinkwater driving at and what was his intended audience? Locon in 1915 was the Divisional Headquarters, some way behind the action as we can see from Fr Walker's painting below, and it is likely that the congregation were predominantly staff officers. Would they understand or be interested in the concept of sanctimoniousness? There is no way of knowing, nevertheless, it can be argued that this sermon was for Drinkwater's internal consumption, a process of self-discovery, part of developing one's own spiritual understanding. From his diaries there

<sup>34</sup> Nothing of his sermons remains, although his impish humour never diminished. From a newspaper, alas without title and date, but probably 1966, states: 'We served in the Liverpool Diocese together (identical twin brother Harry) and sometimes we'd swop over in the pulpit without the congregation knowing' and adds, 'he said with a smile'. SDA, 'Miscellaneous' file on Fr Gillett.

<sup>35</sup> Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, pp. 176-7.

<sup>36</sup> DAA, 3238, Woodlock to Keatinge, (18<sup>th</sup> February 1916).

<sup>37</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (1<sup>st</sup> August 1915).

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/pharisaism> accessed March 27th 2014.

gradually emerged a man striving towards supporting a fairer society. His vision of that society, underwritten by Catholic social teaching, was crystallising through his war-time experiences. Soon after the Armistice he made his position clear to Bishop Keatinge: 'I have written protesting about Churchill's military adventuring in N. Russia. Not that I am a supporter of Lenin or Trotsky, but I hold the view that Russians should be left alone to decide their future'.<sup>39</sup> As stated earlier, the formation process for chaplains continued after leaving Folkestone. He probably witnessed sanctimoniousness in the British Army, in the class system in general, in the Church of England, and in the Catholic Church, but this is not clear. His left-leaning and anti-war stance hardened throughout the war. Fr Drinkwater was a forward thinker and it seems that in 1915 this sermon marked an early stage of his development as a priest and as a man.<sup>40</sup> By July 1916 he was sick of the mayhem, and fortunately for him considering the Reverend Charles Taylor previously, kept his thoughts to himself: 'I shall soon be a pacifist and a conscientious objector - to modern warfare anyhow. It becomes more impossible every month, and the mangling of human bodies *en masse* seems disproportionate to any conceivable object. "A bloody mugs game", said the stretcher bearer'.<sup>41</sup> His diary is a convincing testimony to the idea that he was talking about himself. He recognised the bitter and dramatic contradictions that existed, first between the beauties of his own Faith and the internal dangers of pharissism, and then between Catholicism and the external ugliness of war. This was a sermon not to raise Army morale but perhaps an apogee of Catholic independence through sermons. **Illustration 17**<sup>42</sup>



<sup>39</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, penultimate page, not numbered, clarifying an earlier entry in response to the transcriber of his diaries.

<sup>40</sup> He excelled at both Catholic children's education and social teaching.

<sup>41</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (2<sup>nd</sup> July 1916).

<sup>42</sup> JAL, Fr Walker's paintings, Locon, 'Our first Divisional Headquarters at the Front', (October 1915).

The reasons why Catholic chaplains relegated sermons in their list of priorities were: the precarious environment, the constantly changing congregations, and independence from the Army with regards to content. The first two factors did not lend themselves to continuity or the development of themes on a regular basis. Without such continuity, as would be the case at home, chaplains would have little encouragement to develop the spiritual knowledge of troops in any systematic manner. Furthermore, the absence of any significant military contribution was entirely consistent with the dedication of the homily as purely spiritual education and enlightenment. Clearly, militaristic sermons were not considered relevant to a religion that was keen to demonstrate a disconnection between the spiritual and secular. In other words a calculated decision in-line with Catholic tradition.

Despite insisting on Catholic self-determination, secular contributions were made and show how Catholic chaplains contributed to the war effort, provided they constituted no challenge to their spiritual mission. This varied between individuals. On occasion, chaplains contributed their specialist skills, for instance knowledge of foreign languages enabled them to act as interpreters. These occasions were by request and optional, chaplains reserved the right to refuse.<sup>43</sup> In practice they generally co-operated in these isolated circumstances to assist the Allied effort, and to develop productive relationships, which in-turn assisted them in their own mission. In reality, our control group of diarists and the majority of Rawlinson's correspondence were apolitical. Where they expressed an opinion, they were supportive of the war effort and reflected the common views of British society. The same applied to the majority of Irish chaplains within the Army, although subject to change as the political situation hardened after 1916.

### **Devotional**

Devotions are supportive religious activities which strengthen the Faith and accrue special Graces. They were embraced by devout soldiers whenever opportunity allowed. For chaplains, provision and attendance at the Devotions were essential to the health and development of Catholic spirituality and were avidly embraced. This means that a study of the Devotions is primarily one of the diarists, for it is only here that the frequency, importance, and passion for the Devotions can be gauged. Their testimony was invaluable in explaining the chaplains' own responses and records of events. Analysis strengthens the existing theories of disparate Catholic commitment as a mirror-image of Catholicism in Britain. Soldiers' witness is less

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<sup>43</sup> Chaplains were attached to the Army and not a part of it. On military matters they had to obey orders, but not if those orders conflicted with their religious beliefs, for example the bearing of arms. The army and clergy did not appear to have disputes with fundamental principles. Local difficulties arose, but were of an administrative or personal nature.

evident in this section as their opportunity to attend devotional services was prioritised. The Devotions will be individually explained to complete the religious section, with a minimal description to reflect the relative importance between the Devotions and the Sacraments at the Front.

The Devotions included: Benediction, Missions, Pilgrimages, Retreats, Hymnody and Prayer and offered additional religious pieties, a second-strand of chaplaincy provision. Chaplains were largely pragmatic men and understood that this war was not a crusade but a military bloodbath which required their spiritual intercession. This meant that whilst offering services they were aware of the military expediencies. Fr Gillett observed: 'Every village one passes has its bevy of soldiers all training for slaughter - some to slaughter others, others to be slaughtered. BAH! What a game - and this when the world is supposed to be civilised'.<sup>44</sup> In offering the Devotions, chaplains acted according to their personalities, personal affinities, conscience, opportunity, and vocation.<sup>45</sup> It was not mandatory for soldiers to receive the additional Graces that Devotions might bestow. Response will be shown to be irregular, but there were many instances of great fervour shown by soldiers participating in the Devotions. The gap between those Catholics from a strong tradition at home, and those who were not, was amplified through commitment to these additional services. If those soldiers with weaker belief did not attend the Sacraments or Mass, then it was even more unlikely that they would attend Devotions.

As with Mass, chaplains supplied extra services to support not only the soldiers at rest but the local Catholic civilian population. This needed to be achieved without aggravating military operational requirements. The Devotions were often celebrated in public and conducted behind the line in French or Belgian villages.<sup>46</sup> Churches were the natural environment, but makeshift ceremonies in the war-zone were organised almost anywhere that conditions allowed. Specific religious places such as Lourdes were an attractive change from embattled northern France and southern Belgium, but opportunity was rarely presented. Given the circumstances, it is no surprise that these duties were performed and received only occasionally. As usual the devout showed the same enthusiasm and stoicism to receive Devotions as they had Mass and the Sacraments and they came from familiar units.

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<sup>44</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (12<sup>th</sup> January 1917).

<sup>45</sup> This ethos continued. Writing in '*Lent Extra*' March 2014, Redemptorist Publications, page 9, Fr Mitchell, Senior RAF Chaplain explains, [Following the death of 14 airmen in a crash when he attended the base from which the fliers left for their mission.]: 'If I were not there as their priest - then these young people might be like "sheep without a shepherd". This was confirmation, if ever I needed it, of my calling and vocation'.

<sup>46</sup> There was public hymnody and prayers in forward positions. Private prayer and hymnody was also observed by chaplains.

Benediction, forms part of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and highlights the fundamental mystery of the Holy Eucharist. It is an affirmation that Our Lord is truly present, body and blood, soul and divinity, in the Blessed Sacrament. It is both a rich and colourful service which strengthens the devout spiritually, and is often accompanied by canticle singing. Benediction is an important additional Catholic service, a tradition stretching back to 1264.<sup>47</sup> It begins with the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament which is displayed in a monstrance, an ornate religious receptacle normally placed in a conspicuous place on, or in front of the altar.

Alas, nothing was simple. Clarification of the minimum requirements for conducting Benediction in a military camp was requested by Fr Keating SJ,<sup>48</sup> the reply: 'Fr Rawlinson thinks you can give Benediction with a Pyx under present conditions and that a congregation of 18 [minimum] should suffice under war conditions'.<sup>49</sup> Benediction was often made available to civilians, or the clergy might join in the local service as supplicants. In Boulogne, before going to the Somme, Gillett who recorded offering Benediction on thirty two occasions in France, enthused that: 'The day closes with solemn Benediction in the Cathedral. Quite a day of piety and an eye-opener to the British soldiers. What a blessing must come to France through the piety of its many devout women'.<sup>50</sup> Then two months later in a chapel at Albert he observed:<sup>51</sup> 'What a comfort the peace and quiet of Mass and Benediction seems to be to the lads after the dangers of the trenches. They enter their Devotions with great spirit. They appreciate the chance of using a priest'.<sup>52</sup> These examples express the personal dedication of chaplains to Benediction and its importance to them and their congregations. In the last example there is an outpouring of pride, of the psychological gift of peace, and recognition of priestly efforts generally.

Exposing the Blessed Sacrament was a common, if irregular service, which again connected Catholic soldiers, civilians, and clergy. Sometimes the French clergy and civilians were reproached by British chaplains. The universality of the Church was not in question, more the local interpretation of disciplines and customs. Fr Steuart did not show much *entente cordiale* when he remarked: 'Mass at 9:30. Curé frightfully late as usual, so the Mass didn't begin till nearly 10. Benediction in the evening: which was rather terrible as it was all

<sup>47</sup> [www.newadventorg/cathen/02565b.htm](http://www.newadventorg/cathen/02565b.htm). Accessed on 13th December 2014.

<sup>48</sup> DAA, 3231, Keating to Rawlinson, (24<sup>th</sup> July 1916), from 59<sup>th</sup> Base Hospital.

<sup>49</sup> DAA, 3231, Young, on behalf of Rawlinson to Keating, (26<sup>th</sup> July 1916).

<sup>50</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (20<sup>th</sup> August 1916).

<sup>51</sup> Albert provided opportunity for various units to attend and not specifically Gillett's own men.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., (29<sup>th</sup> October 1916).



French singing'.<sup>53</sup> And whilst serving in the Army of Occupation in Germany in 1919: 'Mass at 9:30 and Benediction at 3:30 even the organist didn't turn up'.<sup>54</sup> A month later Fr Gillett serving in the Army of Occupation in France, organised and led a pilgrimage to Lourdes for soldiers, he made an entirely happier report: 'Mass in Fr Nevins Chapel.<sup>55</sup> Visited Bernadette's House where she lived after the apparitions began. In evening Benediction at Poor Clares Convent. Dinner - Rosary at Grotto then bed'.<sup>56</sup> Not all experiences were so fulfilling and Fr Drinkwater described a tragedy: 'Back at Bethune and found that a bomb got a direct hit on the sacristy last night: sacristy disappeared, all church windows smashed etc. The organist and chanter killed, also a boy named Ducanne who used to serve my Mass. Archpriest wounded. They were just starting Benediction'.<sup>57</sup> Fr Steuart's account shows that he was critical and unhappy, Fr Gillett enthusiastic and informative, both display consistent attitudes which are well-established at this point in the study. Fr Drinkwater's account of Benediction widens the witnesses to the suffering all around, and is a tragic example of the sacrifices that civilians and local clergy made when fulfilling their religious Devotions. Their suffering is rarely acknowledged.

Public processions at home were an essential ingredient in urban life as expressions of civic pride and solidarity. By the middle of the nineteenth century Catholics were joining in. At the Preston Guild of 1862, over 4,500 Catholic walkers joined others in the town's celebrations.<sup>58</sup> Catholics became involved for a variety of reasons which included: celebratory, doctrinal, or 'Just one in the eye for Protestants'.<sup>59</sup> The kinship benefits from processions had both psychological and spiritual elements. A study of processions reveals their relative importance to the diarists, and again reinforces the disparity between geographical religious enthusiasms. These cannot be dismissed as mere personality, as it is a constantly recurring theme. Detail will follow, but in general terms Gillett was comfortable, even excited with congregations and public displays concomitant with his religious experiences at home. Steuart apparently detached himself from the public generally and their processions in particular. This again alludes to the less publically demonstrative Catholicism he knew based at Farm Street, London. Drinkwater remained somewhat in the middle. He mentioned processions in a routine manner, clearly without Gillett's passion but also without Steuart's anonymity. He

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<sup>53</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (5<sup>th</sup> May 1918).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., (5<sup>th</sup> January 1919).

<sup>55</sup> Fr J. J. Nevin took over running the Lourdes Chapel after losing a limb in battle, and was the senior manager of the Catholic Soldiers Club, Lourdes.

<sup>56</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (13<sup>th</sup> February 1919).

<sup>57</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (19<sup>th</sup> December 1917).

<sup>58</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

reserved processions as an opportunity to make a political point. Catholic distinctiveness is once more established through their relative Catholic behaviours and cultural awareness, even allowing for personality.

Fr Gillett combined the present and the past through his cultural inquisitiveness for Catholic ceremony, history, and tradition. The Virgin Mary and Napoleon also feature.<sup>60</sup> On the Feast of the Assumption 1916, he could not hide his excitement at the continental Catholic tradition of procession characterised by the carriage of large statues, accompanied by prayer or music. In Boulogne:

Cathedral Church the main church today - High Mass sung by the Bishop of Arras, who now lived in Boulogne as his palace and cathedral at Arras were no more. High Mass at 9:30 am everything carried out beautifully. In the afternoon solemn Vespers and Procession round the old city walls, the dedication of France to Our Lady. Procession very fine - all the little children in white. Bishop walks the streets in mitre and rochette. Keeps leaving the procession to bless the little children presented to him. The whole week to the 23rd taken up with pilgrimages from neighbouring churches to Our Lady's shrine. The Assumption and France's national fete day and a great birthday chosen I believe by Napoleon. City is full of life and excitement.<sup>61</sup>

Referring to his memory and calling on his Lancashire experiences, Gillett noted that the French versions were not as precise as at home:

Great ceremonies at Cathedral today - procession in afternoon through the streets of Boulogne. The town is bedecked. Masses of people turn in from everywhere and the soldiers stand to gaze in amazement. Procession very long but not that order and precision one sees in Preston and Manchester processions. Bishop takes part on foot wearing mitre and rochette and carrying a staff, accompanied by the chapter and many clergy.<sup>62</sup>

When Fr Gillett attended a 'Monster Procession', it allowed him to demonstrate the integration of his religious fervour, humanity towards soldiers and the sick, respect for French customs and ceremony, and an important personal element of social contact with fellow priests:

Tramped off to Arras for Monster Procession - a wonderful: sight - 30 priests all chaplains, many officers and some 1200 men accompanying the Blessed Sacrament through destroyed Arras. At the hospital of St Jean, the French civilians receive us and Benediction is given in the grounds. A few of the bedridden wounded are brought out to join us. The doyen preaches in French then Fr Scannell appeals to the Tommies, a

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<sup>60</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries. Fr Gillett mentioned Napoleon on three separate occasions and often referenced historical figures such as St. Jean d'Arc.

<sup>61</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (16<sup>th</sup> August 1916).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

wonderful ceremony really. After, the chaplains sit down to supper in the Club - a great time. What a joyous gathering when priests get -together.<sup>63</sup>

In these examples Fr Gillett confirmed his love of the Blessed Virgin, of the Blessed Sacrament, and of ceremony, culture, and history. He was grateful for his fellow chaplains, and embraced the practice of enthusiastic piety he had witnessed in Lancashire among Irish and Lancashire Catholics, replicated at war.

Fr Steuart's minor contribution towards procession occurred in 1919: 'Preached in the Minoruteu Kirche in the evening, where we had an indoor Procession of the Blessed Sacrament'.<sup>64</sup> His comparative lack of enthusiasm is typical of his general demeanour yet he did have personal concerns at this time. The inquest into the suicide of a fellow Catholic Army officer took place that morning and had troubled him, although his woes were lessened when the next day the Peace Treaty was signed ending the war. Allowing for his upright approach to life where he hid his real feelings, his commitment to public devotion, nevertheless, seems stilted in the extreme.<sup>65</sup>

Fr Drinkwater was also brief and unemotional in his description: 'A big procession of the Blessed Sacrament at Bethune church in the evening. Mullins and I and about 30 soldiers walked'.<sup>66</sup> Instead, Drinkwater's unique feedback demonstrated his strengthening political awareness and development: 'It is interesting to see in the papers that the British Government promised the Pope not to bomb the Rhine towns on Corpus Christi: the papers don't mention the bombing of the Karlsruhe procession two years ago [120 killed and 146 injured]'.<sup>67</sup> His concern is indicated through dislike of British Government propaganda, which clearly sought to distort the truth of this attack on the procession. The deaths of so many Catholic civilians in the Corpus Christi procession enraged Fr Drinkwater and helped influence his political radicalism.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., (10<sup>th</sup> June 1917). George McBrearty was a Hexham Diocesan priest and chaplain to the 24th Northumberland Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Tyneside Irish. They had been co-seminarians at Ushaw and McBrearty's appearance brought great joy to Gillett who was experiencing loneliness in his Brigade, as will be shown.

<sup>64</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (22<sup>nd</sup> June 1919).

<sup>65</sup> Paradoxically, he revealed his feelings when demobbed showing a different side. His concerns were with leaving the Army and despite his outward demeanour of disinterest he observed on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1919 that: 'I realised I was a civilian again. I feel terribly out of it and dull. It has been a good time, the like of which I shall never see again'. He enjoyed the latter months of opera, golf, and riding. Was it this lifestyle that made him reluctant to return, or the fact that now at last he was able to rub shoulders with senior officers who were more amenable to socialisation when relaxing from their exertions? Both of these reasons are valid but do not reflect his vocation which cannot be ignored. He was still a priest and it is the fulfillment of his spiritual mission which also deserves to be recognised. In any case many returning from war, despite the horrors and hardships, recognised that life was never going to be the same again and would invariably be duller.

<sup>66</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (2<sup>nd</sup> September 1917).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., (18<sup>th</sup> May 1918).

Attitudes to processions have illuminated and confirmed the characters of the three diarists, and have added weight to the theory of disparate levels of Catholic involvement at war. For soldiers, it was difficult to attend a procession for the obvious safety reasons inherent when a large crowd gathered. The religious importance of processions was minimal for troops and variable for chaplains, yet may have done much for continental Catholic civilian morale as the accounts have indicated.

Through the Marian Devotions, the differences between chaplains from the northern territories in England, and their southern equivalents, continued to be widened. The nineteenth century witnessed an increasing public devotion to the Virgin Mary.<sup>68</sup> Pope Benedict XV's 1915 Christmas Allocution implored devotion to her from Catholics worldwide:

Will Mary, who is queen not of wars and slaughter, but of the kingdom of peace, disappoint the trust and the prayers of her faithful children? ...When man has hardened his own heart, and his hates have overrun the earth, when fire and sword are raging, and when the world rings with the sound of weeping and the noise of arms, when human reason is found at fault and all civilised rights are scattered like thistledown, faith and history alike point us to the succour, to the omnipotence of prayer, to the Mediatrix, to Mary. In all security and trust we cry *Reginapacis, ora pro nobis*.<sup>69</sup>

Fr Gillett exemplified the devotion to the Virgin Mary. He said Mass at Cambrai at the Feast of the Annunciation 1919 where he came in to contact with the painting immediately below. Gillett's loyalty to Mary was manifest throughout his life.<sup>70</sup> His first posting as a young priest was to Our Lady of Mount Carmel,<sup>71</sup> whilst his brother was curate at the Church of Our Lady Immaculate,<sup>72</sup> both in Liverpool in 1906. Consequently he was aware of Mary as the sorrowful mother sharing the death of her son and drew a parallel with the deaths of thousands of sons all around him on the battlefields. Her sympathetic and caring dispositions were qualities in short supply, and much needed in the carnage. Fr Gillett consistently showed the same qualities in his work and observations: '9pm a huge hospital train arrives - but most

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<sup>68</sup> There was also a strong devotional following of The Sacred Heart of Jesus. Churches usually have side altars or shrines devoted to both Mary and Jesus. A leading Order of Sisters, the 'Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary' was Irish-based but served the North-West including Liverpool, managing and operating reformatories. This study concentrates on the Virgin Mary who occupied the greater number of devotions in France and Belgium, reflecting the chaplains own devotional commitment.

<sup>69</sup> Finlay, *British Catholic Identity during the First War*, p. 71.

<sup>70</sup> Gillett also became interested in France in the story of Claire Ferchaud the Sacred Heart protégé, making four entries in 1918.

<sup>71</sup> Situated near Park Road Toxteth, a poor and religiously mixed area where sectarianism was rife.

<sup>72</sup> Situated in Everton close to Scotland Road, another area of great poverty and sectarianism. It was the recruiting ground for the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion K.L.R., the Liverpool Irish.

walking cases, but pitiable to watch the poor fellows hobble along - arms and legs and hands bandaged'.<sup>73</sup> His concern was for everyone: 'Poor Haig, he looks worn and anxious'.<sup>74</sup>



Illustration 18<sup>75</sup>

This representation of the Virgin Mary is in the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Grace in Cambrai. Fr Gillett had a particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin and visited:

Notre Damme de Femme

Notre Damme de Bonne Succour

Notre Dame de Boulogne

Notre Dame de Brebrieres

Notre Dame de Miracles (St Omer)

Notre Dame de L'Yser (Bollerzeele)

Notre Dames de Dunes (Dunkerque)

Notre Dame de Foy (Gravelines)

Notre Dame de Bourbourg 'on which there is a mark on the leg, made by a soldier'

Table 2

On his travels he visited shrines dedicated to Mary whenever opportunity arose: 'Mass at Ledringhem on to Wormhout and roundabout - saw the Notre Dame Des Fames statues' and:

Mass at 7:30 then on to Wormhout to meet Crisp - here we mounted a lorry for Dunkerque - visited Notre Damme de Dunes, a tiny village shrine, but wonderfully rich in native offerings - crowds make a visit to the Church - the Novena being on. Left by train about 5pm to find leave warrant waiting me on my return - hurroo!<sup>76</sup>

The war did not diminish his passion or enthusiasm despite practical hitches: 'Mass then moved off to Loeuilly - passed Nampty, close by there is a shrine to Our Lady - in month of May pilgrimages to it, titled Notre Damme de Bonne Succour. Passed the night in the open - no billets available'.<sup>77</sup> His enthusiasm re-affirms his active Irish inspired Lancashire style of Catholicism. The lack of any reference from Frs Steuart and Drinkwater with regard to Marian

<sup>73</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (7<sup>th</sup> July 1916), after the first Somme casualties reached Boulogne.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., (25<sup>th</sup> July 1918), as the war was turning in the allies favour but casualties continued to rise in what was now, often, open warfare.

<sup>75</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, 'The Mass on the Feast of the Annunciation. Motored to Cambrai town all decorated for the feast', (25<sup>th</sup> March 1919).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., (5<sup>th</sup> September 1917).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1918).

worship means that comparisons cannot be made or safely assessed. Nevertheless, they are entirely consistent with the variance within Catholic worship already established and become more noticeable on pilgrimages to Lourdes.

Pilgrimages are deeply rooted in Catholic tradition. Chaplains on occasion, took pilgrimages for their own spiritual enlightenment. Fr Gillett's devotion to Mary was most joyously expressed when he conducted a pilgrimage for troops to Lourdes in 1919 to which he concluded: 'What a glorious trip we had and how it will live long in the memories of all of us'.<sup>78</sup> Fr Walker also took a party to Lourdes in April 1919 but as far as we know did not paint on that occasion. Frs Drinkwater and Steuart did not visit Lourdes as chaplains. 'The British Soldiers Club', was the Catholic base in Lourdes and run primarily by chaplains who were currently or permanently too sick or injured for active duty. In 1917 Fr Barry Duggan assisted Fr J. J. Nevin with the work in setting up and running the club.<sup>79</sup> Rawlinson teased him with: 'You have certainly dug yourself in a very charming spot, more comfortable than the shell holes on the Western Front'.<sup>80</sup> Duggan had been incapacitated and confessed: 'I left not in an honourable way from wounds received on the battle field, but ignobly through wounds received on the operating theatre'.<sup>81</sup> Lourdes was a temporary posting but he was still medically unfit for service in early 1918. Later, Duggan became a nuisance for writing non-authorised pamphlets, their contents are not specified. Rawlinson was not averse to use peripheral reasons for removing a man and this appears to be the case here:

The enclosed leaflet may interest you. It is the work of Reverend B. Duggan, done entirely on his own and using my name without any permission whatever from me: and this contrary to Army regulations and a special GRO on the subject. It will probably cause me no end of trouble. I should be glad, not only for this reason but for many others, to remove him from here and put someone else in his place.<sup>82</sup>

The elements to be recognised are firstly Rawlinson initiating a personal and Catholic disengagement from Duggan's disobedience towards the British Authorities. Secondly, the evidence in the form of a pamphlet was to be used in conjunction with 'many other' reasons to get rid of Duggan. Thirdly, Rawlinson did not enjoy being circumvented. Other examples will show that if a chaplain had operated behind his back, he was not averse to settling the score. Fourthly, an Irish chaplain, whether justified or not, had little defence if breaking the rules might impact on the reputation of English Catholic chaplaincy as will become evident. This

<sup>78</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (7<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> February 1919).

<sup>79</sup> Not to be confused with Fr Tom Duggan of pronounced political views in Chapter 5.

<sup>80</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Fr B. Duggan, (19<sup>th</sup> November 1917).

<sup>81</sup> DAA, 3234, Duggan to Rawlinson, (22<sup>nd</sup> June 1917).

<sup>82</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Mr Monk at the War Office, (6<sup>th</sup> February 1918).

ruthlessness was manifest as the war continued. The only way that Rawlinson could have Duggan dismissed was on a misdemeanour or failure in due process. The War Office and Rawlinson found ways to remove him: 'Would it be possible for you to recall him to England as he was sent by the War Office and not by me'.<sup>83</sup> This was the last record filed of his time with the Army. Without the leaflet it is difficult to judge whether political reasons were behind his removal and if this was justified or not. The rupture was clearly deemed serious as previous correspondence testified to both men sharing erstwhile cordiality.

Pilgrimages to Lourdes needed to be on a more substantial footing. Establishing the Lourdes Pilgrimage Scheme which was sponsored by *The Universe* Newspaper had not been easy. The Rawlinson Papers described the long and protracted struggles. The issue was not the clergy but the authorities allowing soldiers to go on pilgrimage to Lourdes:

I do not think that any Lourdes scheme is going to find favour in the eyes of the military authorities here, although they will probably not prevent anyone going who desires so. There is no likelihood of their allowing men to proceed there free. You have been misinformed with regard to leave in Paris. It is not free although the sum is very small.<sup>84</sup>

Nevertheless, by October 1918 the scheme was functioning and continued after the war, but only for parties accompanied by a chaplain who had a much easier time getting to Lourdes. In January 1915 Fr Peale SJ described his joy: 'Here at last I was on the spot I had dreamed of and longed to see. Thank God. I cannot describe the impressions of that first glimpse of Our Lady's statue from the train. I reached the basilica and got leave to say Mass'.<sup>85</sup> Fr Peale, an Irish born Jesuit, shared Fr Gillett's enthusiasm for Lourdes and devotion to the Virgin Mary. The Irish and Lancashire enthusiasm, encouraged by high numbers of believers, was so often missing from other Catholic areas without the benefits of such support. Below soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> East Lancashire's accompany Fr Denis Whiteside SJ, from Blackpool to a pilgrimage to 'The Foot of the Cross' in 1919.<sup>86</sup>

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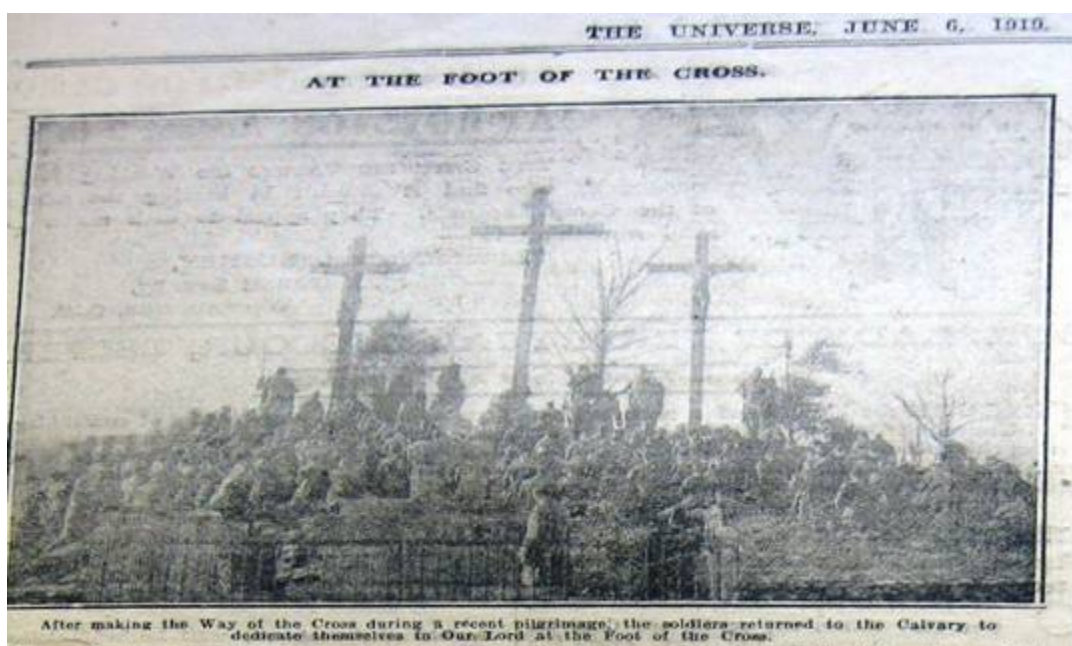
<sup>83</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Mr Monk at the War Office, (6<sup>th</sup> February 1918).

<sup>84</sup> DAA, Ephemera, Rawlinson to Martin Melvin, editor of *The Universe*, (18<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>85</sup> Peale, *War Jottings*, vol. 1, pp. 70-76.

<sup>86</sup> DAA, 3823, Denis Whiteside to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> July 1919).

### Illustration 19<sup>87</sup>



Religious Missions and Retreats were opportunities for intense religious renewal. They were often conducted in public, usually at the behest of the local bishop and were designed as: ‘short, sharp, religious campaigns using the full panoply of Victorian piety to revitalise or awaken a religious spirit in a locality and to establish the identity of the resident Catholics’.<sup>88</sup> The public delivery of missions was a deliberate attempt in: ‘....helping establish this Catholic identity [it] was an essential procedure, as well as [a] contribution to the building up of parishes and the cementation of regular parochial life’.<sup>89</sup> Missions confirmed the pragmatic elements of Catholicism in England, combining infrastructure and identity development with spiritual levitation. The sense of having to re-establish the Catholic Church in England permeated the practical significance of missions, whilst spiritual renewal represented the duality of purpose. Notably, but not exclusively, the Redemptorists, Passionists, and Jesuits, had operated pre-war missions for Catholics in an effort to restore aspects of devotion or to expand religious education. The tradition originated in France: ‘To this day, the ‘mission crosses’ put up to commemorate the descent of a spiritual task force a hundred years ago, can be seen in many Irish and French parishes where the idea of a permanent memorial to religious renewal originated’.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> *The Universe*, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1918.

<sup>88</sup> John Sharp in *Without the Flaminian Gate*, eds., McLelland and Hodgetts, pp. 158-9.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Louis McRedmond, *To the Greater Glory: A History of the Irish Jesuits* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991), p. 295.



Retreats were sometimes personal spiritual exercises embarked upon by choice and of a contemplative nature, but a group might share a retreat.<sup>91</sup> The Jesuit founder, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, describes the basis for a retreat:

The word of God should be proposed to the people unremittingly, by means of sermons, lectures and the teaching of Christian doctrine.... in churches, squares or other places of the region, when the one in charge judges it expedient for God's greater glory.... and Jesuits will endeavour to be profitable to individuals by spiritual conversations, by counselling and exhorting to good works, and by conducting Spiritual Exercises.<sup>92</sup>

Evidence of retreats in wartime for soldiers on active duty, or on leave, has not been unearthed. Chaplains attending retreats were also rarely recorded, and then undertaken only during leave periods and at their own behest. Fr O'Shaughnessy pleaded to Rawlinson:

I would very much like to make a week's retreat somewhere in England e.g. Bishop Eaton, Liverpool.<sup>93</sup> Since I have been a priest, I was ordained Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> 1913 – I have never been able to make a retreat through one cause or another; and I feel I need a little spiritual refreshment very much.<sup>94</sup>

Fr Rawlinson replied thus: 'I fully concur in all you say on your letter of the 4<sup>th</sup> and by all means I will send a recommendation that you should have a month's leave about Christmas time, and I sincerely hope you will get it'.<sup>95</sup> Fr O'Shaughnessy had a torrid time in constant fighting as chaplain to the Kings Liverpool Regiment, earning two MIDs and was promoted to SCF. This was a rare recommendation to support a chaplain's request for leave as in normal circumstances Rawlinson referred the matter back to the chaplain to make his own arrangements with his military unit. Not all priests were accommodated, Rawlinson explained to Fr Joseph Paul SJ: 'I fancy the matter of the retreat will hardly be feasible'.<sup>96</sup>

Retreats were available for Catholic cadets preparing for war, especially empire soldiers. Fr Martindale SJ tried to rally financial support for his retreat scheme by emphasising its advantages, he pronounced: 'You might think only "pious" and half-anaemic lads would come to retreats of this sort. Not in the least. The Colonies and Dominions do not produce anaemics'.<sup>97</sup> A South African soldier exclaimed: 'I've not had such a happy week-end since I

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<sup>91</sup> At other times they may be group orientated, and include private partitions of prayer, study and meditation.

<sup>92</sup> McRedmond, p. 297.

<sup>93</sup> Bishop Eaton a Redemptorist Monastery in Woolton, Liverpool.

<sup>94</sup> DAA, 3825, O'Shaughnessy to Rawlinson, (4<sup>th</sup> October 1917).

<sup>95</sup> DAA, 3825, Rawlinson to O'Shaughnessy, (8<sup>th</sup> October 1917).

<sup>96</sup> DAA, Rawlinson to Fr Paul, (3<sup>rd</sup> January 1917).

<sup>97</sup> Fr Martindale SJ, in *The Tablet*, (12<sup>th</sup> January 1918), p. 41.

left home, perhaps never'.<sup>98</sup> Martindale emphasised the benefits of well-being, which would also help reconstruction by binding peoples together. Nevertheless, the epithet: 'it beats Blackpool hollow', from an English soldier, tends to diminish the retreat's spirit.<sup>99</sup> Retreats had on occasion a subsidiary role to play. It was not uncommon in peacetime for those clergy who were suffering from alcohol or health problems, to seek or have sought for them, a religious retreat in a monastery.<sup>100</sup> The expectation was to return the priest to both physical and spiritual health. Such an opportunity was not visible at war.

The singing of hymns shares with processions many of the same Catholic elements of public affirmation of faith and collective spirit. Hymns are manifestations of passion, belief, commitment, and kinship. When sung lustily and in concert, they generated not only spiritual fervour but intensified comradeship too. They could be covert and include subtle political messages, yet most hymns were simply popular religious songs sung with conviction. Fr Peale with the Connaught Rangers, whilst sailing from India to the Western Front, described three popular hymns: 'The Rangers sang the dear old tunes, "Hail Queen of Heaven" and "Faith of Our Fathers"', but they surpassed themselves when they treated us to "Hail Glorious St. Patrick"!<sup>101</sup> The hymn to St. Patrick had intense meaning for Irish soldiers. Sung with their Irish priest it exemplified joyous national and communal harmony.

These hymns were also popular with English Catholics. National aspirations are openly professed alongside undoubted faith.<sup>102</sup> 'Faith of Our Fathers', a hymn written by William Faber, a convert to Catholicism in the mid-nineteenth century, is arguably the best example of a rousing spiritual rallying call for Catholics. It will be analysed from a contemporary viewpoint. Verse three could be adapted to circumstance or as: 'The Parochial Hymn Book – Words and Melodies' maintains: 'The words in italics signify the difference between countries and substituted for the words below when fitting'.<sup>103</sup> The Catholic Hymnal of Philadelphia provides another variation.<sup>104</sup> Meanwhile, the Sisters of Notre Dame Philadelphia side with their Irish co-religionists.<sup>105</sup> The exclamation marks are original and set the tone:

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. *The Tablet* is included to demonstrate that such accounts were delivered for a specific purpose, here fundraising, and as such the content has to be treated with care.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> For example, Fr Richmond files at the Nottingham Diocesan Archive.

<sup>101</sup> Peale, *War Jottings*, vol. 3.

<sup>102</sup> The author can testify to its popularity in the 1950s, but it seldom gets an airing today in Catholic Churches.

<sup>103</sup> 'Words and Melodies' in *The Parochial Hymn Book* (London: Burns and Oates, 1883).

<sup>104</sup> J. Hacker, *Catholic Hymnal* ([n.p.], Buffalo, 1902).

<sup>105</sup> Sisters of Notre Dame, *Sunday School Hymn Book* ([n.p.], Philadelphia Press, 1888).

## Faith of Our Fathers

Verse 1	Faith of Our Fathers! Living still In spite of dungeon fire and sword Oh how our hearts beat high with joy When e'er we hear that glorious word
Chorus	Faith of Our Fathers! Holy Faith! We will be true to thee till death Faith of Our Fathers! Holy Faith! We will be true to thee till death
Verse 2	Our Fathers chained in prisons dark Were still in heart and conscience free How sweet would be their children's fate If they like them, could die for thee
Verse 3	Faith of Our Fathers! Mary's prayers
<i>Irish Version</i>	<i>Shall keep our country fast to thee</i>
English Version	Shall win our country back to thee
Common	And through the truth that comes from God
<i>Irish/Philadelphia</i>	<i>Oh we shall prosper to be free</i>
<i>English</i>	England shall then indeed be free
<i>New York Version</i>	<i>Our Land shall then indeed be free</i>
Verse 4	Faith of Our Fathers! We will love Both friend and foe in all our strife And preach there too, as love knows how By kindly words and virtuous life

This hymn develops into a rich stream of emotion as it flows from bleak persecution to hope and forgiveness. The first verse evokes the persecution of Catholics in both England and Ireland. The next continues the theme which has resonances of 'Muscular Christianity' which in the Great War scenario could be interpreted as connecting historical Catholic sacrifice with the war. Verse three allows a national emphasis to be inserted. In the English case it is the well-trodden path of conversion of England to Catholicism. The Irish version has both a political and religious meaning vis-à-vis Ireland achieving political self-determination, and retaining its religious independence from Protestant persecution. It is the fervour which accompanied the singing that gives meaning to either of the explanations of verse three, and helps explain how Catholics in general felt and expressed themselves from, as some saw it, the yoke of heresy and persecution.

This hymn could arouse bitter feelings. Archbishop, later Cardinal Heenan of Liverpool, experienced this for himself during a visit to a housebound parishioner, not in 1918 but 1958: ‘Screaming women and children attacked the Archbishop, some wielding brooms, some throwing stones and tomatoes at him and his car. The large Catholic crowd began to sing “Faith of Our Fathers” (with more venom than religious fervour, according to the Archbishop’s own account), and the Protestants feared an invasion of “their streets”’.<sup>106</sup> Heenan’s response was to play down the event with diplomacy. He achieved synergy with verse four, which returns to Catholic principles of love, forgiveness, and kindness. Whether Faber had any such triumphalist or recalcitrant motivations when writing the hymn, is extremely doubtful. As a disciple of Newman and a new convert, his inclinations were assuredly spiritual. It is interesting that the American Sisters espoused the Irish version, whereas the American Jesuit version: ‘Our land shall then be free’, is ambiguous in the extreme in a country where the enslaved indigenous American Indians were all but extirpated, and the Civil War failed to resolve racial injustice.

Despite the variation in words which could be interpreted as reflecting political hopes and desires, hymns were not political devices *per se*. They were sung for their music, tradition, words, and as another means of sharing Catholic values with other Catholics. That is not to say that in a society that was anti-Catholic they did not fulfil other roles. Faith of Our Fathers when sung lustily was often used by Catholics to intimidate or retaliate to similar and opposite songs by their aggressors. Orange songs such as ‘The Sash my Father Wore’ had much the same effect in reverse. This was more tribalism than politics and the composers would surely have been amazed at how they were being interpreted outside their original intention. Hymns were above all spiritual and when sung collectively could be inspirational.

Prayers were said in public, especially at Mass and other services. Private prayers were at the discretion of the individual. Chaplains had their obligatory Daily Office to read, this was a collection of prayers, intercessions, scripture and psalms. A popular prayer in both Ireland and England was: ‘The Garden of the Soul’, and there were many other prayers.<sup>107</sup> Fr Gill’s private collection which he gathered at war, still survives in the Jesuit Archive, Dublin. Men also created their own prayers including Fr Willie Doyle: ‘I have a little system of counting my own prayers: to represent it by figures, the 10,000 before the war has grown to 100,000 daily

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<sup>106</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 358.

<sup>107</sup> Other popular prayers included: ‘Hail Holy Queen’, ‘Memorare’, ‘Act of Contrition’, and ‘Out of the Depths’. Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 128.

now, with the result that He has entered into my life as He had never done before'.<sup>108</sup> Doyle's prayers must necessarily have been brief and self-composed.

This study of prayer will limit itself to the Rosary. The Rosary combines the most common prayers and can be performed at any time either privately or in a group. Its versatility allows short or longer versions to be said whenever convenient. The Rosary was also an external expression of a soldier's Faith and highly visible to all. It was another opportunity to share with one's own brethren a symbol of unity and a connection with home. The Rosary had an altogether more macabre, if practical part to play, in the identification of the death of Fr Looby. When none of his body parts were found after he was atomised by a shell, he was given a grave because: 'the exhumation of the body from a point map reference 20. V.1.a.4.3 was partially identified from Beads and Cross'.<sup>109</sup> His gravestone is marked: 'Believed To Be Rev. P. Looby'.<sup>110</sup>

Chaplains showed great alacrity in promoting the Rosary, with Fr Gillett unsurprisingly recording joyous participation in conducting or providing facilities. These extracts give an insight into a front line chaplain's inner-thoughts and morale. His contribution is significant with regards to the Rosary. It shows how an enthusiastic Lancashire chaplain responded with sharing a simple devotion with units of both strong Lancashire and Irish soldiers, and compares this with his own southern regiments. Given the small number of Catholics in his own Brigade, Gillett reflected: 'Rosary in evening but little encouragement'.<sup>111</sup> Little encouragement, maybe, but Gillett persisted with the Rosary. Nevertheless, the effects of ministering to a non-Catholic congregation took its toll on Fr Gillett's morale. His growing depression was heightened by the miserly response from his own troops: 'Rosary at 6 - disappointed with turn up. Evenings are lonely'.<sup>112</sup> This continued a few days later: 'Rosary - then to Pop [Poperinge] to drive away depression with a gorgeous lunch there and after the pictures - came back more cheerful'.<sup>113</sup> At Ribeaucourt a month later, the poor religious commitment of his own troops was assuaged by the dedication of civilians: 'Mass at Ribeaucourt. In afternoon Rosary and Benediction, owing to poor turn up of soldiers - accommodated the civilians and tackled the Rosary in French, a great success. Arranged for Rosary every night at 5:15 pm at which the civilians attend'.<sup>114</sup> Fr Gillett embraced the Rosary

<sup>108</sup> O'Rahilly, *Father William Doyle SJ*, p. 266.

<sup>109</sup> PRO, WO 339/45506. Reference 114569/5, IWGC to War Office, (6<sup>th</sup> December 1922).

<sup>110</sup> Poelcapelle Cemetery, CWG reference VI. E. 13.

<sup>111</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (4<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., (30<sup>th</sup> September 1917).

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., (9<sup>th</sup> October 1917).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., (8<sup>th</sup> October 1916).

and brought facilities and encouragement to all Catholics whenever possible, despite his own soldiers' indifference. He expressed the versatility and power of the Rosary and also his own bravery: '04:30 guns open out - battle started at 7am wounded coming into hospital - strolled about saying Rosary for those fighting and asking for success'.<sup>115</sup> Yet again Irish and Lancashire soldiers who were passing through emphasised the geographical imbalance in Catholic commitment: 'Mass at Elincourt, an excellent crowd. Boys from Preston and Ormskirk. Rosary in evening at 5:30 and very well attended'.<sup>116</sup> And: 'All Saints - Mass in Cinema Hall Salle de Fêtes - not one of my lads present - many Munster boys there. Rosary at 5pm in RC chapel. Dubliners turn up strong'. Devout Catholics took regular advantage of the Devotions in sharp contrast to their weaker coreligionists.

At Raincheval, the Rosary followed Mass, and was attended by many Lancashire Catholics and his spirits were noticeably high. Gillett could be reflective and he often attached a moment of private thought to his recording of daily events. He combined the Rosary with his particular view on the sorry state-of-affairs in the killing fields:

Mass at 7:30 then Rosary. Raincheval was a cosy little village - there she lay nestling is a huge hollow and surrounded with woods. The church spires, tower up above us, the tree-tops bespeaking the war of God and peace, silently watching over the peaceful village. Yet this village of peace and quiet can tell its tale. In it, hides away some 1200 men, training for the hideous fight, awaiting (sic) for orders to go forward, some must go to death, others are spared for the victory.<sup>117</sup>

The Rosary was linked with the Armistice by Fr Gillett and allows comparison between the diarists' reactions to the end of hostilities and methods of celebration. Fr Gillett announced: 'Rosary 5:30 pm. Everybody on tip toe of excitement, peace whispers going around - yah at last!'<sup>118</sup> Finally, he excitedly links the Rosary and rum together, the latter with great relief, the sense of liberation and need for celebration palpable:

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918. Holy Mass - at 11am precisely CEASE FIRE ordered - ARMISTICE concluded, cessation of hostilities. Thank God. At 8:30 pm Rosary in our chapel, today Vicaire of Cateau takes over. End of bloodshed and strife, Lights up now as long as we like - only drawback is we are in a desolate hole and can get nothing for a celebration - rotten and everybody going mad with delight. 'RUM ISSUE!!

This example tells us much about his ministry. His devotion to Mary and his closeness with the French clerics is amalgamated with a natural relief, not only for himself but for those who

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., (10<sup>th</sup> August 1917). The terms 'strolled', 'lollid', or 'knocked around', are interesting and used by both Steuart and Gillett, despite differing upbringings and regional variations.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., (20<sup>th</sup> October 1918).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., (13<sup>th</sup> September 1916).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., (8<sup>th</sup> November 1918).

gave their blood. He understood sacrifice but also understood men. The rum issue was an important part of a soldier's war-life, as was the estaminet. Gillett shared in this public expression of family or community, in much the same way as he did with his Catholic troops at Mass and his parishioners at home.<sup>119</sup> Fr Steuart never expressed any community values and his reaction to the Armistice was predictable. In place of sharing and collective joy, he appeared to be self-preoccupied. How he was going to fare and had been overlooked occupied his thoughts: 'News of conclusion of Armistice reached us on the march. It's almost impossible to realize that the war is over. I hope I shan't have to return to civil life too soon. I also can't help feeling disappointed that I haven't been able to get a decoration - mostly real hard luck, I really believe'. Fr Drinkwater's diary concluded in hospital in October 1918 so we cannot gauge his reaction.

Fr Gillett demonstrated the Lancashire and Irish devotion to the Virgin Mary through the Rosary. His experiences tell of the psychological complexity and mood swings of a front line chaplain through variations of Catholic soldier participation. Fr Steuart did not mention the Rosary although he did distribute beads on two occasions, Fr Drinkwater mentioned the Rosary only once. Enthusiasm for the Rosary as a devotion to the Mother of God again reflects the differences between Catholicism in English regions. The Rosary dates at least from 1214, and is a universal prayer which developed in line with the devotions to Mary generated by the Roman Church. The apparitions of Our Lady to Bernadette Soubirous initiated the founding of Lourdes as a place of spiritual pilgrimage from 1858. This ritual of Catholic worship had similarities to the Irish Celtic Catholicism of pre-Ultramontane days, and found great favour among most Catholics, particularly those in Ireland or Irish descendants. It follows that chaplains from Lancashire, with its higher concentration of Irish Catholics, replicated the home situation by their joint devotion to the Rosary with the troops, consequently their devotional commitment contrasted sharply with those in southern units; that upset Fr Gillett but failed to deter him.

### **Pastoral**

The spiritual elements of Catholic life have been dealt with. Chaplains also had to do business with the pastoral and secular aspects of their role. Pastoral duties included: writing letters to families of the deceased, conversions to Catholicism, funerals and burials, and ministering at the emotive executions of British soldiers. In the realms of pastoral care chaplains were often in direct contact with public duties and officialdom. Questions surrounding correct burial and

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<sup>119</sup> It is no coincidence that many Catholic parishes developed a social club alongside the church.

funeral procedures provide a window into denominational tensions. Rules were being constantly established and stated in a plethora of pamphlets and booklets.

Burials on the Western Front reflected military action. Funerals attracted more danger because of the gathering of mourners and were thereby restricted in frequency and minimised in length. In battle, casualties were buried at night or where and when opportunity allowed, usually near the scene of death. Fatalities behind the lines were often indiscriminate in nature from bombing, stray bullets, shells, or from errant allied fire, requiring *ad hoc* burials on the spot where the victim fell. Other deaths from accidents, illness, deteriorating injuries, and disease, allowed burials to be more organised in cemeteries attached to hospital facilities. Even historians disagree on the British deaths and despite sporadic attempts to record burials by individual chaplains, there is no reliable common information regarding Catholic numbers. It is possible that early chaplains such as Fr Francis Gleeson had utilised regular army procedure to capture such detail. He has left Brigade Rolls and a handwritten list of soldiers with their number, rank, address and comments section, up to 1917. It should be noted that his 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 14<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Rifles, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Division Munster Fusiliers, was of regular formation and possibly had employed this system in previous conflicts. However, these documents appear to be either a personal system designed by Fr Gleeson or one which was restricted to his army unit.<sup>120</sup> The control group of diaries allow questions to be raised regarding the consistency of burial statistics. Gillett and Drinkwater made no mention of returns of this nature, but Steuart did: 'Sent in burial returns and notices of Church Parades to Dolan'.<sup>121</sup> The overall evidence described a confused and irregular state in terms of Catholic burial statistics, as it does in capturing all statistics, even if there were official structures to record deaths. The registration of graves was an official requirement of which Catholics were aware, but casts little light on Catholic chaplaincy involvement.

Funerals and burials are emotive occasions of sadness and grief for all concerned, regardless of creed or status. They also triggered other emotional and deeply held responses from some Catholic chaplains which went beyond religious ceremonies and services. On occasions conflicts developed from disparity in interpretation between the denominations. This sometimes revived deep-seated antipathies towards the Army authorities and other denominational chaplains. Burial etiquette appeared to be the problem, but there was also an

<sup>120</sup> Fr Gleeson's diaries can be accessed at [http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/war-diaries-of-fr-francis-gleeson-go-online-1.2191271?utm\\_source=dlvr.it&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/war-diaries-of-fr-francis-gleeson-go-online-1.2191271?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter) and <http://digital.ucd.ie/view/ucdlib:36570> or at DubAA.

<sup>121</sup> DAA, Steuart to Rawlinson, (undated.) Dolan was a 57 year old Catholic SCF, from Yorkshire, who was mentioned in dispatches.



undercurrent of defensiveness and insecurity, which needs to be balanced by the legitimacy of establishing the correct and agreed procedures to fulfil Catholic expectations. Priests experienced and wrote about painful human and emotional burial experience, Drinkwater:

The man I buried was a NF (sic) [SF Sherwood Forrester, his regiment]. I wonder if I ever talked to him or heard his Confession? You can't tell, as they sew them up in an army blanket. Those brown blankets – they will always remind me of wounds and death. You see something on a stretcher with a brown blanket over it, and it may be a dead man, or an unconscious man, or only a slightly wounded man covering his face from the flies.<sup>122</sup>

In Drinkwater's case after a mere three months after arriving at the Front, he had already become hardened to burials and war in general. Gillett after only two months described the conditions surrounding a burial. Both men were rapidly becoming familiar with carnage:

Got word that Dr McElvey was killed and was awaiting burial at Paisley Corner. Wasted 4 hours hanging about and that after a long and weary trudge along the trenches. In due course got a grave dug and piously buried the poor doctor. All the while shells were falling around and several times we had to seek shelter. But finally we got through with it. It was a filthy wet day and the trenches were awful. Poor men were lying on the top, knocked out - arms and legs were butting out of the trench sides and here and there a dud shell was sticking out. I was glad to have done with it all and get back to our wee shelter in the woods.<sup>123</sup>

Steuart told little about his burial experiences and seems unimpressed with a French funeral service: 'Funeral (9 to 12!) at Talmas. A very sorry business. Slouched thro' the streets in an alb just below knees, two 'chantres', two servers & a bradle Missa Cantata and burial. All very casual and irreverent to my mind'.<sup>124</sup> Both Steuart and Gillett were involved in the re-consecration of graves after hostilities ended and new cemeteries were built, thereby justifying the thesis end date of 1919.<sup>125</sup>

The burials of Catholic chaplains are recorded for each chaplaincy death by their fellow priests.<sup>126</sup> These were necessarily hurried due to the circumstances. Details were sent to Rawlinson and often forwarded as a personal communiqué to the ecclesiastical superior concerned. Fr Carey's funeral was more civic in nature. Closely connected to the Catholic Club at Audruicq, he died of an acute attack of influenza in Calais. His funeral which occurred in early 1919 after the cessation of hostilities, benefitted not only from the stable condition which

<sup>122</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (29<sup>th</sup> August 1915).

<sup>123</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (29<sup>th</sup> September 1916).

<sup>124</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (21<sup>st</sup> November 1916).

<sup>125</sup> Refer Appendices 12 and 14.

<sup>126</sup> This has been confirmed by the author. All the gravestones of the chaplains buried on the Western Front have been photographed and cross-referenced with the individual accounts which survived at DAA and/or the Public Record Office.

allowed a proper funeral service but also from his close association between himself, the army, and the civilian population, with whom he had forged close links during the war. He is buried in a civilian plot in the graveyard attached to the church and not in the plot imputed by the CWGC:

The large church [Audruicq] was crowded to the doors, one aisle being filled with British soldiers, the other with French civilians. Outside the Church surged a vast crowd of soldiers and civilians anxious to pay their respects of affection and respect. The Very Reverend B. S. Rawlinson OSB, Senior Roman Catholic Chaplain in France pronounced the Absolutions and officiated at the grave.<sup>127</sup>

By contrast Fr Whitefoord had a most unfortunate ending. He was mortally wounded and died after receiving Absolution. His body, which was in repose awaiting burial, was incinerated when a German bomb hit the hospital where he lay. Rawlinson informed Bishop Singleton of Shrewsbury: 'I have now heard that the remains were found and placed in a coffin and buried by a Canadian priest'.<sup>128</sup> His account demonstrates the necessary brevity of burials at war.

Pre-war tensions could express themselves in difficulties and demarcations between religious denominations. Burials and funerals offered a battle-ground on which these animosities could be observed, especially in the early years. It will be shown that these problems were sometimes initiated or sustained by Catholic chaplains, not as a body, but as individuals as the case of Fr G. Ryan will expose.<sup>129</sup> Experiences and relationships at home were avowedly non-ecumenical. Residual elements of Catholic resistance to suppression, real or perceived, ancient or modern, surfaced at times in their chaplaincy mission. Difficult to prove yet impossible to ignore, these senses and their practical manifestations are echoed throughout the war. The situation slowly improved as the correct procedures were learned by everyone. A general directive: 'Instructions Regarding Burials' was issued by the Army as late as July 1918 (A.G. 3212 {o}).<sup>130</sup> In the Catholic experience, chaplains relied on: 'Information and Hints' which itself was not published until January 1917.<sup>131</sup> This document had a page on 'Burial Procedure'<sup>132</sup> which stressed the inevitability that in some circumstances it was not possible for Catholic soldiers to be buried by their own chaplains. It further burdened over-worked Catholic chaplains at the sharp-end, by establishing their responsibility to make adequate arrangements directly and to liaise with all and sundry before going into action.

<sup>127</sup> DAA, Ephemera, not accredited or dated but shortly post-war.

<sup>128</sup> DAA, 3235, Rawlinson to Singleton, (30<sup>th</sup> June 1918).

<sup>129</sup> Not to be confused with Fr W. Ryan whose bravery is attested later.

<sup>130</sup> Appendix 2.

<sup>131</sup> Symptomatic of the necessity of the Catholic chaplaincy organisation to 'learn on the job', as far as Army/Non-RC protocol was concerned.

<sup>132</sup> DAA, Miscellanea, 'Information and Hints'.

Chaplains were required to perform a regulatory and disciplinary role when: 'Cases of Catholic men buried by chaplains of other denominations without adequate reason should be reported as soon as possible to the APC of the Army concerned'.<sup>133</sup> Brookfield OSB wrote to the Adjutant, (alas undated) about his concerns:

I understand that a Roman Catholic soldier was killed on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and buried by a Church of England chaplain. The chaplain has been kind enough to call on me, and I am convinced that he performed the burial in ignorance of the man's faith. We Catholics find so strongly in this area that I trust that you will see that such a mistake cannot occur again and that I am notified when there is a Roman Catholic funeral. If, which is unlikely, it should be absolutely impossible to notify me, it would be better to get a RC soldier to read the service or say some prayers over the body.<sup>134</sup>

Brookfield from a prestigious Religious order had no seniority within the chaplaincy remit. Undeterred, he decided to tackle this issue directly with the Army by-passing the correct course of action which had been defined as via the APC.<sup>135</sup> Brookfield was confident in his dealings with authority. His positive approach was typical of a man assured of his place in society as a Benedictine priest. He was polite, respectful, and tactful: but also confident, assertive, and insistent. He stated clearly that a Catholic soldier should officiate in an emergency [despite being wrong, as will be shown] and not a Church of England chaplain, and moreover: 'we Catholics find so strongly in this area', before reprimanding the Adjutant over his 'mistake'. The recipient, an Adjutant usually with the rank of Captain whose role was administrative support to a senior officer, was unlikely to enter into a controversy with a chaplain of equal military rank. Brookfield had demonstrated the breadth of Catholic experience at large, being well-able to be a priest, an officer, diplomat and a martinet.

Fr Ryan's approach is altogether different and confirms the diagnosis that chaplains' attitudes and actions were derived from their earlier influences. He displayed far less poise in his approach to a burial problem with the Army and Protestants in general. His attitude is riddled with insecurity and veered into a bizarre discourse concerning proselytism:

To protect myself, I am duty bound to record the fact that I have buried at orders but under protest a deceased Protestant patient from your Hospital viz. J. Rose in the portion of the cemetery allotted for Catholics. This I did to prevent trouble, as the grave had not been dug in the portion set apart for the Protestants. Furthermore, I record these facts, as only this week I was called to order by the parson for leaving exposed at your hospital certain Catholic articles & *I am not anxious to give ground for being a 'body snatcher' or for proselytizing: in other words failing to steal Protestants*

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> DAA, 3234, (B12D), Brookfield to Adjutant 4<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Regiment, (undated).

<sup>135</sup> The lack of date denies clarification.

*alive, I appropriate their bodies when dead.* I desire to do neither, indeed it was with a personal resentment that I carried out the order I was given.<sup>136</sup>

Ryan was not being ironic. Resentment is often found in his copious correspondence which illustrates his personality and demeanour as being constantly truculent, thereby, creating further problems with the Army and the Church of England. His personality emerged as brusque, outspoken, selfish, repetitive, and at times seemingly under stress of one type or another, at which times his letters become difficult to decipher.<sup>137</sup> Rawlinson was provoked to reply to one of Ryan's many mundane or controversial queries about alleged Church of England interference: 'If you will allow me to say so, I think it would be a mistake for you to make any objection, certainly officially, as the matter is of no consequence'.<sup>138</sup> Ryan inhabited a narrow and acrimonious viewpoint which was atypical of Catholic chaplains. It is one thing to disavow ecumenism but quite another to be so antagonistic, even allowing for pre-war sectarianism or residual historical prejudice. His attitudes, if publicised, would have been damaging to the Catholic bloc.

Ryan is as far away as is imaginable from Gillett, Drinkwater, Steuart, and the rump of fellow priests. There is an oxymoron here. He appears to have been a thoroughly good and devout priest, seemingly able to confine his bitterness within the establishment and away from his real vocation. His hostile attitude appears to be based on a heart-felt conviction of persecution, whether valid or not. This ambiguity is evident in his files. On the one hand Rawlinson's testimony states that Ryan's: 'Character – excellent, Health – good, Suitability – Not Suitable'. On the other hand he reached the position of DAPC and rank of Lieutenant Colonel, where the Commanding Officer of V11 Corps, Charles Armstrong wrote: 'The chaplain's high character, tact and personal example are of high value to the army'.<sup>139</sup> It is Armstrong's final declaration and assessment which confirms Rawlinson's doubts: 'From my knowledge of him, he does not seem suited for administrative work and therefore I cannot recommend him for promotion'. Ryan's difficulties were with the establishment rather than with his religious life. Nonetheless, given the evidence from both his army and ecclesiastical superiors, this was a troublesome and outspoken man. Both wanted him deployed elsewhere and decidedly not gumming-up the works at headquarters. He was irksome to Rawlinson but not in a political way and was, hence, difficult to remove. Rawlinson had to wait for him to

<sup>136</sup> DAA, 3235, Gabriel Ryan to Major Pincher, Base Hospital Calais, (26<sup>th</sup> June 1915). Author's italics.

<sup>137</sup> Gabriel Ryan, an Irishman from the Middlesbrough Diocese, was a constant complainer and an unpleasant self-publicist. His attitudes to Protestants were bitter and defensive. His handwriting and content appear to become confused, as if intoxicated or extremely fatigued, but without demonstrating any politicisation.

<sup>138</sup> DAA, 3235, G. Ryan, (28<sup>th</sup> February 1916).

<sup>139</sup> PRO, WO 374/59932.

with away on the vine without causing too much trouble. He waited in vain, Ryan remained Front Line chaplain until 1919.

Rawlinson needed a team of diplomatic chaplains for which Ryan need not apply. A gradual increase in monitoring political and diplomatic activity was necessary and was facilitated through the process of gathering together a trusted team of practical and tactful chaplains. This was not a formal selection process and a blueprint was not handed down by the hierarchies. Rather, it was Rawlinson's anticipation and response to future English Catholic aspirations which evolved through experience. Despite his long service, Rawlinson would obviously not consider Ryan in this group of men. Brookfield was also excluded although he had been his long-time friend, and as was shown, had the apparent talent. Rawlinson's selected men were not a coterie of sycophants or a clique of privileged priests. They had to be fit-for-purpose.<sup>140</sup> His judgement was in most areas reliable. In the case of Brookfield he was proven correct later in the war: 'Fr Brookfield says he is temperamentally incapable of mixing with and knowing the men. This is true and his CO has been complaining'.<sup>141</sup> Rawlinson's considered judgements were without bias. In the case of a Salford Diocesan priest R. V. O'Shaughnessy, this chaplain appeared initially to have made an error of judgement yet showed enough promise to be persevered with. His senior Fr Ahearne advised:

Fr O'Shaughnessy is a most hard-working chaplain..... but was asked to bury some men C. of E. He framed his refusal in some such words as 'The C. of E. chaplains would object to'. The CO Batt. was displeased and spoke, I think, to the C. of E. chaplain and so it got, I believe, to Brigade HQ, and there threatened to be trouble or report to GHQ as they say he knew well this C. of E. chaplain would not object, and they resent any imputation on their broad mindedness. I was asked by their SCF, C. of E. to state (1) if they may take our funerals if there should be no RC chaplain present and (2) if we should take theirs: and say some prayers, even if they were not from the funeral service, where no C. of E. chaplains could be found - to all appearances this would be a service. It is most difficult in these abnormal circumstances, to know what answer to give. Could you direct me as to what answer I should give to questions?<sup>142</sup>

Rawlinson reply was strangely confusing: 'The answer to (1) is 'no''. If not possible to find an RC chaplain then they could proceed with the funeral, (2) exactly should apply to their case as to ours. If it is impossible to find a C. of E. man we should certainly bury theirs. I am sorry if there is any trouble of Fr O'Shaughnessy's affair, at any rate we will not meet half-way'.<sup>143</sup> This response is informative in the sense that he would not tolerate local inter-denominational

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<sup>140</sup> A Benedictine clique might be considered acceptable even normal given that Keatinge, Rawlinson and Young, all OSBs, ran GHQ with the support of Fr King SJ. There is no further evidence to support this theory. Instead the Benedictine unofficial hierarchy fits the ethos established on p. 61.

<sup>141</sup> DAA, 3234, Craven to Rawlinson, (13<sup>th</sup> November 1918).

<sup>142</sup> DAA, 3234, Ahearne SCF to Rawlinson, (31<sup>st</sup> March 1917).

<sup>143</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Ahearne, (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1917).

squabbles.<sup>144</sup> It was in his eyes a storm in a tea-cup. He was a firm believer in sticking to the letter of the law in these matters and if further arbitration was required then the Army had a perfectly good escalation procedure by which to reach a settlement. He did not permit gossip to circulate under any circumstances, wanting clean resolutions which could not be misinterpreted by mischief-makers of whatever complexion.

Fr Ahearne was becoming too involved with the Church of England and the Army, and Rawlinson was clearly agitated by him. In this instance both chaplains worked in Lancashire, although on face value O'Shaughnessy from the Salford Diocese had created for Ahearne, a Redemptorist who had worked in the Liverpool Archdiocese, a seemingly intractable problem. Could there be Liverpool versus Salford, or Religious versus Diocesan rivalries? There is no evidence for either proposal. Evidence highlights Ahearne's less than robust temperament. He was frequently indecisive in his correspondence to Rawlinson which inferred that he was over-cautious in inter-denominational and army matters. However, there was another side to Ahearne's character. An affable man, but also a determined one, he was a chaplain for three years earning a MID and DSO. Brave and at the same time cautious is a curious combination. It should also be considered that Ahearne might have been more aware and guarded of his extra responsibilities within the Catholic political mission, being a mature priest of 46 years compared to O'Shaughnessy aged 30. To preserve the English Catholic design of fostering good relations and the promotion of Catholics as good citizens, was exactly what Rawlinson was looking to promote and Ahearne looked ideal. Unfortunately he was not strong enough for additional responsibilities or the rough and tumble of Front line work. He remained in casualty clearing stations, and venereal disease and base hospitals. A good chaplain but not the right type for Rawlinson, he was simply too timid.

Rawlinson was developing a profile of the chaplains who were best able to support the cause of Catholic chaplaincy and Catholic ambition at war, and those less able to do so. He did not criticise O'Shaughnessy in the above affair as he recognised that he was a man who could get on with the job and achieve results. The framework built by Rawlinson, sandwiched between the Army and the Catholic Church, required men that could cement acceptable relationships within this structure, men who could further the wider Catholic ambition. Consequently, Rawlinson's reluctance to condemn O'Shaughnessy was justified by appreciating that he had grasped the correct organizational methodology and had shown sufficient tact and diplomacy. This meant that O'Shaughnessy could be trusted. O'Shaughnessy had further difficulties with Presbyterians and the Army over forced Church

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<sup>144</sup> DAA, 3234, (2<sup>nd</sup> April 1917). Rawlinson refers Ahearne to, 'Information and Hints' on procedure.

Parades, but dealt with them in the proper manner, a trait that the Principal Chaplain always relished. Rawlinson supported O'Shaughnessy thus:

I am sorry that there is further trouble about Catholics forced to go to non-Catholic services, but I am sure that this is not with the knowledge of the Brigadier, who gave me his word that this would not happen again. It is probably the act of some stupid and irresponsible NCO's (sic) as was the case before. I will come up and see you and see what is best to be done.<sup>145</sup>

Fr Robert Vincent O'Shaughnessy flourished as chaplain. He was Mentioned-in-Dispatches twice, promoted to SCF and given an excellent reference when he left Army chaplaincy to join the Royal Air Force as permanent chaplain in 1919: 'Character: Excellent. Fitness: Good. Suitability: Very Suitable'.<sup>146</sup> He was far more representative of diocesan priests than Gabriel Ryan. His relationship with O'Shaughnessy was amicable. When the chaplain sustained a hand injury, he jested: 'So sorry to hear of your accident but pleased to know that it incurred whilst engaged in building a little chapel, which is much better than if it had happened opening a champagne bottle. I have known cases of even priests being injured in this way!'<sup>147</sup> Humour, that elusive commodity in the ranks of Catholic army chaplaincy, makes Rawlinson's joke to O'Shaughnessy somehow more relevant if not, alas, memorable. The war was coming to a close, anticipation rather than out-and-out euphoria the motivation for the lighter and more relaxed atmosphere.<sup>148</sup> Even his attitudes towards Maltese chaplains had softened a little: 'The Maltese blight is not finished yet.... If I were in your place I would certainly grant him leave to Malta, but would take good care that he never left again. Let me know if you have any more Maltese for me!'<sup>149</sup> The significance of this quote is that as he began to relax, his hitherto stern façade began to slip, and his sense of humour emerged as the war turned in the allies favour, despite his unaccountable discrimination of the Maltese clergy.<sup>150</sup>

The conversions of non-Catholics were part of priestly responsibilities. Nonetheless, the numbers of conversions in the field were small compared to the claims made at home by the hierarchy and the Catholic media. The evidence compiled from the Front supports Buchanan with respect to wartime conversions in the field, he observed: 'Catholics may have

<sup>145</sup> DAA, 3231, Rawlinson to O'Shaughnessy, 19<sup>th</sup> King's Liverpool Regiment, (31<sup>st</sup> August 1916).

<sup>146</sup> PRO, WO 0375/51605.

<sup>147</sup> DAA, 3231, Rawlinson to O'Shaughnessy, (30<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>148</sup> There is a lightened, confident atmosphere and a mildly euphoric sense in the three diaries and much of the general correspondence which permeates from September 1918, as the allies pushed their attacks and a successful outlook looked more likely. For example, Gillett Diaries, SDA, (18<sup>th</sup> September 1918): '4:45 barrage - attacking on a large scale - visited main dressing station and ADS, returning to camp about 4pm. After tea strolled out towards Peronne through Aillanes and Mont St Quentin where Australians affected a great piece of work. Good news through hurragh!'

<sup>149</sup> DAA, Rawlinson to Monk, (18<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>150</sup> Data and research material exist both at DAA, and JAL, to expand this topic.

dreamed of reversing the pernicious effects of the Reformation, but, in reality, their priority was defending their position within British society, rather than trying to reconvert Britain to Catholicism'.<sup>151</sup> Catholic propaganda in England, particularly *The Tablet*, will be shown to cling on to the hope of mass-conversion. This stance ironically placed itself outside the chaplains' ability to comply. The political ambitions of the hierarchy owed more to gaining acceptability than religious conversion, which itself may have provoked an anti-Catholic backlash.

*The Tablet* was not afraid to express their version of Catholic triumphalism. At its core was the profound hope that Protestants could be encouraged to return to the 'True Faith'. Under the title: 'The War and the Conversion of England' enthused: 'It is astonishing how soldiers are drawn towards the Catholic Church'.<sup>152</sup> Such hyperbole could not disguise the fact that there was a genuine and widespread aspiration of returning England to the Catholic Church amongst Catholics in general, and there were conversions. This fervent hope, written ironically by Faber, himself a convert, was expressed in the first two lines, verse three, of the popular hymn *Faith of our Fathers*: 'Faith of Our Fathers, Mary's prayers – Shall win our country back to thee'.<sup>153</sup> The rates of conversion were regularly assessed at home. The number of converts in the Liverpool Diocese for example, averaged 1,031 per year for the ten years up to the outbreak of war, with the trend being upwards.<sup>154</sup> It was hoped that the war would create an opportunity to continue this activity. However, the reality was very different to the asinine exaggeration of 40,000 conversions at war claimed by *The Tablet* in 1918.<sup>155</sup> The hierarchies at home tried to collect consistent figures, as did the senior chaplains at the Front, but the results were erratic and untrustworthy. Fr McCliment CF, assisted Monseigneur Bidwell at Westminster, and wrote to Archbishop Whiteside of Liverpool in November 1917 advising him that: 'a register is kept here by which military and naval chaplains are supposed to send notification of conversions'.<sup>156</sup> The term 'supposed to' from the pen of an experienced military chaplain in France, now diverted to administrative duties in London, says much. The reality of war made conversions difficult and although desirable, hardly a top priority. For every soul gained hundreds might be lost through sacramental deprivation or leakage.

To receive a person into the Church entailed a period of instruction then baptism, and this took amounts of time that Brigade or Regimental chaplains in particular found difficult to

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<sup>151</sup> Buchanan and Conway, *Political Catholicism*, p. 248.

<sup>152</sup> *The Tablet*, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1915, p. 230.

<sup>153</sup> Different versions of verse three exist. Refer p200.

<sup>154</sup> LAA, Appendix 11.

<sup>155</sup> *The Tablet*, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1918, claimed 40,000 conversions, a figure taken as correct in O'Rahilly, *Father William Doyle SJ*, p. 255.

<sup>156</sup> LAA, EBC S2 3M S 911 M/13.



secure. Their counterparts serving in hospitals might have more time notionally, but were not in control of the length of recovery time of the patient and potential convert, thereby restricting opportunity for instruction, the mandatory precursor for conversion. Moreover, chaplains had to understand the sensitivities of the Army and their priorities and also that of other Christian denominations. Belonging to the 'True Faith' may have been a traditional creed but it was not an exclusively Catholic conviction. Conversions were necessarily carried out with individuals or small groups. The only way *The Tablet's* figure could be achieved was by mass-conversion which was not in the English Catholic culture and in any case totally infeasible in practical terms, either at home or particularly at war. A system of weekly returns was in place in the trenches but like all statistics, unless accurate and consistently updated, then practically futile. A 'catch-up' survey was requested of all chaplains in April 1917 the results tabulated below.

Table 3<sup>157</sup>

Officers	Soldiers	Others	Total	C.F. Name	Military Unit
0		2 Civilians	2	D. McHugh	39 General Base Hospital
0		Nursing Sister	1	C. Wright C.S.S.R	Un-named Hospital
0	10		10	J. Coghlan	Royal Inniskillings
0	22		22	D. Aherne C.S.S.R.	25 Field Ambulance
0	10		10	Hicks-Gower	18 General Hospital
0	0	Nursing Sister	1	V. Scully C.R.L.	93 Field Ambulance
2	0		2	C. Sowerby	11th Royal Scots
0	3		3	J. Hessenhauer	A.P.C.
0	0		0	W. Amery	Unknown
0	5		5	T. Lowerey	17th Trench Mortar Battery
0	2		2	J. O'Neill	5th Field Ambulance
0	0		0	M. Fleming	1V CCS
0	8	Guess	8	F. Drinkwater	1 North Mids Field Ambulance
0	4	3 on death bed	7	Illegible	2 Canadian Stationary Hospital
0	0		0	H. Collins	69 Field Ambulance
0	2	6 in England	8	G. Mc Brearty	24th Northumberland Fusiliers
1	0		1	E. Mostyn	14th General Hospital
1	3		4	R. Mangan	7th Field Ambulance
0	25		25	A. Johnston OFM	149 Brigade
0	2		2	Illegible	Illegible
1	11		12	F. Woodlock	3rd West Riding Field Ambulance
0	1		1	M. O'Neill	7th Leinster's
0	5		5	D. McGrath	Ammunition Col. 4th West Lancs
0	0		0	B. Wolferston	5th Yorkshire
0	0		0	E. Cullen	Army Post Office

The data should be treated cautiously. Chaplains Ahearne a Redemptorist, and Johnston a Franciscan, came from religious orders espousing the missionary endeavours of the founders St. Alphonsus De Liguori and St. Francis of Assisi respectively, but the evidence is insufficient and contradictory. For example Fr C Wright was also a Redemptorist working in a similar environment to Fr Ahearne yet he only recorded one convert and that a nursing sister.<sup>159</sup>

Catholic bureaucracy affected Catholic chaplains. They obediently if erratically, collated Catholic numbers of Conversions, Communion, Catholic numbers, and other statistical data. These returns were not always popular with chaplains. Fr O'Connor MC and SCF, a Salford Diocesan priest with the 14th Brigade including 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Manchesters and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Inniskillings, grumbled with some justification at the effort required in sending statistics: 'Are we priests or officials first? Or does GHQ know anything of present conditions. Are weekly returns the most important things in a fighting advancing Division containing four Catholic Battalions with two priests to do the work?'<sup>160</sup> Bureaucracy was not relished but was an inevitable and grudgingly accepted component of war. Disputes arose and were generally sorted locally or by GHQ. Chaplains needed diplomacy at times in order to negotiate between spiritual and secular activities. The decision was, nonetheless, at the discretion of the chaplain; secular activities were strictly subsidiary to chaplaincy's religious mission.

The inability to contribute to actual conversions did not seem to unsettle priests. Fleming SJ responded to the survey: 'unfortunately I have none to report'.<sup>161</sup> Meanwhile, Drinkwater estimated that: 'I have not kept any record but the number would not be more than 8 or 10'.<sup>162</sup> Wolferstan SJ accepted a realistic approach and simply accepted the status quo: 'I have not received any officers or men. The men are mostly Yorkshire Protestants and seem content to remain as they are'.<sup>163</sup> There was little or no recorded downward ecclesiastical pressure to convert. When conversions took place they were the normal extension of a priest's duties and training. Our diarists provide minimal evidence of conversions, each citing one example. Drinkwater: 'Received Private Bertie Naylor from Fleetwood into the Church'.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> The mutuality of the relationship between the nursing and medical profession and chaplaincy is an area ripe for research, allowing gender to be explored in this male dominated environment: nuns too are a dramatic omission from our wider understanding of life and death in war. There was empathy between these groups that masculine or feminine historiographies alone will not adequately explain.

<sup>160</sup> DAA, 3235, O'Connor 50th Division to Smith his Army DAPC, (14<sup>th</sup> October 1918).

<sup>161</sup> DAA, 3234, Fleming to Rawlinson, (4<sup>th</sup> May 1916).

<sup>162</sup> DAA, 3234, Drinkwater to Rawlinson, (2<sup>nd</sup> May 1916).

<sup>163</sup> DAA, 3235, Wolferston to Rawlinson, (5<sup>th</sup> May 1916).

<sup>164</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (16<sup>th</sup> May 1918).

Steuart: 'Received Sgt. W. Chapman (KOYLI) into the Church at the convent at Speltisbury'.<sup>165</sup>  
 Gillett: 'Mass and hospitals - this morning received a soldier 'extremis' into the church at the Canadian hospital at Le Portel'.<sup>166</sup>

Sparse and erratic conversion statistics, plus the minimalistic entries both in quantity and apparent relevance from the control group diaries, provides ample proof that conversions were conducted in a piecemeal fashion and could not have reached the levels claimed by Catholic propagandists. Meanwhile *The Tablet* continued advancing conversion statistics, this time domestically. Given the definitive returns from Liverpool already stated, this time the statistics seem reasonable: 'Not quite 2,000,000 Catholics in England last year made 8,500 converts'.<sup>167</sup> Failure to reach *The Tablet's* lofty exaggerations did not make chaplains poor priests, they were simply too engrossed in their prime missions within the war environment which was far removed from the ordered and structured situation found at home. The dreams of newspaper or journal proprietors, no matter how well-intentioned, were grossly over optimistic.

Executions of British soldiers by British servicemen have always been a contentious issue. This was recognised as such when in 2006 the Minister of Defence, Des Browne, on behalf of the British Parliament retrospectively pardoned 306 men 'shot at dawn' out of 346.<sup>168</sup> He said: 'I believe it is better to acknowledge that injustices were clearly done in some cases - even if we cannot say which - and to acknowledge that all these men were victims of war. I hope that pardoning these men will finally remove the stigma with which their families have lived for years'.<sup>169</sup> Military or moral judgements are not addressed here simply because they never appeared in the accounts of Catholic chaplains who attended such victims. Instead eye witness provided a fascinating insight into the true nature of Catholic chaplains who heard Confession, prayed, celebrated Communion, and often stayed with the prisoner overnight, accompanying him to the firing squad the next morning. Effectively this was Extreme Unction, but anointing was not always reported and then only when the prisoner had been shot, if not yet killed. Many celebrated Mass and perhaps buried the unfortunate soldier immediately after the execution. The last hours of a condemned man were a mélange of prayers, Sacraments, Holy Mass, Intercessions, and spiritual support, not to mention having Father with you.

<sup>165</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (31<sup>st</sup> August 1918). This was on temporary home duty in Dorset after being gassed.

<sup>166</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (17<sup>th</sup> July 1916).

<sup>167</sup> Victor McNabb, 'Conversion of England', *The Tablet*, (2<sup>nd</sup> November 1918).

<sup>168</sup> Ian Beckett, *The First World War: The Essential Guide to Sources in the U.K. National Archives* (Richmond: Public Record Office, 2002). Beckett disputes these figure, quoting 361, (291 in British Regiments), p. 145.

<sup>169</sup> *The Guardian*, (9<sup>th</sup> November 2006).

The first account of attending cases of execution comes from Fr Gill who described how he managed to anoint two prisoners in morbid situations. Initially he showed empathy towards two Catholics condemned to die and made a gesture towards intervention: 'I rode up to the divisional HQ and hoped that I could do something. They said there was nothing to be done'.<sup>170</sup> Resigned, he attended one of the condemned and: 'I heard his Confession and promised to give him Holy Communion in the morning'.<sup>171</sup> A bungled first volley by the executioners allowed Fr Gill to anoint the injured man before the second round finalised proceedings, which he described as 'providential'. Gill claimed that: 'His death made a great impression and was a strong testimony to the strength of religion'.<sup>172</sup> Amazingly, exactly the same events happened to a second Catholic 'a week or two' later.<sup>173</sup>

In the few accounts recorded by Plater, they dwelt on the bravery and holiness of the condemned: 'Before dying they both told me they were happy, having been to Confession and Holy Communion. They forgave everybody, thanked God for such a well prepared death and promised to pray for me in heaven. In both cases I spent the night with them and was with them to the end'.<sup>174</sup> In one account it is reported that: 'The Holy Name was on his lips when the party fired. I stepped in at once and anointed. While doing so I heard the officer in charge say, 'Good God, yours is the religion to die in''.<sup>175</sup> In the same testimony the prisoner purporting to be a Catholic, but who was in fact a Protestant, had initially refused the priests interventions but did a *volte face* after hearing that his sentence had been confirmed and death was imminent. After hastily beckoning the Catholic chaplain he was Baptised into the Catholic faith conditionally: '[Afterwards] I spent the night in his cell and said Mass at 3am. The condemned man and four of his guards received Holy Communion'.<sup>176</sup>

Steuart gave an exceptional account in his diary of a man 'shot at dawn' which he wrote at the time of the execution. In stark contrast he published in the 'Month' 1921 an overly-sentimental version of the same event.<sup>177</sup> It is useful to consider these two accounts of the same event, by the same chaplain, of the execution of a British soldier:

Arranged to have Black Watch RC's (sic) at the Club at 5pm. Russell agrees to me staying on for a few days as a Bosche attack is expected on Sunday. I am to be at Feuchy Chapel. Russell called to tell me an RC Seaforth's man is to be shot for desertion to-morrow morning and I am to attend him. Went to him and spent the

<sup>170</sup> DAA, 3231, Gill to Keatinge, (11<sup>th</sup> March 1915).

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Plater, *Catholic Soldiers*, pp. 125-8.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> JAD, *Month Magazine*, Winter/Spring 1921.

night with him. He made a splendid Confession and received Communion, & became quite calm and even cheerful. I can't realize even now, after I have seen him killed, that it was a man with only a few hours to live who spoke and behaved so quietly & cheerfully up to last as he did. He prayed most fervently, received absolution again and again and Communion before midnight & again, just before his execution.<sup>178</sup>

Then the next day:

Woke him up at 5:15 and gave him breakfast. Heard his Confession again and gave him Communion. Then he smoked a couple of cigarettes and after a small tot of whisky we said some prayers and talked together. At about 5:40 he was identified by a NCO of his battalion, and then the APM and an MO came in and his eyes were bandaged and a piece of white lint on to his tunic above the heart. Then he was led out, I holding his arm and helping him to make ejaculations, until we came to the pole to which he was to be tied. The firing party stood with their backs to him. When he was tied up I gave him absolution again and gave him my crucifix to kiss. The APM then told me to stand back: the firing party then faced about at a signal and took aim: at a second signal they fired & he slipped down as far as the ropes would let him, dead instantaneously. He had five bullets through his heart. I buried him at once in a cemetery close by & went off and said Mass for him immediately. He died like a hero and I am as certain as I can be of anything that he is saved. Fr McCann, my successor here, arrived last night just before dinner.<sup>179</sup>

Compare his diary account above with this version which he submitted for the magazine 'The Month', an internal Society of Jesus publication:

It was a misty morning, and the white fog mystified the sounds from the just-awakened camps around us.... Shouts and whistles and a thousand confused rumours of a busy camp reached us, and in the distance a mellow baritone voice was singing "The Roses of Picardy". With these familiar sounds of everyday life ringing in his ears and the bite of the sharp morning air on his face, in full strength and youth, he died.<sup>180</sup>

Fr. Steuart's diaries confirm that he only attended one execution and visits to France have validated this observation. He is, therefore, reporting on the same incident for two very different audiences with altered motivations. This is a perfect illustration of the care needed when analysing historical accounts created outside the original time frame and environment and justifies the valuation of diaries that were written at the time. Steuart has been shown to be unable or unwilling to fraternise with regular soldiers in general, but his diary revealed his true priestly commitment when needed. He responded with great empathy, dignity, and devotion: "The firing party stood with their backs to him. When he was tied up I gave him

<sup>178</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (8<sup>th</sup> March 1918).

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., (9<sup>th</sup> March 1918).

<sup>180</sup> Jal, *The Month* 1923, (Spring/Summer).

absolution again and gave him my crucifix to kiss'.<sup>181</sup> It was the only time he mentioned a crucifix, his own personal possession, and he exhibited an altogether kinder and more human facet to his normal mode of behaviour. This painful episode brought out the best in him as a man and as a priest.<sup>182</sup>

The execution of a fellow-soldier and co-religionist raises many questions, and despite lack of evidence surely created a moral dilemma for some chaplains. Drinkwater has testified to tending towards being a conscientious objector because of the vileness of the war. Even though the Catholic Church had declared this war a justifiable war, a case of *jus ad bellum* as defined by Saint Augustine, could the execution of a Catholic boy from one's own universal family in a non-combatant situation be justified? There is a kernel of insightful knowledge of this apparent conundrum in Catholic chaplains. These were disciplined and trained men with a vocation for delivering the Sacraments, and even if they had individual qualms nothing might stop them from fulfilling their sacred duties. It was a significant statement that the chaplains who attended these unfortunate men did so with care, compassion, and thoroughness. We should not have expected anything less. Nevertheless, it is a cruel irony of war that these condemned men, some of whom were hapless victims, and others who were less worthy of sympathy, were able to prepare for their spiritual salvation more thoroughly than their erstwhile colleagues battling for mere mortal life at the Front.

The onerous task of writing to the relatives and loved-ones of those killed was not confined to the military, chaplains also had their part to play which was deemed essential within Catholic circles. The bond between congregation and priests was not broken because of war. Even if chaplains had no particular knowledge of deceased individual's relatives, they had the common bond of the Catholic Church. Catholic priests at home were central figures in dealing with grief and death within families, providing sacramental and emotional support. It caused angst for both chaplain and family if even for genuine reasons this connection was broken or delayed. Such empathy was, if not an unwritten obligation then an unwritten expectation, a far more worthy motivation. Alas, circumstances might intervene, Fr Bleasdale, a Shrewsbury priest, summaries such a situation in response to a query from Young GHQ:

I thought I had written to Mrs Corish about the death of her son Pat., evidently not. I had too many letters to write, unfortunately, concerning my Catholic Boys who had fallen, and it is possible his poor name was overlooked. We had a nasty time down

<sup>181</sup> JAD, Steuart Diaries, (9<sup>th</sup> March 1918).

<sup>182</sup> Steuart was from a different world from the hurly-burly of mainstream life, and yet this diary example, as opposed to the mawkish article in *The Month*, challenges the stereotype in his diaries as being aloof. Although obdurate and haughty at times, he was still a caring priest and individual under this apparently subconscious subterfuge.

there, but the Division has earned, or rather kept up, its tradition of being one of the best.<sup>183</sup> We are in a quiet spot now but the conditions are terrible. I have not been quite up to the mark during the last few days, but I hope to be myself again in the next few days.<sup>184</sup>

Bleasdale's concern is palpable, his reasoning sincere. These were heart-breaking tasks and not always as straight-forward as might be imagined. The case of Private Patrick Halfpenny, born in Mallywee, County Cavan in 1866 is such an example. It is a penetrating insight into the Catholic mission in death and the anguish of the survivors. The correspondence in Appendix 10 shows initial hope and improvement, deterioration, and finally death. It illustrates the collaboration between medical staff and clergy, and the shocking and in the classical sense the pathetic helplessness of relatives.<sup>185</sup> This correspondence was vital, in fact the only means of personal and trusted communication.<sup>186</sup> The Nursing Sister's compassion for Private Halfpenny's physical state is matched by Fr Keating SJ's spiritual compassion. The letters from both were correct, empathetic and simple. The chaplain responsible for this soldier was Fr Wrafter MC, but it is unknown if he was able to attend to him either in action, at a Dressing Station, or at the CCS. It is not known how Private Halfpenny arrived at 33 CCS in late June 1916 (date has been damaged) in the prelude to the great Somme offensives, but a telegram was sent to his wife. I was able to locate Ligny St Flochel as the location of the CCS some 20 kilometres north west of Arras which was to become the epicentre of huge battles in 1917.<sup>187</sup> Shortly later Patrick was moved to 35<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in Calais, a routine procedure for preparation to repatriate or to receive extended care.

Sister Molloy wrote to Patrick's wife from Calais on June 29<sup>th</sup> 1916: '[He] was admitted to this hospital Saturday suffering from a severe head wound. He is not well enough to write for himself, but I will tell you how he is going on and you may be sure that everything possible will be done for him'. On the 5<sup>th</sup> July she wrote again: '[He has] suddenly become very much worse and his situation is more serious'. Sister Molloy's final letter was the news that the family were dreading: 'I greatly regret to inform you that your husband passed away quietly last night. I am so sorry to be the bearer of such sad news, but everything possible was done for him. I am glad to say that he has not been in pain and has been visited frequently by the Roman Catholic chaplain, with much sympathy'. Sister Molloy would have written many such

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<sup>183</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> London Regiment. His Battalion was part of the 47<sup>th</sup> London Division who at that time had recently engaged in phases of the Somme campaign at Fleurs-Courcellette, Transloy and Warlencourt – Long, Long Trail <http://www.1914-1918.net/47div.htm> accessed 1st April 2014.

<sup>184</sup> DAA, Bleasdale to Young, (16<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>185</sup> Mr Tony Halpin and his family, Appendix 10.

<sup>186</sup> Ignoring the mass-produced and impersonal messages of condolences from the authorities.

<sup>187</sup> Long, Long Trail <http://www.1914-1918.net/ccs.htm> Accessed 3rd April 2014.

letters yet her empathy was genuine and comforting. Keating was similarly consoling, stressing Patrick's spiritual preparation having received the necessary sacraments. In both Catholic and human terms, the family derived great consolation which this reassurance and knowledge provided.<sup>188</sup>

Having a copy of the original documents in my possession one cannot help but be moved by Keating's sincerity, even if this task was repeated in some form or other far too often. What did the family feel about these letters? In this case for certain they created a need for the family to communicate with the priest further. Their importance to the grieving survivors can be verified when the family, who had migrated to Liverpool after the organised butcheries of Catholics in Belfast after the war, contacted the Jesuits at Loyola Hall, Liverpool, some 18 years later. They wished to thank the priest personally and included the aforementioned letters, in an effort to move nearer to closure. Fr Sexton SJ replied that: 'There is no doubt at all that Fr Keating who wrote those beautiful letters to your dear mother is dead'.<sup>189</sup>

Letters to relatives were a common reassurance to grieving families and a testimony to the pastoral care with which these priests demonstrated their compassion. Together with the more important spiritual dimension, they strengthened the bond between Catholics and bridged the awful silence between the battlefield and home.

### Secular

The definitive Catholic chaplaincy position, condensed as a distancing itself from non-secular activities, has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, but requires further explanation. Chaplains did provide non-religious facilities to assist the authorities when they considered that it was the right thing to do, within the guidelines already established above. Chaplains realised that they were not immune from the war and its consequences and helped whenever appropriate, but secular duties could not impose on the spiritual. It will be shown that a wholly secular activity, that is those without any direct Catholic religious interpretation such as organising social events, bore little relevance to the desire or obligations of Catholic chaplains. The dogged protection of their independence from denominational interference, as they saw it, was sometimes expressed in unnecessary hostility.<sup>190</sup> In those days ecumenism was a poor second best to the defence of Catholicism. Fears of proselytism, and materialism,<sup>191</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Fuller correspondence of Fr Keating's letters in Appendix 10.

<sup>189</sup> Keating died in early 1934 at the age of 69.

<sup>190</sup> Chapter 6, particularly Fr Oddie.

<sup>191</sup> Concerns expressed in, *Rerum Novarum*.



occupied the thoughts of many Catholics before the war but these influences were only manifest in a minority of chaplains during it.

There were those Catholic chaplains who took a positive stance towards their relationships with non-Catholics. Such men recognised the possibility of creating a good impression from their actions. Rawlinson would have approved. Catholic priests in khaki were human beings, and as part of a unified fighting force they were more than willing to do their bit when appropriate. Bertrand Pike, a Dominican chaplain with the 55<sup>th</sup> West Lancashire Division and attached to the 166<sup>th</sup> South Lancashire Royal Field Artillery saw an opportunity to further the Catholic cause and wrote on these lines:

I find myself surrounded by men, the majority of whom are not Catholics. [Despite this being the most Catholic English Division]. This being so, I must remember that for the present, at any rate, I stand in their eyes as a representative of the Catholic Church. They may or may not know what are my duties. At any rate I can show them that I know them and am ready to stand by them. I must remember that the honour of the Church is vested in me. It is just possible that they may judge the whole Catholic Church by my individual behaviour.<sup>192</sup>

Fr Pike's attitude is the classic Catholic position, stated throughout, of the need to demonstrate Catholicism by good deeds and behaviour. He appeared to have succeeded in his objective when Major Hornby of the 55<sup>th</sup> Division wrote to his General Hugh Jeudwine on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1915:

I am writing a few lines, a liberty I trust you will forgive, in a semi-official way to ask your help [for the retention with the 55<sup>th</sup>] of Fr Pike who is doing simply splendid work. We could not have a better man and he hits it off simply splendidly with everybody. Everybody likes him, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.... we do not want to lose Fr Pike.... [could you] arrange for Fr Pike to stay with the artillery as it really would be a great pity to lose him in view of all the good work he is doing and the way he gets on with all the artillery officers, none of whom are Catholics.<sup>193</sup>

The plea, although not acknowledged in Rawlinson's files, was clearly honoured. Pike was captured by the Germans in 1918, repatriated, and after fighting his way through governmental red-tape was reunited with his Division: 'I understand from the War Office this morning that repatriated chaplains will be able to return after all, and I am writing to get Fr Pike back as quickly as possible. This would put things right with the 55<sup>th</sup> Division'.<sup>194</sup> Pike without

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<sup>192</sup> Catholic Truth Society, *On Active Service*, (undated), page 7.

<sup>193</sup> DAA, Ephemera. Major Newby to General Jeudwine. This is a unique document in the sense that it is the only army to army letter (not facsimile), in Rawlinson's files. How it got there and Rawlinson's response is not known.

<sup>194</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Carden, [once Hessenhauer], (26<sup>th</sup> April 1918).

realising the political significance of his simple actions contributed intuitively to the wider political aims of the hierarchy.

Although chaplains did encounter military protocol and some Catholic bureaucracy they were not too tightly harnessed. When the Army requested secular duties of Catholic chaplains, wily clergy deferred and then calculated the consequences of doing so. Chaplains, as everyone else in the armed forces could not disobey legitimate orders from an Army authority. Similarly, no such order could be made unless it was correct within agreed procedures which were over-arched by Kings Regulations. This included non-interference in Catholic services. For both parties, the distance between Army orders and chaplaincy acquiescence was jealously protected by Rawlinson.

Censorship signified the crossing of the line from spiritual to secular. Although censorship was only recorded by Fr Staniforth, this case acts as an exemplar for other secular demands made on chaplains in other areas:

The CO here insists on the chaplains taking it in turns to act as Chief Censor and it is put in Orders. The Chief Censor is supposed to apportion a number of letters to certain Officers deputed to act as censors. Now I am willing to take a share in censoring, when it is necessary, & when it does not conflict with my proper duties: but I do not quite see why a chaplain should be appointed in a kind of official manner which lie outside his own proper sphere: especially when it involves a kind of supervision over other officers.<sup>195</sup>

Staniforth crystallised the Catholic position. Wishing to act in accordance with the Commanding Officers mandate, he could not in conscience accept that this was a proper function for a Catholic chaplain, yet he wanted to comply. He pointed to the dangers of upsetting other officers whilst prepared to do his share, but his main concern was the disruption to his 'proper duties' which were spiritual. This was a situation where the CO did not understand the Catholic position, but to criticise the CO is harsh as from his perspective he was treating all officers equally. The problem was lack of officer training, and familiarity in relationships with the various and different religious bodies. From a secular position it may seem incongruous that a senior military man had to consider the sensitivities of a Catholic priest in the bloodiest of wars. The fact was that the great majority of the Army Commanders, including Haig, eventually learned to accept and benefit from the work of chaplains. Chaplains were engaged in a spiritual war of greater significance than a material one, but there was also a need to appreciate the military. Both parties were loyal to their respective objectives and both wanted victory. Censorship was an isolated event, yet the principles hold true for all the

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<sup>195</sup> DAA, 3231, Staniforth to Rawlinson, (1<sup>st</sup> November 1916).

secular incursions into a Catholic chaplain's role. Wanting to assist was a natural thing to do for one's comrades, and the allied victory was desperately desired by all, but there was a dividing line and chaplains automatically knew where that line was drawn.

Accompanying the rations offered opportunities for chaplains to engage physically with the men. It also came at great risk and was by no means obligatory. If chaplains attended or helped with this necessary and eventful job, the advantages gained were both physical and symbolic. They bridged the gap between the rear and the Front, and of chaplains with soldiers. Gillett took occasional advantage:

Tramped over the old battlefields of Sept 1916 again and reconstructed the scene. Followed the line of the track up to Thiepval [where his original Liverpool Irish battalion had been decimated], dead still lying about – trenches one mass of equipment and broken arms and ammunition. Tramped up with the rations to Grandcourt setting off about 7pm and getting back about midnight. Adding to the excitement one or two shells came over, but no one caught. In the dark we tramped over anything and everything – dead bodies lining the road side.<sup>196</sup>

Steuart also was involved on one occasion: 'Went up at night to Ypres with rations. Night fairly quiet, but we were held up for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour at a very dangerous corner, where the Boche was putting over 9.5s, most of which burst about 100 yards from us. Arrived back at Erie Camp at 2:30 a.m.'<sup>197</sup> The example below, painted by Lesley Walker SJ, shows men bringing up the rations to the Front line at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915. He painted the scene on the spot, evidently recognising the value of the rations arrival. **Illustration 20**<sup>198</sup>



<sup>196</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (9<sup>th</sup> February 1917).

<sup>197</sup> JLA, Steuart Diaries, (29<sup>th</sup> June 1917).

<sup>198</sup> JLA, Walker Paintings, 'In the Fire Trench. Neuve Chapelle', (February 1916).

Combat training did not apply to chaplains. Army tactics for a forthcoming attack, bayonet skills, shooting practice, regimental and brigade sports et al., and the often despised Church Parades and drill, were confined to the military. Safety training was mandatory for all, such as gas avoidance and the management of breathing apparatus: 'Went to St. Martin's gas school at 9am. Two very interesting lectures'.<sup>199</sup> These activities kept the actual rest period of soldiers who were out of the line to a minimum. Rest periods were something of a misnomer for fighting men. They were kept fit and busy by logistical tasks such as road and railway building and repair, trench digging, filling sand bags, and a variety of other mundane but necessary tasks. Chaplains were not involved in the detail although they could exploit the opportunities for delivering their services behind the lines.

On occasions chaplains acted as stretcher bearers and even prisoner escorts. Fr Gillett reported that: 'German prisoners were made to do the heavy stretcher bearing and very keen to work, they work. Evidently they were glad to be out of the firing line. Took a prisoner down to a cage myself - to the amusement of overlookers'.<sup>200</sup> Gillett now with the stretcher bearers: 'Accompanied the MO's (sic) stretcher bearers to pick up treatment of the wounded, first aid'.<sup>201</sup> These isolated examples demonstrate that these supportive manual activities, although of little practical help, were nonetheless meaningful gestures.

Catholic chaplains' special talents, which were encouraged and developed in seminary, were offered to good effect to assist the Army and their co-religionists. They readily volunteered their linguistic skills. Fr Prevost stated: 'I say Mass for the German prisoners and preach in German. I thought I could never do it but German has come back to me'.<sup>202</sup> Sometimes being an expert was not a requirement: 'Your knowledge of German will be useful in almost any sphere, even if it is only to point out to the enemy the way to the cages'.<sup>203</sup> Others seeking to volunteer were not needed: 'We have already quite a good supply of chaplains that have a really good knowledge of Italian'.<sup>204</sup> The Universal Catholic Church, with its missionary and educational traditions, extended beyond continental Europe where many of the priests had also studied. Two Jesuits killed in action were Frs Hartigan and Bergin, both capable in Arabic: '[Michael Bergin] His thorough knowledge of French and Arabic means that he will be a great loss to our Syrian Mission'<sup>205</sup> and: '[Austin Hartigan] He had an unusually

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<sup>199</sup> JDA, Steuart Diaries, (11<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>200</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (17<sup>th</sup> February 1917).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., (12<sup>th</sup> September 1916).

<sup>202</sup> DAA, 3235, Prevost to Rawlinson, (9<sup>th</sup> May 1917). Prevost, born in Switzerland, could speak both French and German.

<sup>203</sup> DAA, 3235, Rawlinson to Scully, (2<sup>nd</sup> February 1919).

<sup>204</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Darvell, (7<sup>th</sup> January 1918).

<sup>205</sup> JAD, Obituary in *Our Past*, 1919.

brilliant career at the University of Beirut where he obtained a Doctorate of oriental letters as he was proficient in Arabic'.<sup>206</sup> It was not only the Society of Jesus but also diocesan priests who contributed: 'I have two priests who have volunteered for Russia, Frs Phelan and Day. Fr Phelan [Salford Diocese] has lived in Russia for some years and speaks Russian'.<sup>207</sup> Whilst returning to the Western Front, Fr Scannell using the colloquialisms of the time informed Rawlinson that: 'I have succeeded in getting a number of phrases translated into Chinese. [To assist with Confessions] I have been rather interested in the 'Chinks'<sup>208</sup> for some time and found a fair number of Catholics among them'.<sup>209</sup> Gillett, a French speaker, liaised between the French clergy and British soldiers: 'In the evening Bishop addresses my soldiers and I interpret for him and then after gives short Benediction. He speaks of the impression the English Catholic soldiers have made in France and thanks the brave men for all they are doing'.<sup>210</sup> Similarly, Steuart used his knowledge of the German language to tackle German prisoners: 'Hardie & Sutherland, severe shell-shock. Miserable time. Casualties coming in. Acted as interpreter for 4 prisoners'.<sup>211</sup> Simple interpretation caused no great conflict between military and spiritual responsibilities. Stuart again: 'About 9am shelled out of C Coys. billets, & again had to take to the fields. Sent for by Brigadier of 105th Brigade to question 2 Boche prisoners'.<sup>212</sup> However, Steuart by acting as interrogator chronicled a more serious action which elevated his role uncomfortably towards military intelligence. He repeated this exploit: 'Boche trenches smashed flat. Many must have been buried in their dugouts. Strange to look back and see Arras behind us. Very few dead Boche lying about. About 7 or 8 thousand prisoners. Occupied in interrogating prisoners'.<sup>213</sup> Claiming to question and to interrogate prisoners suggested a higher plane of activity than simple interpretation. Such military tasks were outside his remit and may be interpreted as tending towards the soldier-priest ethos. The probability, in character with Steuart's grandiose outlook on life, is that he was the translator rather than the skilled military intelligence officer that he wanted to represent himself as. Steuart was anxious to receive military recognition as his diaries indicate: 'Houston tells me that his

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> DAA, 3231, Rawlinson to Monk, (18<sup>th</sup> April 1919).

<sup>208</sup> This is an unfortunate term in today's terms but was in common usage. Daryl Klein, *With The Chinks: The Chinese Labour Corps* (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press and the IWM, reprinted in 2009. Original was undated, but almost certainly in the 1920s), is a case in point.

<sup>209</sup> DAA, 3235, Scannell to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> June 1918).

<sup>210</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (26th June 1917).

<sup>211</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (1st August 1917).

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., (16<sup>th</sup> October 1918).

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., (10th April 1917).

recommendation of me for an MC has been reduced by a Brigade to a mention! I have certainly had pretty rough luck throughout'.<sup>214</sup>

There were other areas where a priest's talents could help. Fr Gill, an eminent Cambridge qualified scientist before the war in the field of physics, invented a signalling machine. His invention probably came too late: 'I enclose copy of GRO 5131 with regards to inventions, which may interest you. I do not know if anything further has taken place with regard to your suggestion for signals'.<sup>215</sup> Science had been advancing rapidly in seminary education.

The Catholic chaplaincy body was rich with men from educational backgrounds. Frs Baines and O'Herlihy, for example, had both been professors in Diocesan and Religious order colleges respectively.<sup>216</sup> In 1918 a radical plan was introduced by the Army called, 'The Educational Training Scheme' with two stated purposes. First was the rather haughty aspiration: 'To give the men a wider view of their duties as citizens of the British Empire', and the second was a valid and admirable intention: 'To help men in their work after the war'.<sup>217</sup> These two ambitions encapsulate the contemporary mentality being at the same time both pompous and paternal. The clergy were quick to reciprocate with Fr Plater behind the scheme. He wrote to Rawlinson enlisting support and a cross section of the volunteers has been collated in Table 4 below.

**Table 4**

<u>Fr T Molloy</u> – Teacher 7 years – English Literature, European History
<u>Fr J Byrne-O'Connell</u> – Teacher 3 years – Moral and Mental Science, Philosophy
<u>Fr O Claeys</u> – Teacher 10 years – Social Science
<u>Fr A Johnston</u> – Teacher/Lecturer 24 years – Talks to working men, Labour Questions, Temperance, and History
<u>Fr W J Brown</u> – Teacher 6 years – Value of Education, Historical Geography, Citizenship, French, Labour Questions, Specialist in Catholic Social Guild subjects

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., (26<sup>th</sup> February 1919).

<sup>215</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Gill, (8<sup>th</sup> October 1918).

<sup>216</sup> Baines from Liverpool Diocese was a professor at Ushaw Seminary College. O'Herlihy was a professor and Cistercian monk at St. Joseph's College, Roscrea Abbey, Tipperary.

<sup>217</sup> DAA, Ephemera. Published by British Army GHQ in France, (8<sup>th</sup> March 1918).

<sup>218</sup> DAA, Ephemera. This list is a truncated version of the original which was anonymously compiled.

Catholic participation anticipated that this part of the scheme would be a Catholic enterprise. The subjects mentioned were the offerings to the men and were discharged by the named priest, they are instilled with Catholic social teaching.

### **Conclusion**

Devotional commitments were subjected to the same influences as Mass and the Sacraments summarised in chapter three. Pastoral activities were the remit of a chaplain's individual prioritisation and were performed appropriately. They had their origins in parish work back home, albeit in very different circumstances. It is the secular elements drawn out in this chapter that reveal much about Catholic chaplains and Catholicism in general. Catholic chaplaincy asserted its distinction from other denominations by its refusal to jeopardise its spiritual intent by secular activities. They were willing to provide intellectual support and did so without coercion, but these duties were additional to, and not instead of, their religious missions. By volunteering their educational acumen they assisted the British cause and also supported the wider Catholic ambition of cementing secular loyalty to the Crown. How chaplains conducted themselves with the authorities became visible to Fr Rawlinson and assisted in his knowledge in building an unofficial team of trusted men to implement English Catholic strategy. A good chaplain needed to be seen as co-operative by both troops and the authorities. In return, they had to recognise that the Catholic chaplaincy mandate to distinguish between the secular and spiritual was based on tradition, morality, and effectiveness. The dismissive and unfair evaluation of chaplains from other denominations as being vendors of buns, at the expense of delivering spiritual sustenance, was not an option for Catholic chaplains.

# Chapter 5

## The Irish Question

### Irish Chaplains at the Front

## POLITICAL AND RACIAL PREJUDICE

Formation and religion, as sections one and two, have been explained. But what was it like for chaplains at the human level at war? Furthermore, did bishops with their own responsibilities for the wider Catholic world seek to influence their chaplains beyond spiritual matters? The third section explores the experiences of chaplains both as human beings and as instruments of political intrigue. The Irish experience will be examined in this chapter, and the English equivalent in the next.

It is important for balance to understand both the Irish and English episcopal reactions to these new crises and how they affected chaplains. The English Catholic hierarchical ambitions, which are explored in the next chapter, are very different from the response of the Irish prelates. It will be demonstrated that Irish chaplains who were commissioned into the British Army in France and Belgium were directly affected only by English Catholic hierarchical intentions.

Irish-born chaplains volunteering directly from Ireland, or from other British locations, were exposed or subjected to prejudice and discrimination. Some of these attitudes were based on ignorance or racism, but the majority were generated through a sense of distrust. Personal relations between many English and Irish chaplains had been established before the war through shared education or missionary experiences, and these connections were commonly amicable. Political events exerted pressure to this cordiality, and as the war progressed, the Irish came under suspicion from the Army and aspects of English Catholicism. This chapter explores what happened in Ireland that may have affected matters, and asks if the Irish clergy at home contributed to affairs, or was it simply that ancient anti-Irish prejudices re-emerged? Were Irish chaplains a fifth column waiting to undermine English efforts, or were they merely victims of English Catholic ambition? Importantly, when viewed from a neutral perspective, was there an English over-reaction which tells us more about English frailties than supposed Irish disloyalty? Examples will be examined to establish why such fears were generated and examine their purpose and assess their accuracy.



After the Dublin Rising in 1916, and later the Conscription Crisis and dwindling voluntary recruitment, attitudes by the English authorities hardened towards the Irish. The English distrust of Catholics was never far below the surface and at this time was expressed as disloyalty to the British cause. The deteriorating political and military scenarios after 1916 increased the pressure on internal British relations. Ireland was considered the problem, and the 'Irish Question' resurfaced.<sup>1</sup> All Catholic chaplains in the British Army were under effective English Catholic hierarchical control through Cardinal Bourne up to late 1917, and from 1918 by *Episcopus Castrensis* Keatinge. In assuaging the English Catholic ambition of displaying overt loyalty to the Crown, the Principal Catholic Chaplain Rawlinson, monitored and acted upon any suspicion of political involvement of Catholic chaplains. This in reality meant Irish Catholic chaplains. This chapter examines how these tensions played out at the personal and hierarchical levels, and concludes that rather than being the 'Irish Question', what emerges could properly be called the 'English Question'. This notion will be examined in detail.

At the start of the conflict, the political position of the bulk of the Irish hierarchy was located in a desire for Home Rule within the British Empire. It can be expressed in the leader of the Irish Party's<sup>2</sup> terms: 'John Redmond was profoundly conscious of Britain as the centre of a great empire in which Ireland held an honoured place and he found no contradiction in declaring that Irish roots were in the imperial as well as the national'.<sup>3</sup> Cardinal Logue, senior prelate for all Ireland, followed the Redmond model being both pro-Empire and pro-Irish political self-determination. His stance was echoed by the majority of Irish bishops. There were two notable exceptions. Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick was staunchly anti-Redmond and opposed him throughout the war, particularly his recruitment campaigns for the British Army. O'Dwyer was in tune with the Pope's insistence on peace which made him a natural opponent to Redmond. The second was Bishop Walsh of Dublin, but he had taken the decision to withdraw from the political limelight before the war started and was not at this time in good health. In general, there was no early cause of episcopal disloyalty; nonetheless, the Irish bishops were living through a period of accelerating political change not of their own making, so that by the end of the war their position had shifted. How much had things changed? Did the Irish clergy and bishops at home have different agendas to Irish chaplains at war? Was there really any justifiable cause for English fears of disloyalty?

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<sup>1</sup> Examples: Paul Adelman, *Great Britain and the Irish Question, 1800-1922* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001), Goldwin Smith, *Irish History and the Irish Question* (Charleston: BiblioLife, 2009), and O. A. Howland, *The Irish Problem* (Charleston: BiblioLife 2009).

<sup>2</sup> A shortened and popular version of the I. P. P., the Irish Parliamentary Party.

<sup>3</sup> T. P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), p. 37.

The Irish episcopacy and clergy were influenced by the political and revolutionary nature of Irish life emerging in Ireland. After events in Dublin at Easter 1916, the political situation started to alter so that by the summer of 1916: 'the Catholic Church was little by little adapting itself to a new political environment'<sup>4</sup> which meant that: 'The Easter Rising and British war policy had made two victims in Ireland, the Nationalist Party and the war effort'.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent political and military measures further reduced the Irish war venture as recruitment into the British Army diminished and opposition to conscription grew. Recruitment had been encouraged by most bishops, but the change in Irish attitudes to the war was being sensed and taken into episcopal reckoning. The bishops had played their part as loyal members of the Empire in the early years, but became increasingly receptive to the views of the younger clergy and congregations. With the notable exception of O'Dwyer, this was not the bishops driving through anti-recruitment policies or philosophies, but responding to the general climate of mistrust towards the British after mid-1916. The population was increasingly incensed by the protracted and systematic executions of the failed leaders and the political impotence of the Irish Party. As Lee claims: 'The conviction that Redmond had been out-manoeuvred by perfidious Albion further sapped his authority in Ireland',<sup>6</sup> and continued with the: 'DORA, imprisonment, exile for 2,000 Irishmen in Wales, crumbling faith in England's credibility and more, ensured that empathy with the British cause eroded resulting in a curtailment of mobilisation'.<sup>7</sup> Lee observed that recruitment had been declining since 1915: 'it seems that the enthusiasm for the war was never as widespread in nationalist Ireland as the media and pro-war elements suggested. It waned to virtual vanishing point from the autumn of 1915'.<sup>8</sup> This picture of faltering recruitment to the British Army was falsified by *The Tablet* which operated as an organ for English Catholicism, despite having originated in Dublin. In its regular reviews of Ireland, its coverage had a distinctly acute bias towards those bishops who were favourable to the war, and who published Lenten Pastoral Letters. Thus, bishops O'Donnell, Browne, and McHugh, were represented as the total Irish bishops' stance, when in reality the other twenty-four bishops' views and Pastoral Letters, which were less enthusiastic towards the war, were in effect censored. English Catholic ambition was the determining factor at the expense of the truthful representation of Irish co-religionists.

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<sup>4</sup> Aan de Weil, *The Catholic Church in Ireland 1914-1918*, p. 127.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Joe Lee, *Ireland 1912-85 Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., *Ireland 1912-85*, p. 29. Lee casts doubt on the integrity of historians claiming public support for the rebels as a 'romantic assumption'. He points out that censorship and news black-outs meant that reliable public opinion could not have formed at the time, and was not therefore, hostile to the rebels until later. The confusion and daily rumour mill is also evident in Morrissey, *From Easter Week to Flanders Field*, p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> Lee, *Ireland 1912-85*, p. 24.

Could the bishops be accused of disloyalty when they eventually joined forces to merely acquiesce on recruitment and oppose conscription from 1917? The argument from an English military perspective has credence, but it should be balanced against the realities of the Irish economy which was distinctively agricultural and rural. To understand the Irish position it is necessary to appraise Ireland's historic role as an exporter of animals, people, and foodstuffs to Britain. This arrangement was always beneficial to England but became vital to the British war effort. First, as Lloyd George admitted, conscription for Ireland should be postponed because: 'These men are producing food that we badly need'.<sup>9</sup> These men meaning the Irish labourer, who had not yet enlisted, could not be in two places at the same time. The farm in rural Ireland during the war was a responsible and profitable place to work. To protect agriculture, as Lloyd George confirmed, Irish farm labourers should have been treated in much the same way that many reserved occupations were in the rest of Britain.<sup>10</sup> It suited Britain to have a reliable supply of food on its own doorstep with the submarine threat escalating. The Irish episcopacy united on the issue of food production as early as February 1917. Under the banner: 'The Peoples Need, the Farmers Duty – Bishops on the Crisis', was signed by a number of bishops and Cardinal Logue.<sup>11</sup> Well into 1918 local newspapers continued this campaign, which was a shared Irish and English concern, at a time when separation and disloyalty were working their way further into popular consciousness. Food was a serious issue for both Ireland and England. On January 14<sup>th</sup> 1916 a Catholic newspaper in England asked: 'Are we sure to have enough food to meet our requirements, supposing the war to continue another two years?'<sup>12</sup> At the local Irish level, efforts to increase production produced proposals such as the compulsory purchase of urban land scheme, known as the: 'Adopt an Allotment Scheme' by the Thurles Urban Council, County Tipperary.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, it was the hierarchy's weight that was required behind food production and economies in consumption. In England, Archbishop Whiteside of Liverpool announced that: 'There is considerable anxiety throughout the country regarding the supply of food and more particularly breadstuffs [...] as the co-operation of the Catholic clergy is sought in this campaign, [The Proclamation on National Economy in Bread], I would ask you to impress upon your people the duty of loyal obedience to the Crown'.<sup>14</sup> Food anxieties lessened as the submarine menace declined into 1918, coincidental with the heightening tensions in Ireland's political climate. The Irish episcopacy

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<sup>9</sup> Aan de Weil, *The Catholic Church in Ireland 1914-1918*, p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> This was not official policy for Irish agriculture. Haphazard recruiting drives continued amongst all the Irish population.

<sup>11</sup> *Tipperary Nationalist*, 10<sup>th</sup> February 1917.

<sup>12</sup> *Catholic Times and Catholic Opinion*, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1916.

<sup>13</sup> *Tipperary Nationalist*, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1917.

<sup>14</sup> LAA, Lenten Pastoral Letter from Archbishop Whiteside to Clergy, 10th May 1917.

had shown loyalty to both Irish and English consumers by actively campaigning for increasing agricultural production, even at the expense of reduced numbers of volunteers and resistance to conscription.<sup>15</sup> Food production may well be seen as a convenient device for keeping men on the farm but its value to hard pressed civilians should not be ignored. Rural societies have little option than produce food when there is no other means of economic survival as recent Irish history demonstrated all too well, consequently the bishops merely reflected the mood and reality of the day.

The danger of British defeat on the Western Front intensified in early 1918; consequently conscription took on a new urgency for the Army. The Irish were in internal political turmoil which was itself encapsulated in a vacuum by the exigencies of international war. This suited Britain's politicians. They offered Ireland more promises of Home Rule whilst keeping the flow of men into the Army, erratic though it had become. This so-called 'dual policy' is an example of this government's duplicity.<sup>16</sup> The Military Service Bill (Conscription for Ireland) was passed, yet not implemented until the House of Commons had granted a Home Rule Bill. In this political gambit, the idea was to assuage British public opinion, which was now hostile to Ireland's exemption from conscription, and to simultaneously satisfy Irish aspirations. Its real purpose was to fob off the reality of separation and prepare the way for a deal on Irish recruitment by force. Henry Duke the Secretary of State for Ireland and Lloyd George had masterminded another attempt to ignore Irish opinion, which was now totally disenchanted with British intentions.<sup>17</sup> Lloyd George had changed his position from early 1916 when he had stated that: 'If you passed the act you would only get 160,000 men and you would get them at the point of a bayonet'.<sup>18</sup> The Dublin Rising, for all its inadequacies, had demonstrated how a few determined Irishmen, even if doomed to eventual failure, could cause havoc to British rule. Lloyd George had taken note, but was prepared to take the risk as British casualties escalated in the summer of 1918. Fortunately, the war ended before coercion took place.

By 1918, with these latest political shenanigans from Westminster, and the continuing need for food, combined with a population that was becoming radicalised, it was no surprise that the Irish episcopacy had turned inwards to purely Irish affairs. Any claim of their disloyalty during the war is unsubstantiated and other hypotheses will now be explored.

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<sup>15</sup> There were other factors in relation to opposing conscription, many of them aggravated by the reasons given by Lee, *Ireland 1912-85*, above. Conscription in particular aroused nationalist passions and English fears of armed resistance.

<sup>16</sup> Aan de Weil, *The Catholic Church in Ireland 1914-1918*, p.36.

<sup>17</sup> DAA, Ephemera. Arguments between Logue and Plunkett, (6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> August 1918). Appendix 16.

<sup>18</sup> Aan de Wiel, *The Catholic Church in Ireland 1914-1918*, p. 36.

Did the idea of disloyalty spring from a long held prejudice about Catholic clergy and the fear of Roman Church domination? The perceived Roman threat was articulated through a mistrust of the Catholic clergy and this question occupied Unionists to whom it was deeply embedded into their psyche aroused, as they saw it, by the threat of Home Rule. Did Irish chaplains secretly harbour disloyal sentiments and if so, to what degree? There are two ways of answering these questions. The first examines what was happening to the priesthood in Ireland at home. The second line of enquiry looks at evidence from the Front.

In Ireland, the situation was informed by an examination of police 'Intelligence Notes' from 1913 and particularly for 1915-1916. The reality of Ireland being under constant surveillance is itself indicative of the suppression which Ireland endured. This intensified under DORA and did little to foster Irish support for the British cause. At times the surveillance was disproportionate to the need. For instance, the scale of political involvement of priests in 1915, indicated that they were reported on 48 occasions, which considering the period and number of priests, determines a figure of less than 1.5% which is negligible. Some of the claims were petty but others did include anti-recruitment, anti-conscription, and pro-Irish Volunteer content. The most extreme was Fr Coyle in Fintona Catholic Church County Tyrone when he: 'Told a recruiting officer that he would give him no assistance and that he would rather be under German rule than English'.<sup>19</sup> In English eyes that is about as disloyal as can be imagined. A comment attached to Coyle's stance indicates the episcopal relationship with the police and the clergy: 'The action of this clergyman has been brought to the notice of the Bishop'.<sup>20</sup> From this it is safe to assume that episcopal restraint was applied. The report on: 'Activities of Political Societies' in March 1916 concluded: '....with the exception of some priests, nationalists of respectable position in the provinces hold aloof from the Irish Volunteers'.<sup>21</sup> There is nothing from bishops or priests in 1915 that ought to have any repercussions on Irish chaplains. Even Fr Coyle's obstinacy was an isolated event which remained in the hands of the intelligence services and his bishop.

Any reaction to the events at Easter in Dublin would be reflected in the clergy's behaviour in the country, and was closely monitored. Rebellious attitudes at home might be echoed in the trenches. Despite events in the capital, analysis of the Police reports following the 1916 Dublin Rising suggests Ireland remained a placid country. King's County (now Offaly) for example reported that: 'some of the younger RC clergy, with a few exceptions, gave expression to the Sinn Fein views, but the older Parish Priests were loyal and quite opposed to

<sup>19</sup> B. MacGiolla Choille, *Intelligence Notes 1913-1916* (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair 1966), p. 168.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. In remarks column.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

Sinn Fein'.<sup>22</sup> In Kilkenny a similar story: 'The general attitude of the RC clergy was passive, except for Fr Delahunty of Callan who delivered a violent speech against recruiting. The Religious orders did not show any sympathy with the movement'.<sup>23</sup> In County Mayo: 'The RC clergy, with few exceptions, showed no sympathy for the movement. 8 of the parochial clergy are known to have Sinn Fein views, but only 4 of them publicly identified themselves with the movement. 2 members of the Augustinian Order are also accredited with holding Sinn Fein views'.<sup>24</sup> In Cork, it was simply stated that: 'The RC clergy, with few exceptions, were in sympathy with the rebels, but only in a couple of instances were there pronounced Sinn Fein views'.<sup>25</sup> The same response was reported from all the Ulster counties although Dublin is not included in the report. Carlow typifies the rural response in Police Notes for 1916:

Political societies in the county were not very active during the year and they have little weight or influence with the people.... [Rebellion] At first the feeling of the people generally was against the movement, but later the rebels attracted a good deal of sympathy. The RC clergy took up no attitudes in the matter and did not give expression to any pronounced Sinn Fein views. Recruiting for the Army, which has been very good, has now practically ceased, and it is not expected that many more will join until compelled to do so.<sup>26</sup>

The general parish clergy were sympathetic but not politically active, doing little to encourage the concept of a clerical conspiratorial hot-bed of political intrigue and unrest, or a breeding ground for radicalism. If Aan de Wiel is correct, any such impulses were more likely to be present in the seminarians at Maynooth: 'Younger priests [at Maynooth seminary] were more inspired by the ideals of the Easter Rising than by war in Europe'.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, it is difficult to imagine how this impacted upon chaplains in the firing line; nationalist ideals were more likely to be applicable to events in post-1919 Ireland. Maynooth will be shown to have no political imprint in the war, but would appear later as a barometer for both Irish and English class snobbishness.

Both Irish clergy and episcopacy did shift towards political radicalism as the decade progressed and the hopes for a constitutional settlement failed to transpire. The events of 1916 marked the turning point for Catholic action and these essences were detected and will soon be reflected by some in the trenches. The picture was not linear or complete, and many were slow to change their opinions. This was not a revolution but an evolution. As the bishops

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 208. Callan is between Kilkenny and Clonmel. Kilkenny town was home to a large Dominican community.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>27</sup> Aan de Wiel, *The Catholic Church in Ireland 1914-1918*, p. 127.

gently moved away from Redmond, this progression marks the start of a political sea-change, encouraged by a backlash to British obduracy and lack of compassion. If bishops and clergy at home were not culpable for inciting disloyalty claims, what caused distrust?

Bowman concluded that in the Irish soldiers' experiences: 'Post-1916 events in Ireland appear to have soured attitudes to Irish soldiers. While there is little evidence to suggest that soldiers in Irish units felt any sympathy for the Sinn Fein movements, Irish battalions were treated with mistrust by other units'.<sup>28</sup> This was an unjust position for Irish soldiers to contend with, as many of them had themselves a loathing for Sinn Feiners at this time. This letter to *The Liverpool Catholic Herald*, [A Captain's Letter] explains the Irish troops' dilemma:

In the trenches the men regard Sinn Fein with a bitterness they cannot express. When hundreds of thousands of Irishmen were fighting for their lives against superior odds, they begin an insurrection, the effect of which was to keep at home reinforcements sorely needed in France, and in doing so consigned to death thousands of Irish soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

The developing political situation in Ireland was understood; politics permeated the trenches, even if such intrusions were not systematic, conspiratorial, public, or threatening. Fr Page, an English chaplain with the Irish Jesuit Province explained his dilemma: 'Now I simply detest Sinn Fein and hate the way that England is spoken of in Ireland'.<sup>30</sup> Page's English nationalism had become offended by the changes he had witnessed on leave in Ireland, and read about in France. The rise of Irish nationalism and republicanism, forced Page to reject not only Sinn Fein but Ireland too: 'My last Provincial [Irish] recognised that a full-blooded Englishman was out of place in Ireland [...] I certainly have no desire to go back to that country again and intend to change Provinces'.<sup>31</sup>

Some Irish chaplains did display Sinn Fein sympathies which generated anti-Irish feelings in the officer class. Moreover, they were also mistrusted by some of their fellow Catholic chaplains, even Irish ones, as will become apparent. Fr Hessenhauer, an English chaplain, wrote: 'I am sorry to trouble you again about Father Shaw but he really is the limit. He does nothing but sits at home and read the *Irish Independent*<sup>32</sup> being a Sinn Feiner.... he is a perfect dud...'.<sup>33</sup> A mild rebuke, yet it does indicate a growing awareness of Irish chaplain politicisation and English chaplaincy responses after 1916, prior to this date there was no

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<sup>28</sup> Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War*, p. 205.

<sup>29</sup> *The Liverpool Catholic Herald*, (20th October 1917).

<sup>30</sup> DAA, 3235, Page to Rawlinson, (undated).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Page was later transferred and never returned to Ireland.

<sup>32</sup> Hessenhauer was mistaken. The *Irish Independent* was a Home Rule supporter. Lee, *Ireland 1912-85*, p. 29.

<sup>33</sup> DAA, Hessenhauer to Rawlinson, (11<sup>th</sup> July 1916).

evidence of political interest. This letter had a secondary purpose as it forewarned Rawlinson of a threat to stability in relations with the Army.

The Rising generated implications for Irish Catholic chaplains preparing for the Somme offensive. Fr Gill lamented:

We can't think of anything else but the terrible things that have been going on in Dublin. Please God it is over now and that the authorities will use as much tact as possible in dealing with it. Nothing has affected Irishmen out here more than this....I pity the poor young fools who got entangled into so horrible an affair.<sup>34</sup>

This is an interesting statement for four main reasons. Firstly it emphasised the impact that the Rising had on Irish troops. Secondly it deemed the rebels young fools and does not assign courage or nobility to their efforts, qualities which were often attributed to the Republicans in the fighting. Thirdly, it emphasised the forlorn appeal for tact. Finally, this example from Fr Gill demonstrates the advantages of using primary sources written at the time. In a later variant Gill either forgot these comments, or preferred a different interpretation, when he claimed: 'On the whole the event created very little comment'.<sup>35</sup> The change in memory by Gill remains a mystery to be explored. He does find an ally in one historian who claimed: 'In some Irish battalions, news of the Rising had little impact', but significantly the evidence is based on: 'Irish officers being interviewed long after the war'.<sup>36</sup> Recollections of this type as a basis for interpretation have been eschewed as unreliable, being substituted by new evidence from the trenches.

Disloyalty remains unproven, yet it did re-energise anti-Irish rhetoric of a racist nature. The concept of racism from a contemporary standpoint presents problems yet cannot be ignored. Eriksen contends that: 'The term race has dubious descriptive value'.<sup>37</sup> He is alluding to the idea that there has been so much intermingling of peoples that it is difficult to deconstruct race origins. The term racism is quite different and is employed deliberately. It may be argued that the concept of racism is anachronistic and that this type of language was commonplace across all classes in this era. This is muddled thinking. The deliberate separation of individuals or groups from the mainstream by their race is invariably embarked upon as a means of dispatching scorn, contempt, and ridicule, and to influence the power dynamics within sections of society. It was equally repugnant then as it is now, even allowing for the time differential. Looking at people from their own shoes, which is a core requirement

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<sup>34</sup> DAA, Gill to Rawlinson, (3<sup>rd</sup> May 1916), with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Irish Rifles.

<sup>35</sup> JAD, CHP1/27. Gill Diaries 1922.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard, in Cecil and Liddle, *Facing Armageddon*, p. 262.

<sup>37</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, p. 4.



of this study, does not equate to sanitising their attitudes. Those who held these views did so for personal or class advantage. It was not simply the words used but the intent derived from their usage. When stereotyping on cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious grounds, the Irish did not suffer alone, Maltese, and Lancashire chaplains also endured such adverse comments, but the Irish bore the brunt as Curtis explains: 'Irish Celts [were seen as] a sub-race'.<sup>38</sup>

The 'Irish Question' refused to disappear. But what was the 'Irish Question'? The term: 'The Irish Question', or 'The Irish Problem', is deliberately utilised. It is the language of the propagandist and a feature of the colonial experience, containing elements of personal anti-Irish prejudice, and more worryingly, elements of systematic, deliberate, and institutional anti-Irishness. It is present in many colonial or imperial mindsets. It has been shown to be based on race earlier though the attitudes of Mrs Charlton, and continued at the Front as will become apparent. Racism is often fortified by cultural judgements, where the 'superior' coloniser dismisses or ridicules the 'inferior' colonised, or as Said has remarked: '[...] the vocabulary [...] of imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as "inferior" or "subject races", "subordinate peoples", "dependency" [...].[...] notions about culture were clarified, reinforced, criticised, or rejected'.<sup>39</sup> The 'Irish Question' may have racial components but it extends to other imperial motivations. It is provocative, shifting the blame for any difficulty or conflict directly on to Ireland. To transfer culpability onto the victim, allows the victor to resume the superior position, and effectively ignore the blamed party. With this preface, the Irish desire for self-determination for example, can be explained away as the response of an ungrateful nation with the Irish being seen as: 'errant, troublesome, and ungrateful subjects or children, by some in Britain and some British officers in action'.<sup>40</sup> Brigadier W. Carden Roe of the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Irish Rifles typified this condescending, albeit somewhat benign attitude towards the Irish soldier: 'The Irish soldier is undoubtedly a pleasant fellow to deal with. He gives a certain amount of trouble at times, but there is no malice behind it: it rather resembles the behaviour of a naughty child'.<sup>41</sup> Condescension, assumed cultural superiority, and mistrust, are all part of the Irish Question.

Anti-Irish racism is hardly a new phenomenon: 'From that time [1171] an amazingly persistent cultural attitude existed toward Ireland as a place whose habitants were a barbarian

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<sup>38</sup> Liz Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles Publishing, 1971).

<sup>39</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>40</sup> Timothy Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003), p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

and degenerate race'.<sup>42</sup> Some seven hundred and fifty years later its persistence was confirmed at the Front. Fr Oddie, an Oratorian priest, displayed extraordinary unprovoked outbursts against Irish chaplains which seem starkly and simply racist. Amongst the few chaplains to exhibit racism, he delivered the most extreme examples of gratuitous anti-Irish rhetoric. Irish Catholics were not alone, he also ranted about Protestant clergy. Religious bigotry and anti-Irish sentiment are bedfellows from the pen of this malevolent zealot. Of many of his rants:

If you are sending a priest, would it be possible to send someone who is not a wild, rabid and rough Irishman? Fr Kennedy of the 26<sup>th</sup> Highland Brigade is very holy and very good but frightfully Irish. He disapproves of me strongly (I think) liaison is difficult as a consequence. Fr Walshe is easier to get on with but he also disapproves of me and is also very Irish. I am at present in a rather forlorn minority. Fr Doherty is a splendid little chap, but he seems to avoid the society of us, and we hardly ever see him. I beg you not to send another rough Irishman to this Division.<sup>43</sup>

There is a direct correlation between Oddie's attitudes and that of the leader of his Religious order. As an Oratorian, he was trained at Brompton, the London centre for Oratorians, as distinct from Newman's Birmingham foundation. The founder of Brompton was William Frederick Faber, an ex-Anglican, and was noted for his anti-Irish remarks such as: 'The Irish are swamping us, they are rude and unruly'.<sup>44</sup> These formative influences were now exposed in chaplaincy spheres in a flagrant and hostile manner and owe much to Faber's social status: 'the ex-Anglicans, with their bourgeois or gentry susceptibilities'.<sup>45</sup> Oddie might have derived his attitudes from a class basis but they were, nevertheless, expressed as racism.

A shout of: 'The Irish are vermin and scum of the earth', confronted Fr Phelan in his own Army Mess.<sup>46</sup> Fr Hegarty, his SCF, explained this to Rawlinson as: '[this occurred] when feeling against the Irish was running pretty high because of the recent Rebellion'.<sup>47</sup> Fr Phelan was moved on when he reacted by saying: 'damn and blast'.<sup>48</sup> His choice of language had crossed the line of officer conduct despite outrageous provocation. The protagonists, operating within their own tight cabal, assured that their pusillanimous behavior would be internally acceptable. The racist insult was not challenged and Phelan's dismissal was subsumed within the niceties of social etiquette. Hegarty was also an Irishman but did not defy the authorities, whether the Army or Rawlinson. He continued: 'He has been of the greatest assistance and has done excellent work. However, in the circumstances, I am

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<sup>42</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 266.

<sup>43</sup> DAA, 3235, Oddie to Rawlinson, (29<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>44</sup> Norman, *The English Catholic Church*, p. 217.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> DAA, 3234, Hegarty to Rawlinson, (20<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

prepared to make a sacrifice of him'.<sup>49</sup> It was a war of sacrifices, and Phelan was sacrificed on the altar of English prejudice and English Catholic hierarchical expediency by a Dubliner, a Vincentian priest. The pretext was his verbal riposte. This example demonstrates how the blueprint of protecting the good name of Catholicism was intuitive with a SCF, despite his nationality. It is highly unlikely that Hegarty was responding to, or had comprehension of the English Catholic ambition, his actions were instinctive.

There were cultural and societal distinctions between some English and Irish chaplains, and similarities derived from a common faith and similar training. Mere expression of difference is not racist if not used in an offensive way, or for advantage. A Cork chaplain, Fr Scannell OMI did recognize that Irish men were different and required an Irish chaplain: 'I am rather reluctant to discuss this matter lest I should be unconsciously biased but my conviction is that it is hard to get a non-Irish chaplain who can understand Irishmen'.<sup>50</sup> Scannell's reluctance to create an issue around cultural difference, and his awareness of sensibilities, [regarding Fr Moulin-Browne an English priest who was not up to scratch], compared vividly to Oddie's racially based rhetoric, hence, reflecting two opposite ends of assessment and diplomacy.

Racism is a cousin of other anti-social behaviours such as snobbery and spitefulness, which were not unique to England. Ireland too had its share, particularly anti-Maynooth. Fr Edward Joseph Keane, a Redemptorist born in Cork in 1884, trained in Middlesex before ordination in 1907, and served with the Munsters. He wrote: 'Can you give me a change to more convivial surroundings? There is nothing wrong here, and anyone who comes, providing he has ordinary manners and is not Maynooth will find everyone very cordial'. Five days later on May 21<sup>st</sup> he reiterated: 'It is difficult to get a man for the Munsters but for the sake of all the virtues don't send 'Maynoot' (sic). Lyons and the others have a holy horror of them as have most people'.<sup>51</sup> Was Keane exposing internal Irish divisions such as urban-rural, Cork-Dublin, East-West, Irish Party versus Sinn Fein, or Religious order versus Diocesan? It is the social snobbery that catches the eye, by dropping the 'h', he is suggesting that a Maynooth priest is a culchie, an unsophisticated countryman from the lower social classes. At first sight Keane's contribution appears to be a distortion of the cogent description of Maynooth and her priests, articulated so brilliantly by Gwynn.<sup>52</sup> This was quite a deliberate choice of misspelling, his emphasis was meant to be derogatory whichever interpretation is preferred. However, a word

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> DAA, 3235, Scannell to Rawlinson, (undated).

<sup>51</sup> DAA, 3238, Keane to Rawlinson, (16<sup>th</sup> May 1916).

<sup>52</sup> Beck, *The English Catholics*, p. 290.

of caution is required. Edward Keane was a complex character with an impish sense of humour, or possibly a damaged personality, and it is not known whether his jibes at 'Maynoot' have their basis in rivalry, fun, malice or emotional fragility. Joking engenders ambiguity, and this mode of discourse resonates throughout his correspondence making it difficult to interpret his true meanings.

These comments, nevertheless, allow Irish prejudices to be explored. Social exclusion is an unlikely motive. Keane originated from a simple upbringing in rural County Cork and could also be classed as a *culchie*. His father died three years previously and his brother had, despite 'many opportunities', become a drunkard leaving his mother and sister in dire financial straits, hardly the ideal basis for snobbishness.<sup>53</sup> As a Redemptorist his income went directly to the Order and in the circumstances he felt his conscience could not allow this state of affairs to persist, he wanted to support his family. Any Diocesan versus Religious order competitiveness is difficult to substantiate, as in September 1915 he informed Rawlinson that he was leaving the Redemptorists and seeking an appointment with the Glasgow Diocese as he was friendly with the bishop.<sup>54</sup> The correspondence unfortunately fails to develop this story, yet he was certainly promoted in 1916 and was still enlisted in 1918, which indicates that some accommodation had been reached. Keane was not a typical Rawlinson correspondent. Analysing his comments warns of the danger of stereotyping. He was hardly a Bohemian but certainly characterful. Did his 'Maynoot' jibe have its foundation in inter-Religious rivalry, which he hoped to have endorsed by a Benedictine priest at the expense of Diocesan priests? As he had nothing to gain it was possibly either a tongue-in-cheek remark and typical of his general playful and roguish character, or blatant hypocrisy. A further exploration of Keane's post-war life would be fruitful. Many priests simply refused to be stereotyped.

Despite individual anti-Irish prejudice and local rivalries, the bulk of the instances evinced at war owed more to real or alleged politicization of Irish chaplains. Political loyalty was vital for English Catholic ambition. Involvement in Irish politics equated to disloyalty, trouble, and even treasonable activity. The case of Fr Tom Duggan is straightforward to understand, and given Rawlinson's desire to appease the authorities, his removal from service was a foregone conclusion. He had strong Sinn Féin views and was not shy in expressing them: 'When in 1917 Cardinal Logue issued a special appeal for Irish Chaplains, I volunteered. And I went off to France with the blessing and encouragement of every friend I had in advanced

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<sup>53</sup> DAA, 3238, Keane to Rawlinson, (8<sup>th</sup> August 1915).

<sup>54</sup> DAA, 3238, Keane to Rawlinson, (15<sup>th</sup> September 1915).

Sinn Fein circles in Dublin'.<sup>55</sup> Duggan was captured by the Germans in the 1918 German spring offensive and repatriated after a few months as a POW in Germany.<sup>56</sup> Rawlinson had his chance to eliminate Duggan from his chaplaincy group by advising that Duggan should not be returned to France. Duggan's case was clear-cut and politically motivated, even if Rawlinson's flat denial to have him back because of his constant conflict with the authorities was somewhat disingenuous. If Irish politics was the gunpowder, then falling out with the authorities was the fuse.

Other cases were less clear. The politics of Fr Cotter, attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers, were reported by General W. Hickie of the 16<sup>th</sup> Division. He wrote to Rawlinson:

I have been a little uneasy about the influence that Fr Cotter, now with the Munsters, has been exerting on the men. He has very pronounced political views and although I knew of them, I had hoped that he was keeping them more or less to himself and doing no harm. *It must not be thought that I was asking for his transfer on account of his politics*'.<sup>57</sup> [Author's italics]

Even the GOC Hickie, an Irish Catholic, wanted to wash his hands from political association.<sup>58</sup> Cotter, a Redemptorist priest and winner of the MC was informed of a move immediately after returning from leave. He acquiesced under strong protest and repeatedly requested, then demanded an explanation. No record exists of the outcome to this unsatisfactory political intervention which was well after the Dublin Rising. Here was a blatant example of political influence, even the General of the 16<sup>th</sup> Irish Division felt that he was left with little choice but to request Rawlinson to intervene.<sup>59</sup> Faced with such an invitation from a prominent and well-liked figure as Hickie, it was inevitable that Cotter would not be retained. Despite the circumstances, it is unfortunate that a way could not be found to mitigate Cotter's anguish. His sincere letters show that he was genuinely unaware of the reasons behind his removal. In the circumstances, Hickie and Rawlinson operated quietly without creating any bow waves, but given Hickie's own politics, was there collusion between those supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party and senior clerics in the Army to marginalize Sinn Feiner's? If so, were the reasons political or based on class? No evidence emerged but this topic requires further exploration, as noted in the conclusion.

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<sup>55</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London: Profile, 2004), p. 151.

<sup>56</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to O'Connell, (31<sup>st</sup> March 1918).

<sup>57</sup> DAA, 3235, Hickie to Rawlinson, (21<sup>st</sup> December 1917).

<sup>58</sup> Hickie, like many Irish Catholics and senior clergy, was a fervent Home Ruler, supporting the Irish Parliamentary Party. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that 'politics' equated with Sinn Fein politics. In 1925 he was elected with a record vote as a member of the Irish Senate in the Free State.

<sup>59</sup> Although Hickie was the senior officer, as a Catholic he was in the minority even in the 16<sup>th</sup> Irish Division.

Fr Burke was also removed for political reasons masquerading as 'health'. Burke wrote: 'Many cogent reasons induce me to resign my commission: with the exception of a few months my whole service has been given to the troops in the fighting area, and now my nerves fail me on the least provocation'.<sup>60</sup> This was not the real reason. Burke had been praised by the Curé of Garbecque as late as September 1918: 'for an act of bravery. Going on horseback when no one could penetrate into the town of St. Venant, he went and removed [rescued] the Blessed Sacrament and brought it to my church. It was very brave to face the bombardment at the time'.<sup>61</sup> These were hardly the actions of a man: 'whose nerve fails me at the slightest provocation'. Mentioned-in-Dispatches, he was evidently a fine chaplain. Nevertheless, there was an intrigue against Burke which started as early as October 1916: 'I think the sooner Fr Burke goes the better, because the GOC is of the view that he should depart. I should like to repeat that Fr Burke has done everything asked of him and if it had not been for his unfortunate politics out here there would probably been no trouble'.<sup>62</sup> Hessenhauer who initiated concerns about Burke, was evidently aware of the sensitive political position some six months post-Easter Rising. With his alleged political involvement and the opinion of the GOC to consider, Hessenhauer felt that he had little alternative. Fr O'Connell continued the pursuit of Burke in 1918 when he stated: 'I am convinced he is quite unsuitable for the work of military chaplain in any capacity: he is wanting in the tact that would enable him to get the best results from his work'.<sup>63</sup> This was a curious assessment given that his track record was favourable. Rawlinson was aware of this, he cautioned O'Connell that: 'It is by no means an easy thing to do [to have Burke released] unless there is some very definite charge, or some strong reason which would be difficult to find in the case of Fr Burke who has done much good work and has been Mentioned-in-Dispatches'.<sup>64</sup> This note of caution did not prevent Rawlinson from writing the next day to Bishop Keatinge: 'Following the strong recommendation of O'Connell his SCF, both have been with the 16<sup>th</sup> Irish Division since it came to France, I am strongly of the opinion that his resignation should be accepted as he is constantly in conflict with the Military Authorities. He is a good man, and an excellent zealous priest, and it is a clear case of 'unsuitability'.<sup>65</sup> Lack of tact, or unsuitability, were commonly inter-changeable words for political involvement in this world of doublespeak diplomacy.

<sup>60</sup> DAA, 3234, Burke to Rawlinson, (14<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>61</sup> DAA, 3234, Rev. O. Flippe to Rawlinson, [translation], (15th June 1918).

<sup>62</sup> DAA, 3234, Hessenhauer to Rawlinson, (22<sup>nd</sup> October 1916), GOC was Hickie.

<sup>63</sup> DAA, 3235, O'Connell to Rawlinson, (9<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>64</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to O'Connell, (17<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>65</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Keatinge, (18th September 1918).

Both O'Connell and Burke were Irish born, trained at Maynooth, and being diocesan priests had much in common. There was no apparent personal animosity between the accuser and the accused, and it is likely that O'Connell was simply doing his duty to protect the wider Catholic interest, very much within Rawlinson's overall design. Rawlinson's cautious initial response was, by the next day, over-ridden by the necessity to maintain something of a congruent relationship with the Army. The euphemisms of Burke's 'unsuitability', or 'wanting in tact', rather than politicization, aided the quiet removal of Burke which became easy after his sudden 'bad health'. In old military parlance Burke had fallen on his sword. Amazingly, the elapsed time between the initial complaint and resignation was nearly two years. He was still in the 16<sup>th</sup> Division in September 1918 and it remains a mystery how and why Rawlinson kept him so long whilst simultaneously managing to satisfy his accusers. Two possible reasons should be considered. The Catholic GOC Hickie having initiated action against Burke was probably happy to have done his bit without creating further fuss; it was now Rawlinson's problem. They were both good friends exchanging Christmas cards shortly after this occurrence. Rawlinson, sensing that there were no further repercussions simply let the matter slide until the second event became too much and O'Connell's claims too persistent. This does not explain why the same treatment was not meted out to Cotter. The other reason may be that Burke was simply put in a non-combat unit. He wrote above in his resignation letter that: 'with the exception of few months my whole service has been for the troops in the fighting area'.<sup>66</sup> Neither explanation is satisfactory. In the latter scenario, if he was genuinely politicized then his political views were still the same, and he had the opportunity to express them to a non-combatant section of the army presumably with the same reaction from the officers. The first excuse is also hard to accept. There were no other cases where Rawlinson failed to directly tackle the potential threat of clerical politics to the overall Catholic ambition. Fr Burke's case remains unproven, and a study of his later life is necessary to confirm or deny these allegations, as it would be for all Irish chaplains dismissed in this way.

Fr Denis McGrath from Dublin managed to upset both his senior chaplain, Fr Wynch, and the military authorities simultaneously. Wynch complained to Rawlinson that McGrath, CF to the 55<sup>th</sup> West Lancashire Division: '... asked the unattached Belgian priest to say the Poperinge Military Parade Mass at 10 o'clock without consulting me, when I the RC chaplain of the garrison was here to say it!'<sup>67</sup> These seem relatively minor events, but a chaplain ignoring or circumventing both his senior chaplain, and even more so the Army authorities,

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<sup>66</sup> DAA, 3234, Burke to Rawlinson, (14<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>67</sup> DAA, 3235, Wynch to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

set alarm bells ringing at GHQ where Rawlinson was based. Rawlinson's patience continued to be tested, despite severe shortages: 'I think it would be a good idea to post him [McGrath] to England so that his frequent visits to his sick father could be more easily carried out. He is more than useless to me at the moment as he frequently leaves me in the cart'.<sup>68</sup> McGrath's fate was sealed when the Army Staff Captain of the Royal Artillery, 55<sup>th</sup> West Lancashire Division wrote to Rawlinson on February 21<sup>st</sup> 1917 and explained: 'I do hope you think I am not interfering in any way [...] Fr McGrath, whom I think you know all about, did not hit it off very well'.<sup>69</sup> Rawlinson did not jump when the military authorities interfered, as they patently tried to, yet equally he took the messages on board and acted when the correct timing materialized.

There was disappointment expressed on behalf of McGrath. Fr Moran, a Salford Diocesan priest informed Rawlinson that:

I have just heard with regret that Fr McGrath has been forced to leave our Division. My senior chaplain [United Board] was very sorry and acted very nicely to Fr McGrath. I understand things would have been far more serious except for the intervention of Major Martins on his behalf. I do sincerely hope that no Irish priest will have recourse to "The Green Flag" argument in the future. It does an immense amount of harm to the rest of us who have to remain on in the Division.<sup>70</sup>

McGrath's files testify to the active role he took in religious life, for example conversions whilst a chaplain. Moreover, his one-time senior chaplain Charles Wright of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion Liverpool (Irish) Regiment remarked that: 'Frs Dunford and McGrath are doing great work'.<sup>71</sup> Be that as it may, Moran's evidence of Irish chaplaincy politicization warned of the potential damage to the overall English Catholic cause. Undeniably, Fr Moran was a reliable and worthy witness. If this was simply a convenient method to remove a habitually difficult man, it is highly unlikely that Moran would allege politics without sufficient reason. Moran MC had an outstanding record as a chaplain as this example demonstrates:

Possibly you heard I was wounded on the 27<sup>th</sup> July during the big show at Rheims. There was one Officer and Corporal killed by the same shell and we were sure upside at the time. So I have a lot to thank God for. I was hit in four places in the right arm, one serious but all the bits are taken out now. I won't go to hospital now. I just got a few injections and returned to my old post till the stunt was over. I'll soon be able to take my arm out of the sling and all pain is gone, though I can't sleep.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> DAA, 3235, Rawlinson to Keatinge, (17<sup>th</sup> September 1917).

<sup>69</sup> DAA, 3235, Staff Captain 55<sup>th</sup> Division to Rawlinson, (21<sup>st</sup> February 1917).

<sup>70</sup> DAA, 3235, Moran to Rawlinson, (16<sup>th</sup> June 1917).

<sup>71</sup> DAA, 3235, Wright SCF, 8<sup>th</sup> Kings (Irish) Liverpool Regiment, to Rawlinson, (16<sup>th</sup> March 1916).

<sup>72</sup> DAA, Moran to Rawlinson, (11<sup>th</sup> August 1918). Moran was a Salford Diocesan priest.



There is no evidence in the Dublin Archdiocese archive to suggest McGrath's involvement in politics, but plenty to testify to his truculence. McGrath was clearly not the most endearing man.<sup>73</sup> He may have harboured political views, and if that was the case then constant visits to Dublin to see his sick father may have aroused suspicion. Whether deserved or not, McGrath's tenure as a chaplain was terminated. To be connected with the 'Green Flag' was no longer a symbol of Irish nationality, after the Dublin Rising it was the flag of militant republicanism and the overthrow of the British in Ireland, and deemed anyone declaring allegiance to it as suspicious or disloyal. Rawlinson dealt with McGrath accordingly. Archival research was conducted in the period before the war which gave an insight into his personality. A further study after the war would reveal additional material to complete the picture.

### Conclusion

If the chaplains were under suspicion, what was the feeling towards the Irish bishops? Despite English apprehension, Irish episcopal ambitions were not a legitimate source of English distrust. Irish bishops had no discernible effect on Irish chaplains at the Front. Instead of becoming embroiled with external affairs, Irish prelates were jostled in the turbulence of civil and social unrest as the threat and reality of internal violence and upheaval materialised. Caught between the conservatism of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the radicalism of Sinn Féin, political shifts unsettled the Irish Hierarchy. As the war continued, internal national politics drew Irish bishops increasingly into Ireland's changing political landscape. Irish bishops, grappling with the politics of civil unrest, responded in an increasingly nationalistic but determinedly non-violent fashion. It was thought by some that Ireland's contribution to the war effort would ensure that the Home Rule Bill was passed in time. When it was realised that this was a mirage, disenchantment and a sense of injustice with Britain grew apace, as the arguments between Plunkett and Logue demonstrated.<sup>74</sup> Irish political zeal for Home Rule had become impotent, and with it a growing acceptance that it might take the intervention of the physical force alternative to achieve its goals, creating difficulties for the traditionally non-violent Irish episcopacy. Ireland was approaching a revolutionary phase in its history at the same time as the Great War was coming to its finale. The Irish episcopacy simply had enough

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<sup>73</sup> Denis McGrath, a Dublin Diocesan priest, was no stranger to controversy. Before the war an exchange of letters between McGrath and Fr Byrne from Wicklow, culminated in an enquiry by Archbishop Walsh of Dublin over the failure to attend to a sick man. McGrath and Byrne both disputed responsibility, Byrne basing his argument on distance, and McGrath's on the unofficial arrangements of having one day off sick call per week. Byrne's accused thus: 'Father McGrath tried to shift the responsibility to me'. This seemingly innocuous spat in the tight ecclesiastical Dublin parochial circle carried more weight than first appears. This was as daring a personal accusation as was permissible from one priest to another, and inadvertently echoes criticisms of his time in chaplaincy as truculent and possibly devious, but nothing about politics. These seemingly minor spats continued and Archbishop Walsh Papers DubAA contains these minutiae.

<sup>74</sup> DAA, Ephemera, (6-9<sup>th</sup> August 1918). Appendix 16.

to deal with maintaining calm in society without any more external distractions, and had no involvement, implicitly or otherwise, in chaplaincy affairs. There could be no justifiable claims for disloyalty from this quarter.

The available evidence suggests that Irish chaplains were, in the main, unaffected by civil politics at war, and for those that did show an interest there is absolutely no evidence that they were disloyal. In the absence of any organised political influence in the trenches, and with little connection with home, then it is safe to assume that apolitical men before the war would not change radically during it. However, the tumultuous events of 1916 were felt by some chaplains either through newspapers or periods of leave, and some may have surreptitiously kept their own private political convictions quiet. In the absence of further post-war enquiry, data collected exclusively at the Front points to only minimal chaplaincy political involvement. The only positive proof of Sinn Féin politics at war, rather than accusation or hearsay, came directly from Fr Tom Duggan who brought his political convictions with him from home. He was openly proud of his Sinn Féin heritage, but harbouring a desire for radical politics in Ireland does not automatically make Duggan disloyal, he did after all offer his services to the Crown. Despite this he was discriminated against and removed. Others clearly had political affinities but whether these were active political priests remains speculative.

Post-war study is required to examine each chaplain and his post-war activities. One such priest is a case in point. After demobilisation, Fr W. Carroll MC, an Irish born priest from the Liverpool Diocese, became chaplain to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion East Limerick Brigade of the IRA.<sup>75</sup> Is this an obvious example of Irish disloyalty hidden at the Front, a Trojan horse? Being a chaplain to the IRA made him no more an Irish Republican than being a chaplain to the British Army made him a Tory; instead it is more feasible given the study of chaplains to date, that his spiritual support for the Nationalist war effort after the war, merely echoed his spiritual support for the British war effort during it. In other words he was unpretentiously responding to the needs of soldiers and civilians in the Irish War of Independence as a conscientious priest, as he had done for soldiers and civilians in the Great War.<sup>76</sup> His pride in the Military Cross for his work for the British Army suggests that he was no died-in-the-wool republican.<sup>77</sup> However, Toomey has stated differently that Carroll did participate in IRA

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<sup>75</sup> See <http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributions/4403> and <http://www.cairogang.com/incidents/grange/grange.html>, accessed on 25th October 2013

<sup>76</sup> He would have undoubtedly ministered to Catholic soldiers fighting for the British Army in the War of Independence, as happened with German soldiers.

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributions/4403> and <http://www.cairogang.com/incidents/grange/grange.html>, Accessed 4.8.2013.

activities after leaving the British Army and the Liverpool Diocese.<sup>78</sup> He draws on the testimony of a captain in the IRA: 'Fr O'Carroll (sic) gave the local Volunteers every encouragement and subsequently accompanied us on ambushes, and often heard confessions preparatory to an attack on the enemy'.<sup>79</sup> To what degree these were spiritual or military matters, remains somewhat vague. It would be hard to defend him in a military court, but perfectly possible if judged by his spiritual peers, his only concern. Certainly nationalists have somewhat belatedly adopted Fr Carroll as one of theirs, without any apparent understanding of the vocational, rather than simply nationalist forces, at play. Like other 'war stories' the intended audience defines the logic behind the 'history'. In Carroll's case, his later involvement with the IRA confirms his duty as a chaplain, but it is illogical and slanderous to conclude that he was politically motivated or disloyal whilst serving in the British Army. His nationalist sympathies might have been aroused by events in Ireland that he was witnessing, but that does not imply dereliction of vocation as a priest.

Irishmen were proud to be Irish and many proud to be British too. These allegiances were not mutually exclusive, even allowing for nationalist aspirations. Chaplains had above all other considerations to put their spiritual commitment first. Irish men, just like their British neighbours, volunteered their lives for a plethora of reasons. They have been treated shabbily and attitudes espoused in 'The Irish Question' have never been satisfactorily questioned, let alone answered, by historians. This lack of scruple raises the spectre of a competing philosophy, perhaps 'The English Question'?

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<sup>78</sup> The Limerick Leader on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015, quotes Tom Toomey, "the historian", from his book, *The War of Independence in Limerick 1912-21*, that: 'Carroll [...] didn't like the British', because: 'The conditions that Fr Carroll found upon his return obviously made a very deep impression and he soon became a firm supporter of the IRA. At what stage he became chaplain to the local IRA is difficult to ascertain but it was clear that he was involved before the Mid-Limerick Flying Column participated in its first attempted ambush at Ballinagarde in September 1920. [...] It was even stated that not alone did Fr Carroll hear the confessions of the men prior to the Grange ambush, which took place between Limerick and Bruff, but it was claimed that he actually took part in the ambush'.

<sup>79</sup> Bureau of Military History, 1918-21, No 1279. The testimony of Captain Sean Clifford Fedamore, Company Battalion OC of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Mid-Limerick Brigade, <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1279.pdf>. Accessed 21.10.2015.

# Chapter 6

## Attitudes and Behaviour

### English Chaplains at the Front

## SOCIAL and REGIONAL PREJUDICE

The final chapter extends the examination of the human elements of Catholic chaplaincy, and the political ambitions of the English episcopacy. The actions and attitudes of English Catholic chaplains in particular, were conditioned by social behaviour. Consequently the delivery of English political episcopal ambition was sought through the need to convince the Army authorities of not only loyalty by Catholics to the Crown, but also of social acceptance. This could be achieved through expressing and complying with the aspirational core values of polite English society which had been recently been fortified in the Edwardian era by national heroes such as Scott and Shackleton. Hattersley noted these qualities as: 'Hardihood, endurance, and courage', to which he added Tennyson's words: 'To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield'.<sup>1</sup>

Despite, or because of modernisation, all was not well with the élite of English post-Victorian society. There was conflict between older aristocratic values and the new. The *ancien régime* vied with the emerging manufacturing classes, and the attendant *nouveau riche*. This was succinctly captured by the Countess of Cardigan and Lancaster: 'Money shouts while birth and breeding whisper'.<sup>2</sup> Good breeding could be expressed among other things as: etiquette, manners, accent, courage, appearance, and conformity. These were at the root of social acceptance in the higher echelons and typified many in the British Army officer corps. English Catholic chaplains, as both priests and junior officers, were expected to comply accordingly. Their politics and religion were not the primary focus of attention by the authorities;<sup>3</sup> instead their acceptance within English society depended on their appropriate conduct as gentlemen and officers. In doing so, the class differentials within Catholicism emerge and exhibit both beneficial and detrimental results. English society with social and regional inequality to the fore, affected the attitudes and actions of some chaplains. Some were the victims, others the perpetrators of social and regional discrimination. The situation crystallised intra-Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> Hattersley, *The Edwardians*, p. 386.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p33.

<sup>3</sup> In reality the bulk of clergy were apolitical.

social and regional inconsistencies, with the added complication of being situated in an alien and Protestant dominated environment.

The conservative English hierarchy was not consumed by the Realpolitik of the Irish dimension. The primary worldly ambition of English bishops was to continue the consolidation of the English Catholic Church's position, vis-à-vis the English political and social establishments. Its politics were limited in scope, exclusively English, and a continuum of pre-war policies which had overseen and managed a growing acceptance of Catholicism within the Protestant state. Before and during the war, the English episcopacy had seen value in expanding Catholicism through overt declarations of loyalty. These were not hollow gestures. In temporal affairs Catholics were solidly behind the King and his government. By being trusted associates in society they sought to ensure self-determination over Catholic social policy and particularly education. The Great War provided an unexpected yet welcome opportunity to demonstrate Catholic loyalty through exhortations for recruitment through the pulpit, and the reminder of civil authority which must be obeyed. These were public exhortations and left no room for prevarication. Among many examples, the Bishop of Hexham's 1916 Lenten Pastoral Letter stated: 'By God's command, we are bidden to obey our civil as well as our spiritual and natural Superiors'.<sup>4</sup> The bishops were in no mood for dalliance. It will be shown that their wishes were executed by their subordinates in a determined and at times ruthless manner. Wittingly or not, it was senior chaplains at the Front, in synchronisation with these ideals, who implemented the strategy and operated the levers of manipulation. In reality, as far as English chaplains are concerned, corrective action or removal applied only to a few errant chaplains, however, constant scrutiny ensured that the Army establishment had little cause of complaint through perceived unsociable behaviour.

Rawlinson in GHQ understood the imperative of maintaining the good name of Catholicism, and he became more and more vigilant as 1918 progressed. By mid-1918, after the German spring offensive was contained and the counter-allied offensive began, a sense of military victory permeated his writing. Accordingly, he turned his attentions to post-war Catholic societal intentions, although in reality he was far behind the bishops in forward thinking, particularly Bishop Whiteside concerning reconstruction.<sup>5</sup> His role was not planning but preparing the ground with the authorities. His patient team-building bore fruit. An examination of his role and that of his chaplains communicating through GHQ, charts the

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<sup>4</sup> SDA, Lenten Pastoral Letter of Richard, Bishop of Hexham 1916, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> Bellis, 'The Rawlinson Papers', pp. 6-7.

development of an increasing desire to maintain Catholicism's good name in order to gain extra credence, if not in the peace-talks, then in the renewal of post-war society.

How did chaplaincy experiences contribute to the overall political aims of their bishops and cement the Catholic position in post-war society? Chaplains themselves were not directly conscious of this ambition, yet their formative years ensured that they were automatically cognisant of upholding the good name of Catholicism at all costs. Careful monitoring of chaplaincy conduct by senior chaplains, and particularly the Principal Chaplain, ensured a high degree of compliance. This essential hierarchical aspiration was assiduously guarded by Rawlinson at GHQ. Although there is no evidence that he received any official directive, it is reasonable to surmise that if priests knew instinctively what to do, then Rawlinson with the social advantages and experience conferred on him as a member of the Order of St. Benedict, and his rank as Colonel in the British Army, would also enable him to act intuitively to protect the Catholic hierarchical position.

What were the levers mentioned in the introduction, and how did English Catholicism manipulate them to enable its own ambitions to come to fruition? An intelligence gathering and communication system was essential to this aim by providing management control. To assist Rawlinson and GHQ in France and Belgium, three main categories of intelligence gathering on, and by, fellow chaplains emerged. The contributors were: Assistant Principal Chaplains (APCs) at Base Hospitals reporting on new chaplaincy arrivals: Senior Chaplains (SCFs) attached to a Brigade and having direct responsibility for the deployment of the other three chaplains in the brigade and: chaplains (CFs) themselves. This method was open to personal partisanship as the withering comments of Fr F Woodlock will demonstrate.

Part of the APCs role relied on experienced chaplains informing Rawlinson of their judgements of new recruits. Temperament, character, fitness, and other accomplishments for specific areas of work were assessed, as was their potential for various roles. These verdicts were based on time spent at the Base Hospital on arrival, and sometimes prior knowledge of an individual was also factored into the equation. Fr Peter Grobel, a Salford Diocesan priest with pre-war British Army chaplaincy experience, and Fr Francis Woodlock a Dublin born Jesuit from the English Province, were the best known. This was an informal role and was easiest achieved orally, little of this reporting was put in writing. Nevertheless, Woodlock, based at Calais submitted a summary of twenty recently landed fellow Jesuit chaplains. He marked his scruffy submission on card and daubed it *CONFIDENTIAL* in crayon.<sup>6</sup> Fr Agius

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<sup>6</sup> DAA, Ephemera 0960.

who was later shown to have been a fine chaplain at Base came under Woodlock's subjective scrutiny:<sup>7</sup>

Agius. A Maltese but no accent. Fully qualified MD but very shy and humble and nobody would know he was an MD. Very pious and zealous but a wee bit of a stick. A CCS job of routine work would be done well but he might be less useful where 'hunting up' his work had to be done.<sup>8</sup>

Only one account of external advice as to a chaplain's competency emerged from research. Writing to Rawlinson from Stonyhurst College, on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1918, English Provincial Fr Wright SJ sent a supportive letter about Fr Agius:

I thought it might be of use to you in placing him, to know that Father Thomas Agius, one of the Chaplains I have recently sent out, was a doctor (MD) before he came to the Society, so he may be valuable where a good deal of first aid is required. He was also an officer in the Army (Royal Malta Regiment). So Officer, Doctor and Priest, he should find plenty of scope for work I hope he and all my latest contingent do well.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of Agius it appears that Rawlinson took both Woodlock and the Provincial's advice and Agius earned a good reputation for his work in hospitals. Rawlinson replied to Wright: 'I have Father King SJ here at GHQ, and Fr F Woodlock SJ at Boulogne Base, who advise on all Jesuit matters. In posting Fr Agius, therefore, he has gone to a place where I think he will find plenty of scope for his special abilities'.<sup>10</sup> Rawlinson's tact satisfied all parties.

Woodlock's comments are meant to be helpful, but often contain judgements that are too prejudiced for deciding deployment effectiveness containing undertones of 'Muscular Christianity', perhaps inculcated from his time with the OTC at Stonyhurst. Nevertheless, it made sense to have experienced chaplains at arrival points and to make some sort of assessment, even if it remained a controversial method of analysis containing a degree of danger, vis-à-vis no information at all. Reporting was not always a satisfying experience. Fr Grobel complained to Monsignor Keatinge that: 'I have a Father Gill SJ from Dublin helping here, but dissatisfied and awkward to deal with'.<sup>11</sup> The whole of Rawlinson's documents are punctuated by this method of information sharing. Fr Aveling, a Westminster Diocesan priest and APC at 14<sup>th</sup> Stationary Hospital, did not leave any reports but his qualities for the APC role can be sensed when he was Mentioned-in-Dispatches. General Gough (5<sup>th</sup> Army) described him on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1917 as: [providing] 'Valuable administration service. His sagacious

<sup>7</sup> PRO, WO 0374/474. Testimony from Dr Simms Principal Chaplain states, Agius: Character – Excellent, Fitness – Good and Suitability as a Chaplain – Very Suitable, (18<sup>th</sup> January 1919).

<sup>8</sup> DAA, Ephemera 0960, Woodlock to Rawlinson, (21<sup>st</sup> May 1918).

<sup>9</sup> DAA, 3235, Wright to Rawlinson, (23<sup>rd</sup> May 1918).

<sup>10</sup> DAA, 3235, Rawlinson to Wright, (27<sup>th</sup> May 1918).

<sup>11</sup> DAA, 3234, Grobel to Rawlinson, (23<sup>rd</sup> November 1914).

insight into the difficulties of the new situation, his tact, industry, power of suggestion and achievement make him invaluable in his present position'.<sup>12</sup>

The role of the Senior Chaplain (SCF) assumed greater significance when their worth in fine-tuning chaplaincy Divisional work is assessed. The formal organisational structure limited their role to the chaplains in his Division, consequently the role assumed a supervisory function rather than that of management. It is difficult to see any organisation functioning effectively in practical terms without the contribution of a group of people acting as conduits between HQ and front-line personnel, SCFs approximate to NCOs in the military in this regard. Their reporting is an essential element of the structural communications pyramid, feeding back updates on the condition, competency, and personality of his men. Certain reporting was positive. In the difficult situation of ministering to the Catholics in the predominately Protestant 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division, Fr Noblet SCF [later MID, DSO, DAPC] a Liverpool Diocesan priest wrote to Rawlinson on 20th October 1916:

With regard to my fellow chaplain of this division,<sup>13</sup> I am glad to say he seems to be settling down to work very well indeed and has, as yet, found no serious trouble. There are one or two difficulties to be overcome as you might expect, and these, while they need seeing to badly, may give rise to considerable heat if not handled properly.<sup>14</sup>

If chaplains complained to GHQ they unwittingly became part of the reporting mechanism. These men were human and some were not slow to criticise when their colleagues were not up to scratch. This may seem an underhand method but in essence what could a chaplain do to alter a situation which he felt was letting Catholicism down? Personal failure meant missionary failure as the Church was the bedrock of their spiritual purpose: 'Remember it is not a kingdom of men you have to propagate, but the Kingdom of Christ'.<sup>15</sup> It appears that protection of the good name of Catholic chaplaincy shared equal, if not more gravitas, than that of a conventional soldier or officer upholding the good name of his regiment. Fr E. Guinness, a Salford priest, wrote in this vein when he grumbled about two fellow priests to Rawlinson. Writing from the 1st West Riding Field Ambulance, his testimony as an experienced chaplain was that he had made a request to two fellow Catholic chaplains, Frs Bull and Jarvis, who ignored him. McGuinness complained on 26th September 1918:

Fr Bull [HEX] is 'it' absolutely and Fr Jarvis [BRM] is well-meaning but hasn't got a bit of energy or interest about him. There's not a bit of initiative about him.....I went on

<sup>12</sup> DAA, 3234, Gough to Rawlinson, (25<sup>th</sup> September 1917).

<sup>13</sup> George Barrett SJ, a Newcastle born priest of the English Province, and pre-war teacher in Liverpool.

<sup>14</sup> DAA, 3235, Noblet to Rawlinson, (20<sup>th</sup> October 1916). Noblet a Preston born priest from humble origins belonged to the Liverpool Diocese. Here he is referring to work in the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division.

<sup>15</sup> LDL, Pope Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter, *The Character of the Christian Missionary*, November 1919.



leave and wrote to both Bull and Jarvis asking them to do their best for my Brigade during my absence. On my return I visited the Advanced Dressing Station and expressed my pleasure in him living there. He informed me he wasn't living there, he had only come up to bury a man, he was living some miles back. And where was Jarvis? 'Oh, further back still about eight miles away'. We didn't come up because Patterson [the SCF a Baptist] never suggested it.<sup>16</sup>

Interpreting their lack of support in terms of temperament, that is laziness and lack of initiative, he was supported by his Colonel's observations: '...there's only one lazier man in the division than Jarvis and that's Patterson [Baptist SCF], he's a nice fella mind but a lazy bugger (sic)'.<sup>17</sup> Rawlinson's reply was sympathetic with undertones of war-weariness. It also indicated his method of dealing with the inevitable frictions between chaplains' personalities. He suspected the war was soon to be over. He answered: 'Had it been possible to take any action on the matter immediately I would have done so, but with the present shortage of priests – over 90 on this Front – it becomes very difficult indeed to make any changes and we are simply bound to utilise the material which we have'.

Under Rawlinson's stewardship the management of chaplains was effectively self-sustained by fellow chaplains. This created a strong if invisible mechanism by which English hierarchical ambitions were achieved. As the initial Irish ambition of pursuing both Empire and Home Rule had evaporated by the end of the war, perhaps Rawlinson could feel exonerated for this Anglo-centric approach but that is arguable. It seems more likely that if the dwindling Irish episcopacy involvement in the Great War had been reversed by political concessions such as Home Rule being granted, Rawlinson would have continued the English Catholic ambition regardless. He was a product of, and answerable to, conventional southern English-based power centres established in Chapter One.

### **Social and Regional Prejudice**

Stephen Loudon described the general condition between Church and Army as: 'the synchronous engagements by two organisations, whose purposes are not immediately reconcilable, have been shown to create tensions from conflicting loyalties'.<sup>18</sup> Those chaplains from a different social or cultural milieu, such as those working in under-privileged communities, might find themselves in difficulty and especially the Maltese who were outside the English model. It could be an alien experience to those unfamiliar with the social codes and mores, which were often expressed through social etiquette and tradition.

<sup>16</sup> DAA, 3235, McGuinness to Rawlinson, (6<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., (26<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Loudon, *Chaplains in Conflict* (London: Avon 1996), p. 117.

Misinterpretation was always a possibility leading to embarrassment and ostracism. One of the themes within the Rawlinson Papers is the doublespeak and euphemisms of the period, which were often employed to make a point more by suggestion than outright criticism, although action soon followed if the intimation was not acted upon. Consumption of alcohol or bad language, for instance, were often used as a way of describing general unsuitability within Army Officer's etiquette. This will be shown to be sometimes vindictive, petty, and hypocritical, but at other times diplomatic and effective.

In social terms proto-Edwardian society was a *mélange* of contradiction. Public morals and behaviour were often extreme both in their practice and in denial. Prostitution was rife in Britain and particularly so at military home-bases; by contrast there was public outrage and condemnation and charitable institutions clambered over each other to prevent such behaviour. Much the same could be said about alcohol consumption. Extremes of alcohol abuse were causing the Churches to crusade against misuse and temperance movements were prolific.<sup>19</sup> In the military it was traditional to consume alcohol and its distribution and usage was under the control of the officer class. Men went into battle having their courage fortified with a tot of rum. Officers used personal hip flasks, and the Mess alcohol preferences were whisky, brandy, and wine. The great monasteries including the Benedictines, owed much of their wealth to distilling or brewing alcohol.

Alcohol and tobacco roughly divided soldiers from officers. Class was also a part of the distinguishing differences through apparel, language, and insignia. The key is to realise that it was not so much what you did as to where you did it, and ought to be contained within the inner-circle such as found in an Officers Mess, or at least away from the ranks. Some Catholic chaplains smoked cigarettes for instance, but I have never seen a photograph of one in public. These unwritten codes of conduct and behaviour had to be maintained and any fraternising or crossing the boundaries, tacitly accepted by both parties, was frowned upon. Their purpose was conformity by exclusion of the soldier classes, and within their own ranks through preventing an officer from being accepted into the main body when he was deemed unsuitable. This has a significant impact on the behaviour, or perception of behaviour, for some chaplains who wandered across this divide. Catholic chaplains who fell foul of these techniques, often expressed as ill-health, politics, drinking, or bad-language, were usually removed from duty. Many of these incidents reveal a lack of solid evidence. There was rarely an opportunity to hear the accusation or defend the complaint; the unswerving need to satisfy

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<sup>19</sup> Ferriter, *A Nation of Extremes*.

the over-arching Catholic desire for good army relations dictated. That does not mean to say that Rawlinson erred too often.

Sectarianism was a regional problem at home, and at war could contain elements of class-snobishness, religious bigotry, and anti-Irish entrenchment. Pre-war sectarianism in Lancashire has been explored and shown to be endemic. Lord Derby, a virulent anti-Catholic critic missed little opportunity:

The Liverpool-Irish Battalion was an unsatisfactory lot. Very subordinate and slack in peacetime and not too satisfactory during the war. We were never able to get a good CO for it, and never will as long as it is known as the Irish battalion. The Irish in Liverpool are synonymous with all the lower classes.<sup>20</sup>

The polarisation of Derby's Protestant ascendant attitudes with those of the Liverpool-Irish reflected the entrenchment of both sides at home. Fr Wright CSSR served for a time as the chaplain to the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, KLR Liverpool-Irish and he forewarned GHQ that [owing to a new CO "kicking him out" of his quarters]: 'I only hope the Catholic men from the Scotland Road district of Liverpool [where Frs Gillett, Higgins, Leeson and others served pre-war] would not regard the unprecedented action of a CO as an insult to their RC padre (The CO is a Protestant Irishman) as I believe they would be capable of raising hell. Sectarian trouble is nowhere more bitter than the North End of Liverpool'.<sup>21</sup> There were a number of concerns here, from personal insult and inconvenience of Wright, to a sense of entrenched Catholic protection of their Church, and a forewarning that they would cause trouble.



<sup>20</sup> McCartney, pp. 184-5.

<sup>21</sup> DAA, 3235, Wright to Keatinge, (21<sup>st</sup> January 1916).

**Illustration 21**<sup>22</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Liverpool-Irish, the King's Liverpool Regiment, after a trench raid in April 1916, the first engagement of the 55<sup>th</sup> West Lancashire Division.

Whatever the moral disputes, provocations, and misrepresentations, the Liverpool-Irish had a reputation for violence in defence of their faith. Neale's account bristles with confrontations between the Orange and Green sects.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the most damning account showing violence across the denominations is represented in the six years from 1913 to 1918 in Walton Prison, Liverpool. The daily average of prisoners showed: Catholic Males as 256, other denominations 353. Catholic Females 180, others 145.<sup>24</sup> These figures demonstrate that Catholics were grossly over-represented in prison and reflected the sectarian violence of the era.

Sectarianism and bigotry were not the preserve of any one sect. Some chaplains, such as the intemperate Fr Oddie, took bigotry too far:

My morals might not be up to much but my Faith is like St Peter's. For that reason I object to any form of 'communication in *sacris*' and that is why I still loathe the Non-C. of E. business [the nomination of a Presbyterian as senior chaplain over Oddie] and regard it as a filthy indecency and an abomination in the sight of God. To treat a loathsome, heretical object like Jaffrey, as a superior officer is an impossibility, and I am always very rude and insulting to these Corps and Army people when they are heretics. A priest can never be under anyone who is not a priest.<sup>25</sup>

Oddie delivered an extreme example of over-zealous Catholic narrow-mindedness. The great majority of chaplains were not so contentious or irrational. The Sacramental system set Catholicism apart through religious tradition and did not require such aggressive defending. Certainly the vast majority of priests studied thought so.<sup>26</sup> There were no saving graces for Oddie's repulsive previous attacks on the Irish or bigotry against Protestants. Another example: 'We priests [Catholic] are a totally different breed from that swanking crowd of heretical dirty dogs who poison the atmosphere with their beastly existence and do the devil's work. How I do hate those miserable blighters!'<sup>27</sup> If that was not sufficient to satisfy his resentment: 'The very idea that a protestant parson should be allowed to interfere in any way with the manner, time or place in which Catholic priests perform their duties is too grotesque,

<sup>22</sup> Picture was first seen by the author at the King's Liverpool Regiment Archive at the Liverpool Maritime Museum June 2010. The original is temporarily between archival relocation. Reproduced from: [wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2b/Liverpool\\_Irish\\_raid\\_Q\\_510.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Liverpool_Irish_raid_Q_510.jpg) – citation verified.

<sup>23</sup> Neal, *Sectarian Violence*, pps. 158-62, 186-7, 196-8 and 231-4.

<sup>24</sup> LAA ECS2/102 – [118-120]. These figures are accurate but not totally representative, for example not all people in prison were from Liverpool. Appendix 9.

<sup>25</sup> DAA, 3235, Oddie to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> November 1917).

<sup>26</sup> Including the control group. They may have railed against Army awkwardness but never against religious ministers.

<sup>27</sup> DAA, Oddie to Rawlinson, (21<sup>st</sup> September 1916).

blasphemous and indecent for words. I will, needless to say, disregard all such orders from these Heretical ministers'.<sup>28</sup> [Capitalisation is in the original].

Such odium is difficult to comprehend and is in direct violation with basic Christianity. The effects which sectarianism and an anti-Catholic climate might have on individual priests have been acknowledged, but being born and growing up in affluent Wimbledon, Oddie did not have the violent Liverpool, Glasgow, Belfast, or Tyneside experiences. He was a recently ordained priest from the Brompton Oratory and it is difficult, given his youth and background, to imagine that sectarianism had any significant or practical part to play in the formation of his character; nonetheless, Oddie appears to be afflicted by an extreme sense of persecution and bitterness. He was not anti-authority, his attitude to Rawlinson was markedly servile, but he was vehemently anti-Protestant authority. He took the defence of Catholicism to a bizarre level and his remarks were totally beyond the realms of rational Catholic priests who would have abhorred such extreme sentiments, despite very real historical precedents and provocations. He was twenty-six when he wrote these remarks, and died in 1947, not surprisingly without rising through the ranks of the priesthood, remaining as assistant priest at Holy Rood Church, Watford, until the incumbent's death. Rawlinson, through whom his rants were directed, replied to a typical onslaught, this time about horses with: 'The withdrawal of your horse has filled up your cup with bitterness. Of course I can't say I agree with everything you say, especially your diatribes against His Majesty's Army!'<sup>29</sup> Rawlinson had clearly had enough yet surprisingly did not take further action. This final Oddie quotation perhaps underlines his lack of reality, after Rawlinson called him a 'grouser':

I am very sorry that you called me a grouser, because a grouser is, in my opinion, the most horrible type of man in the world. It is my strong faith that makes me grouse sometimes but I will not bow the knee to a heretic because I am fifty million times better than any heretical chaplain and I know that all heretical ministers are bad men and children of Satan.<sup>30</sup>

Oddie's contemptuous and immature remarks raise doubts about his sanity, but Rawlinson had the advantage of knowing him in person. With his tact he treated Oddie like a tolerant father might treat his naughty and petulant child. This was the most sensible way of keeping the lid on a potentially volatile storm that would deservedly follow if this venomous rhetoric became knowledge in the public or Army arenas. Oddie remains an enigma. He continued good chaplaincy work despite his idiosyncrasies. His behaviour was always conducted secretly,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., (28<sup>th</sup> May 1918).

<sup>29</sup> DAA, 3235, Rawlinson to Oddie, (4<sup>th</sup> April 1917).

<sup>30</sup> DAA, 3235, Oddie to Rawlinson, (20<sup>th</sup> November 1917).

cowardly, and immaturely, and had no practical effect, but it does offer an extremist flavour of these non-ecumenical times.

Class snobbishness at home was unlikely to disappear at war. A summation of class snobbishness and the Catholic challenge was strongly made by Fr Plater SJ: 'We Catholics need much more solidarity. We are riddled with snobbishness and split into cliques and coteries. Yet we ought to be taking the lead in healing the breaches of society in dissipating the fumes of class hatred which threatens to poison the nation'.<sup>31</sup> Snobbishness was not confined to any one geographical area but was pronounced when Lancashire chaplains were attacked by those both outside and inside the chaplaincy communities. When condescension is expressed, its purpose is to act as an identifier establishing a rapport between the informant and recipient, thereby, excluding or vilifying the victim. It predicates the snob's supposed superiority over the victim, and in consequence reduces their status to one of inferiority. It is a particularly cowardly approach to human relations and as such was usually confined to letters marked confidential or private. A Catholic British Officer, Hussey-Walsh, rank unknown, managed without any apparent provocation or request from Rawlinson [whom he knew from their shared South African war experiences], to launch an attack on Fr John Clarke of the Liverpool Archdiocese, accusing him thus:<sup>32</sup>

I am writing you a private note about one of your Padres. His name is Father Clarke from the Liverpool Diocese. I am told that he comes from that very charming and delectable manufacturing town in Lancashire called St. Helens. The first thing we noticed was how very *common* and generally *bad-mannered* he was. Nothing whatsoever of the '*Sahib*' about him: however, in this war we have all got to get accustomed to that sort of thing, so there was no protesting: he has somewhat of the '*Maynooth*' type about him I used to encounter in Ireland so I saw at once that I will probably not have very much to say to him.<sup>33</sup> [Author's italics].

What is mystifying is that Hussey-Walsh had nothing to gain except to mistakenly think that he was ingratiating himself with Rawlinson. He was a poor judge of character.

Snobbery was also noticeable within Catholic chaplaincy. Rawlinson wrote to Fr Chapman: 'Fr Green [a working class, Liverpool born chaplain] has been two years out here and has done very good work in the line, being twice Mentioned-in-Dispatches. He is an excellent worker, but not a very taking (sic) man either in appearance or manner'.<sup>34</sup> Chapman was a fellow Benedictine and based at the main hospital in Calais, he replied: 'Fr Green is a

<sup>31</sup> JAL, *The Month*, 135 (January-July 1920) 256.

<sup>32</sup> Clarke was an Ushaw trained priest.

<sup>33</sup> DAA, Ephemera, Hussey-Walsh to Rawlinson, (16<sup>th</sup> December 1917).

<sup>34</sup> DAA, 3234, Rawlinson to Chapman, (25<sup>th</sup> May 1917).

*common* little man. This is written as man-to-man, for your information, and is no means intended as a formal complaint'.<sup>35</sup> It took Chapman less than a week to form this assumption which he delivered in a spineless fashion. His snobbish motive was to protect the social status of Catholics of his type. If that meant deriding a fellow chaplains social standing, rather than the positive promotion of Green's acknowledged bravery and hard work, it is a disappointing indictment of both perceived Army susceptibilities and the dominant southern Catholic senses of priorities. Nevertheless, given pre-war social disparities of a class and regional basis, it is a sad but probable reason. English working class chaplains, as well their Irish colleagues were to be sacrificed when deemed necessary by the English Catholic élite.

It was claimed in the study of the restoration of the hierarchy that tensions between Diocesan and Religious order priests had been overcome. This assertion will now be scrutinised. Father Hessenhauer's comments on Jesuits are illuminating. His correspondence is plentiful and usually reasoned and pragmatic. He is not shy to criticise Jesuits directly or indirectly, and there is some evidence that he harboured a deep-rooted resentment towards their seemingly attraction to comfort.<sup>36</sup> Hessenhauer commented: 'the staff captain 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade thinks that the chaplain should be posted to 11 Brigade and he will fix him up with same battalion. As transport is difficult the chaplain should be warned not to bring excessive kit. That seems to be the chief objection to a chaplain, some arrive with bed, library, and gramophone etc. etc'.<sup>37</sup> There were at least two Jesuit chaplains who brought gramophones, and possibly many more did: there were no references to other orders or diocesans doing the same. He was not referring to Fr Steuart as he arrived in France in October 1916. Steuart had a liking for the finer things in life including a gramophone which he mentioned in his diary for November 7<sup>th</sup> 1917: 'Returned at 5pm boat, bringing up the gramophone. Two sniper bullets over us in Johnson Avenue', and again on Mon 13<sup>th</sup> January 1919: 'Went to Signals School & fetched our purchases - crockery, cutlery, gramophone etc'. Another diary entry features Steuart's incessant name-dropping: 'Came back in private car with Brigadier of Artillery 11th Brigade'.<sup>38</sup> These peripheral and pretentious behaviours from a Front line chaplain would not have gone unnoticed. If Hessenhauer had personal views on Jesuits there is no direct evidence that they were based on political or racial convictions. Hence, when he connected Father Shaw

<sup>35</sup> DAA, 3234, Chapman to Rawlinson, (3<sup>rd</sup> June 1917).

<sup>36</sup> This is a generalisation. Some Jesuits, Gill, Browne, Steuart and Doyle for example, did have wealthy parents but it is ludicrous to suggest Doyle embraced any comforts, O'Rahilly, *Father William Doyle SJ*, testifies. Others like Delaney and the three Whiteside brothers were from humble backgrounds. It is likely that individual priests from wealthy backgrounds did acquire luxuries which were not the experience of the vast majority of both Diocesan and Religious order priests. Those who paraded such extravagances, as Steuart did, naturally attracted adverse criticism and jealousy which Hessenhauer alludes to.

<sup>37</sup> DAA, 3234, Hessenhauer to Rawlinson, (9<sup>th</sup> June 1916).

<sup>38</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (7<sup>th</sup> November 1917, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1919, and 20<sup>th</sup> November 1916), respectively.

SJ with Sinn Fein and by extension the Society with radical politics, then anti-Irish or political concerns may have motivated his views towards Shaw; but it may equally be a statement based on personal animosities or Shaw's alleged inability to do the job. Hessenhauer wrote: 'I am finding it rather difficult to push Fr Shaw he is terribly afraid of private soldiers'.<sup>39</sup>

The probability is that his real difficulty was with chaplains from the Religious orders. Hessenhauer evidently saw the Jesuits as rather pampered and perhaps too removed from the pragmatic approach of a Diocesan priest. Taken together this suggests that pre-war tensions between Diocesan and Religious had not yet worked their way through. This is emphasized in his praise for Fr Wood from the Salford Diocese: 'As regards to a successor to the 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade would it be possible to have a lively, energetic man such as Father Woods (Salford Diocese) who came to us for a fortnight? Please not another Jesuit!'<sup>40</sup> When he lauds a Diocesan chaplain over a Jesuit it suggests both inter-clerical rivalry and personal animosity based on the premise that Jesuits are lazy and sedentary, presumably the converse for Diocesans who are tough and hard-working. Such images reflect pre-existing stereotypes and come as no surprise given historical tensions. There may be grains of truth in these beliefs but this study has demonstrated that the overall Catholic chaplaincy, with rich distinctions both between and within these two clerical strands, included all types of character that cannot be simply categorised. Chaplains were both, strong and lively, weak and dull, across the religious divide. Hessenhauer was a sincere and dedicated chaplain but he was also human and his criticisms although dressed-up as professional, were at their centre personal.<sup>41</sup>

Hessenhauer's views had no bearing on either his work in general or Rawlinson's views on Jesuits. His was not the view of the Principal Chaplain whose plaudits for Jesuit chaplains included: 'The Irish Jesuits have supplied us with excellent men, some of the best we have had',<sup>42</sup> and shortly after the Armistice of: 'the splendid way in which the Irish Province has played up (sic), during the war'.<sup>43</sup> These comments refer to the Irish Province he does not record his thoughts towards the English Province.

Rawlinson's informant on the English Jesuits was Francis Woodlock and his contribution has been covered in part in the role of the APC. Born in Dublin 1871 and trained at St Bueno's North Wales, he was ordained in 1902, after which he joining the English Province. Some of the snobbish and anti-Irish, anti-Maltese, and anti-Lancashire traits can be

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<sup>39</sup> DAA, 3234, Hessenhauer to Rawlinson, (11<sup>th</sup> July 1916).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Hessenhauer, (Carden), was murdered in bizarre circumstances in Cairo in 1934, <http://www.h-f-h.org.uk/gallery/gdm99gjhidoi>, accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013.

<sup>42</sup> DAA, 3231, Rawlinson to Keatinge, (20th September 1918).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., (14<sup>th</sup> November 1918).



recognised. Their relevance is that they are all men within the Society of Jesus and hence not open to religious rivalries:

Montague; [Irishman] rather wanting in initiative – silent shy man. OTC officer but won't set the Thames on fire. Popular with his contemporaries in a quiet way. [Father Montagu was killed in action with the RFA on 31/10/18 and is buried at Awoingt] 'Father Agius; A Maltese, but no accent. Fully qualified MD but very shy and humble and nobody would guess he was an MD. Very pious and zealous but a bit of a stick. A CCS job of routine work will be done well but he might be less useful when 'hunting up' his work. Gallagher; a wild Irishman. I hope he'll swallow his politics for the duration. An able man but not tactful. (Gallagher was attached to the RFA 57 Division and was gassed on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1917, he recovered). Myerscough; a little, insignificant man to look at. 'Very Lancashire', Preston being the centre of the Universe! Would do well with Lancashire troops, related to half of Preston! Son of Alderman Myerscough and nephew of Father Myerscough, rector of St Joseph's Preston.<sup>44</sup>

Woodlock was talking élitist language and trying to frame his observations in a manner he considered appropriate to the Principal Chaplain. He did not understand that Rawlinson's sense of duty to the Catholic Church was grounded in the ability of Catholic chaplains to unilaterally provide sacramental succour to as many Catholic soldiers as possible. Belonging to the Order of St. Benedict ensured he was in an élitist position, yet he rose above partisanship which Woodlock so feebly failed to grasp.<sup>45</sup> Woodlock's criticisms of Frs Agius, Gallagher, and Myerscough for example, demonstrated a variety of negative attitudes, all or some may be relevant in trying to understand his motives. Agius has been mentioned, but clearly Woodlock felt obliged to mention that although he was a Maltese, he did not talk like one, which presumably mediated the detrimental effects that his place of birth had posed? He combined this geographical subjectivity with a reproach about his physical presence. Curious then that Agius's concluding report on his worth as a chaplain was: Character – Excellent, Health – Good, Suitability – Very Suitable'.<sup>46</sup> His summary on Gallagher contains unsubstantiated allegations about his alleged seditious politics, whilst his diatribe against Myerscough is dominated by sarcasm towards his background and stature. His jibe of the 'insignificant little man', as we have seen, was based on Myerscough's lack of height, criticisms of which had dogged and upset him throughout his life. Such a personal attack was uncalled for and cowardly in the extreme, marked as it was "confidential", especially from a fellow Jesuit. Myerscough, another man with an excellent final war record: 'Character – Excellent, Health –

<sup>44</sup>DAA, Ephemera 0960, Woodlock to Rawlinson, (21<sup>st</sup> May 1918).

<sup>45</sup> His work both before and after the war with the Bermondsey Boys Club illustrates his preparedness to "get his hands dirty" as well as occupy senior roles.

<sup>46</sup> PRO, WO 374/474.

Good, Suitability – Suitable’,<sup>47</sup> was not immune from the snobbery emanating from Woodlock suggesting that the ‘North-South divide’ was very much alive, at least as far as Woodlock was concerned. As their paths did not cross in seminary or in their pre-war experiences, there was no apparent basis for inter-Jesuit rivalry. Instead they appear to be the irrational views of a man who had problems with others whom he deemed to be inferior, with ‘Muscular Christianity’ at its root. Given that Gallagher was from the remote area of Donegal, perhaps the Irish East-West divide became a factor, or was class the sole arbiter?<sup>48</sup> At no time in his war records or obituaries was he in any way connected to politics. He was also a successful chaplain: Character – Excellent, Health – Good – Suitability – Very suitable’,<sup>49</sup> and it appears from his Mention-in-Dispatches, a very Muscular Christian.<sup>50</sup>

Clearly Francis Woodlock was a poor judge of character and ability, but that is secondary to his part in flagging up chaplains who might rock the boat with the Army. There is no evidence that Rawlinson acted on any of his reports but he was at least pre-warned. It seems that in the final analysis, Woodlock had proven to be unreliable and his testimony became insignificant. After this juncture his reporting appeared to cease. Nonetheless, these forms of unsubstantiated criticisms do reveal personal snobberies, and had the potential to inflict irreparable harm on innocent chaplains. They are codified techniques designed to strengthen a position in the dominant group in order to create a distance between the accuser and the victim, and as such can be illusive to decipher. Furthermore, once expressed the accuser was never taken to task and required to justify his comments. Are these criticisms of Woodlock too harsh or tenuous, was he merely flippant? Unfortunately not, such comments are often presented in such a way that if challenged, can be explained away as teasing. Woodlock’s writings are singularly without wit or humour which negates this excuse. Fortunately these were relatively isolated, but not unique, examples.<sup>51</sup>

Fr Gillett was not immune from this system of regulation and stumbled into trouble through no fault of his own. This episode will demonstrate how this system of discipline and compliance operated; it was not an isolated chaplaincy example. Ironically, the Catholic authorities caused Fr Gillett more angst than the Army. Keatinge wrote to Rawlinson: ‘The enclosed letter was sent by the Archbishop of Liverpool to Cardinal Bourne regarding Fr F.

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<sup>47</sup> PRO, WO 374/49934.

<sup>48</sup> Donegal located in the Northern Province of Ulster geographically, was very much in the West of Ireland culturally and politically.

<sup>49</sup> PRO, WO 374/26232.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Of interest, it was Bishop Keatinge (Rawlinson’s superior and Army Bishop), who celebrated Mass at the opening of the War Memorial built under the direction of Father Page, inside St. Warburge’s Preston in 1923. Francis Woodlock gave the sermon.

Gillett. If it is true it is very serious. In a case like that I am afraid military discipline<sup>52</sup> may have to be used'.<sup>53</sup> There was no direct mention of the reason of the allegation against Gillett, but it followed a pattern and was almost certainly drink related. This is indicated in Rawlinson's response to Keatinge which states that: 'Frs Meany and Keegan were found on the road in the same condition by another Catholic Officer'.<sup>54</sup> Rawlinson continued: 'I have started investigations with regard Rev F. Gillett'. Details of the enquiry are not on file, but clearly Rawlinson pursued his remit to root out a potential chaplaincy misdemeanour: 'The investigation I have made so far regarding Fr Gillett does not corroborate in any way with the report given to the Archbishop of Liverpool. *It is of course easier to make a report of this sort than disprove it*'.<sup>55</sup> This is an important observation. He then concluded his investigations: 'With regard to the accusations brought against Fr Gillett of the Liverpool Archdiocese, I have now carefully investigated the matter and found that *there is not a vestige of truth in any of them*. He has been doing good work with his Division for some considerable time'.<sup>56</sup> Gillett was totally exonerated. Inexplicably the investigation process of which he knew nothing but concluded in his favour, still decided that he should be sent home. In other words Gillett was accused, found innocent and then subject to punishment, an illogical process:

It came as great surprise when on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1918, '*Audi alter am partum* - a very heavy day for me - met by my Senior Chaplain and received a stunning communication. Mass in Chateau then off to Picquigny for chaplains meeting - Rawlinson coming and Smith - privately interviewed by Rawlinson and told I had been ordered home by my superiors!! Cycled back very sore. After three years of wicked war, to be asked back by fools in England, without enquiry of any sort, Bah! The irony of it all - *AUDI ALTERAM PARTEM*. Am very low and depressed.'<sup>57</sup>

*Audi alteram partem* translates as 'hear the other side too'. It was a reasonable request but was denied him, although he was investigated without his involvement. Why Rawlinson advised him that he was being returned home, despite a clean record, remains a mystery.<sup>58</sup> In any event, life continued as before and he remained in France until 19<sup>th</sup> September 1919. Gillett was

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<sup>52</sup> Keatinge was out of touch or being disingenuous, in reality Courts Martial were to be resisted to avoid the scandal being made public, irrespective of the outcome.

<sup>53</sup> DAA, 3231, Keatinge to Rawlinson, (6<sup>th</sup> April 1918).

<sup>54</sup> DAA, 3231, Rawlinson to Keatinge, (8<sup>th</sup> April 1918).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., (20<sup>th</sup> April 1918). Author's italics to emphasise the truth of this comment.

<sup>56</sup> DAA, 3231, Rawlinson to Bourne, (6<sup>th</sup> June 1918).

<sup>57</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (22<sup>nd</sup> July 1918).

<sup>58</sup> LAA, EBC S2.1 G, contains a rare letter to Archbishop Whiteside. It is a general letter reflecting Gillett's experience with a unit having few Catholics, his belief in the strength of French Catholicism, and life in general. It is a respectful and routine correspondence with no mention of the incident above. The events described, when cross-referenced to his diary, suggest late 1916 (he writes in a similar vein about 'the Godless French authorities' and their 'Godless schools'). It is not dated and loses much value, but it does show the cordial but deferential relationship between priest and bishop. If it is 1916, it also shows that Fr Gillett would not be immune to episcopal retribution if he did not conduct himself appropriately, as was initially alleged in 1918.

not afforded basic individual rights, relying instead on the intervention of an indiscernible reporting system to clear his name. This was an arbitrary method which was not extended to many Irishmen. If Rawlinson had not taken the time to research the allegation, Gillett would have been finished. Both Fr Meany, and Fr Keegan a Passionist priest, were sent home before courts martial commenced. Keegan had a long history of drink allegations beginning in Cairo in 1916, always refuted, but he also won the Military Cross at Thiepval and worked satisfactorily throughout. There were more casualties of this war than are often recognised.

There were characteristic common fault-lines through the reporting of alleged offences which were usually alcohol or bad language related. They do not make edifying reading and appear to be instigated by Army officer peer-pressure. Furthermore, the accused had no opportunity to defend himself, or enlist support. In most cases the suspect was blissfully unaware of any problems until it was too late. What is crystal clear and understandable from the Principal Chaplain's point of view, is that good relations with the Army were essential for chaplaincy success. Chaplains had to look out for themselves, or be fortunate to haphazardly enlist support. Any 'falls from grace' which might bring Catholic chaplaincy into disrepute were crushed instantly without concern for the individual. Rawlinson was not in the business of mediation, consultation, and even less counselling. His mission matched that of the Catholic hierarchy namely to deliver devotions to Catholic souls and at the same time develop Catholic relationships with the establishment. The latter was not a recognisably Catholic ethos, but certainly a pragmatic one. Rawlinson was not a vindictive man, simply a competent and professional administrator.

Fr Looby, an Irishman but working in Liverpool, was accused of bad language and drinking and was also fortunate to have support. Hessenhauer, the APC, confronted the accused and heard Looby's version. He then put in place a mutual plan to alleviate any further problems. On 12<sup>th</sup> April 1917 a letter arrived from Father Hessenhauer:

Rev Looby has been most gallant when the battalion have been in the trenches and in action. In fact from the Brigadier down all speak of his goodness to the men and his utter fearlessness. There is something wrong, however, he is suspected of drinking too much, though has *never been known to be drunk*. Also *his language* is somewhat strong for a cleric, *nothing beastly but you know how Protestants regard that sort of thing*. Hence it seems that his remorse is desired. I saw Looby this morning he admits carelessness as regards language but not much in the way of drink. He promised me faithfully to keep off both and I think he will keep his promise. Now all this is indefinite but having seen Brigadier, CO, and Looby, I think we ought to make a change. The Brigadier wants it. Now he seems a nice boy and keen as mustard. He *wants badly an Irish regiment or work with Irish boys*. He will do well there (16<sup>th</sup> Division). He is young and chock full of energy. He prays not to be sent to a hospital –

this would be a disaster. I hope you will be able to do something for the boy whom I feel sure you will like.<sup>59</sup> [Author's italics]

Again the common elements are Army involvement, drink, language, possible Protestant approbation, and the desire to avoid scandal. Here Looby was moved on, but Hessenhauer was a shrewd man and there was an opportunity for giving both the chaplain and the Army satisfaction with a transfer, Looby had requested a move previously. More importantly, the English project was maintained. Fr Looby was a rare example of clemency to an Irishman, albeit working in Liverpool. His wish to be with a Catholic unit was granted, alas, he paid the price with his life.

If these accusations demonstrated chaplaincy ambiguity regarding drink and language, it is interesting but not surprising. Given the temperance movements within Catholicism such as Father Nugent in Liverpool, temperance sat uncomfortably with popular culture and indeed the habits of the well-heeled. Whilst there were significant movements towards temperance in the war, there were equally increasing cases of drunkenness across the sexes, and delinquency among boys and girls in Britain. These complaints about chaplains, which revolved around drinking and bad language, were predictable but illogical. Monks had produced alcohol and drank and sold their wares throughout history. In a similar vein, the estaminet and officers' mess were simply substitutes for the public house and gentlemen's clubs. It is worth noting that the proletarian composition of Catholic soldiers mirrored that of the British soldier generally, and the Catholic Church: 'took a relatively relaxed view of such classic Protestant taboos as drinking and gambling, vices which were as prevalent in the army as they were in contemporary working class life'.<sup>60</sup> The negative interpretation of drinking and bad language owes more to officer peer-pressure, social status of the accuser or the accused, or personal interpretation. This is a somewhat hypocritical response considering official rum rations to the men and liberal use of alcohol in officer's mess and private quarters.<sup>61</sup> Snape is correct, these reactions had more to do with Protestant taboos and were, therefore, more of a threat to social compliance than any strong moral opposition. They would invariably illuminate cultural differences between peoples.

There were justified cases of Rawlinson's interventions to protect Catholicism. Fr D. Hughes SJ, SCF, reported: 'I have to write to you on a painful subject. It is to ask you to take Richmond away; if he was sent home it would not be amiss. It would be too bad to unload him

<sup>59</sup> DAA, 3234, Hessenhauer to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> April 1917).

<sup>60</sup> Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, p. 22.

<sup>61</sup> JAL, Fr Steuart's Diaries refer to whisky being supplied for the officers, and beer for the men, through his Mess duties.

on another Division'.<sup>62</sup> The cases of Fr Richmond and later Fr Tonge appear at first reading to be simple misunderstandings and even lack of empathy from senior chaplains, most notably Rawlinson, suggesting a flawed system not worthy of the Catholic mission. They seemed to react to opinions as if prostrating to Army criticisms, whilst revealing their own lack of man-management skills. In the cases of Richmond and Tonge such assessments could not be further from the truth. Post-war examinations of these two priests confirm that senior chaplaincy was absolutely correct. Both men were disreputable priests and forced to resign from the priesthood. Scrutiny of the *Ad Limina* Reports to Rome in the 1920s has confirmed their unsuitability for the priesthood and confirmed Rawlinson's sound judgement.<sup>63</sup> Their misdemeanours after returning to their diocese were a continuation of their poor conduct in military service.

The chaplaincy system of reporting such occurrences, whilst inherently arbitrary and open to prejudice, were in these instances successful in quickly identifying and removing these culprits. This was a satisfying if unlikely outcome after my initial research. Satisfying, because it showed the efficacy of this informal system by weeding out two weak and damaging chaplains, whose continuance would have had a detrimental effect on the chaplaincy mission. Unlikely, because all the evidence surrounding Richmond in particular, had all the hallmarks of denial and exhortations of innocence which he cynically tried to manipulate. Post-war research has clarified the situation at the Front and shown its usefulness.

Initially Father Joseph Brown SJ reported that: '...Captain Constable, Divisional Headquarter staff complained to me that he (Richmond) horrified everyone by his vileness of language which was loose and blasphemous when he visits the mess and we have to keep the whisky locked up. He then charged him with being a drunkard'.<sup>64</sup> Father Hughes SJ the Senior Chaplain to the division wrote the same day 10th July: 'Lieutenant Colonel J. Davis says he could not believe that Father Richmond was a chaplain so vulgar was his conversation'.<sup>65</sup> Doubts crept in, Richmond was a calculating man and not the naïve person he purported to be.<sup>66</sup> He was utterly convincing throughout his defence and even his accusers clearly had second-thoughts. Cunningly he was beginning to win support from his immediate colleagues in the 38<sup>th</sup> Welsh Division, so that after reflection the accusers reassessed their opinion of Richmond and back-pedalled to try to limit the damage. Late in July Father Brown lamented:

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<sup>62</sup> DAA, 3234, Hughes to Rawlinson, (23<sup>rd</sup> July 1918).

<sup>63</sup> Each bishop is bound every 5 years to provide the Supreme Pontiff with a report on the diocese entrusted to him.

<sup>64</sup> DAA, 3235, Brown to Rawlinson, (10<sup>th</sup> July 1918).

<sup>65</sup> DAA, 3235, Hughes to Rawlinson, (10<sup>th</sup> July 1918).

<sup>66</sup> He continued with this evasiveness when he returned to Nottingham Diocese post-war and was an evasive priest to dismiss. Richmond Papers NDA.

'I feel sure he would prosper by a new start, I venture to state this side of the case to you. After all we have no school of Padres. Frankly I like him as I now find him, positive guidance is what he requires'.<sup>67</sup> The SCF of the division Father Hughes commented:

I hear that Father Richmond is leaving and I sent a note to him to say that any mistakes were entirely due to ignorance of army ways, he thought it was the ordinary way of going on in the army. In new surroundings he will do great work and completely retrieve the mistakes made by ignorance of this I am quite sure. In his new division you will certainly find this to be the case. Certainly during the last fortnight when he has seen he was on the wrong method, he has worked hard and well among men, impressing them with his fearlessness and got on well with both officers and men.<sup>68</sup>

Father Hughes continued in a more desperate tone:

I rode over to see Father Richmond on Heavy Siege Guns and found him much perturbed at leaving. The great cause of his fear is due to a strong letter he got from his Lordship his own bishop [Thomas Dunn]. I beg you accept the letter of penitence he brings you and put him somewhere else and not let his career be ruined. He is a capable and brave man so I do hope he gets another chance.<sup>69</sup>

Charles L. Perry, Senior non-Catholic chaplain wrote to Rawlinson:

He got it into his head that the way to become popular and influence officers and men was to conform to their method of doing things. He has had a rude awakening and the experience will be of the utmost value to him. I am confident that if you have a straight talk to him he will still be a valuable worker, officers and men testify to a complete change already.<sup>70</sup>

These were charitable yet wrong-headed attempts to mediate. On first reading it appeared that Richmond, and to a lesser extent Tonge, was a victim of an unfair conspiracy and had been harshly treated. The post-war evidence repudiates that theory and showed men who continually transgressed, and as perpetual fraudsters often do, they were incredibly convincing in their attempts to appear as the victims themselves. Rawlinson was wiser than those around him. Richmond had not convinced him and it was rapidly arranged for him to be sent home. On August 7<sup>th</sup> Rawlinson wrote to Fr Brown: 'I do not propose sending Fr Richmond to any other unit. He has done already sufficient harm out here'.<sup>71</sup> The die was cast, *iacta alea est*. Rawlinson wrote to his bishop, Thomas Dunn, whose response, was:

<sup>67</sup> DAA, 3235, Brown to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>68</sup> DAA, 3235, Hughes to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., (15<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>70</sup> DAA, 3235, Perry to Rawlinson, (12<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>71</sup> DAA, 3235, Rawlinson to Brown, (7<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

I am distressed and surprised beyond measure to read about Father Richmond. He is a gentleman and a convert and ought to know better how to behave himself. As a matter of fact I allowed him to join up only because he begged very hard to allow him to do so. He represented to me that he belonged to Old Army stock; many of his relations having been soldiers and that his mother who had practically repudiated him when he became a convert was ready to be reconciled with him if he became chaplain. Don't show any consideration in his case but if he should come home in disgrace he will have a bad time at my hands.<sup>72</sup>

Dunn confirmed his own apparent hoodwinking by Richmond: 'I know him well, he is not by any means a knave, but he is a great deal of an ass'.<sup>73</sup> This is a disturbing comment from his bishop. If he knew him well why was his behaviour not detected earlier? He could not have become such a menace after only a month in France having been a priest since 1906. Bishop Dunn cannot ordinarily have known Richmond well, as he was consecrated bishop only a short time before in 1916 after being a priest in Westminster, but if he had known both Richmond and Tonge did he off-load trouble into Catholic chaplaincy? This remains conjecture, but not without precedent. Historically, the transfer of less popular priests has been demonstrated in the case of Rev. T. Scott from Southwark and in the Nottingham Diocese by Dunn's predecessor but one, Bishop Bagshawe, which had earned Nottingham a reputation pre-war as a *refugium peccatorum*.<sup>74</sup>

Rawlinson acknowledged that Richmond was in no sense a gentleman or a priest. On Richmond's Army testimonial he wrote, 'Character – Peculiar. Fitness – Good. Suitability – Not suitable at all'.<sup>75</sup> This testimony was for Home Office consumption and usually contained guarded language, but these remarks are the harshest for an outgoing chaplain researched in the Public Records Office. The term *peculiar* speaks volumes and is not difficult to decode in the vernacular of the day. The manner of his removal was the effective but disingenuous device of ill-health. Richmond wrote from Derbyshire 31<sup>st</sup> August 1917: 'I have the honour to request your permission to tender my resignation of my chaplaincy. In view of my nervous collapse and its subsequent consequences I am given to understand by Bishop Keatinge that you were prepared to grant my request'.<sup>76</sup> This doublespeak was a lie but offered a convenient way of allowing both the recipient and the organisation to avoid bad publicity and further disciplinary action. However, in Nottingham it only postponed further indiscretions, further

<sup>72</sup> DAA, 3235, Dunn to Rawlinson, (29<sup>th</sup> July 1918).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., (24<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>74</sup> Bishop Brindle's episcopacy came between Bagshawe and Dunn.

<sup>75</sup> PRO, WO 374/60980, (29<sup>th</sup> November 1918).

<sup>76</sup> PRO, WO 374/57411.



enquiries, yet more unsuccessful attempts at rehabilitation, and finally dismissal from the priesthood.

The misdemeanours of Tonge were also real but less serious than Richmond. They caused Father Hegarty, a Mill Hill Father from St Joseph's Mission to write: '...I have no definite charges against him but for some reason or another I have no confidence in him. A Catholic officer, Captain English, told me that he was very much dis-edified by the conduct of Father Tonge at the opera on the night of July 25<sup>th</sup>. Although not drunk he had more than enough taken and the language was not that becoming of a priest'.<sup>77</sup> This timid, even apologetic reporting of a fellow chaplain was usually in response to Army officer scrutiny or alleged scrutiny. Note there is no attempt to confront the accuser or the accused. Was the opera, whilst providing much needed respite, the correct place for Tonge to be visiting at least in the eyes of the accuser? How much had he drunk and what exactly did he say? Had he simply overstepped the bounds of etiquette, skilfully and invisibly laid down by various strata of society? Or was his behaviour so bad that a smoke-screen was created to minimise further damage?

It should be recognised that not all complaints were generated through spite or malice; some accusers genuinely had the name of the regiment, religion, or insignia of chaplains to protect. Despite the lack of transparency, the unofficial vetting system was correct in this case. Fr Tonge was proven to be unsatisfactory in his post-war priesthood, exhibiting the same habits which had been unearthed by fellow chaplains. Post-war records confirm that Tonge was a man with serious drink problems and a man with a desire to enjoy civilian life. He left the Church and married. His case was one of human weakness rather than wickedness. Both Richmond and Tonge were dealt with by Rawlinson instinctively, ruthlessly, and correctly. Both men were guilty and Rawlinson's decisive action restricted any political fall-out.<sup>78</sup> As far as disciplinary procedures are concerned, the removal of these two disgraced men reinforced confidence in the system's use of the SCF to weed out problems. Experienced priests had unsurprisingly developed a good understanding of people and character from their work at home.

Both Tonge and Richmond came back to create difficulties after the war and it seems highly likely that their behaviours, consistently bad during and post-war, had been habitual

<sup>77</sup> DAA, 3234, Hegarty to Rawlinson, (4<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>78</sup> I was granted unlimited access and permissions to these papers from both the bishop and archivist, for which I am grateful. My purpose was to examine the system rather than the individuals *per se*. Although given permission to use in this thesis, citation is not given to respect the sensitivities around these topics. This is purely the decision of the author.

for many years. To be fair to Dunn, Richmond excelled at deception. Bishop Dunn did certainly get to grips with Tonge and Richmond, although it took time and a deal of patience before the Church could rid itself of both men. Rawlinson showed no such qualms.

Sex scandals had the potential of devastating the Catholic good name, and if they surfaced had to be eradicated. As with drink and bad language, if dereliction of duty could also be alleged, then the accused was on a very slippery slope. The results were devastating for the accused if judged guilty; and equally devastating for the organisation if ignored and scandal spread. Fr Mortimer J. Galvin was one such case. He was accused of poor morals and dereliction of duty, Carden [Hessenhauer] wrote a letter 'Private and Confidential' on August 20<sup>th</sup> 1918 to Rawlinson:

He returns very late to the Presbytery – sometimes as late as 2.a.m., apparently he plays cards. The parishioners have complained to the Curé that he walks about with a particular woman – sometimes in the evening, and even in lonely places. This the Curé has not seen himself but it is common talk in the village....the woman in question is a refugee much sought after by officers and thought to be charming. Fr Galvin is supposed to have taken her out to dinner at a neighbouring village [during Mass he arranged for a collection to be made] and much to the scandal of the Curé and the village Fr G. gave these bags to this creature in the church. He rushed through Mass and got off his vestments quickly and was at the door to offer Holy Water to this creature before she left. To choose out a woman of *that kind* to make a Civil Collection during Mass is a gross offence. An interpreter priest said it was common talk about an English priest [Galvin was Irish from Kerry] who was always with a woman and that he may have been seen kissing this woman. I then visited a very good woman in the village who said she had seen nothing personally and could only say it was the talk of the village. It would be impossible for such stories to get about unless Fr Galvin had been indiscreet.<sup>79</sup>

The total evidence amounts to hearsay and rumour and the tone of retribution is disconcerting, but it was sufficient for Rawlinson to require Galvin to resign his commission. Rawlinson confirmed this and the fact that he had negotiated proportional gratuity payments.<sup>80</sup> It all seemed trivial, unproven, and devious. Yet Hessenhauer's track record was good, and Rawlinson's even better as we saw with Richmond and Tonge. Did Galvin go astray or was he the victim of malicious gossip, perhaps sexual envy from officers? Was the woman in question a prostitute, and if so was Galvin under her spell, or simply acting in a remedial, priestly manner, in much the same way as Mary Magdalene was treated by Christ? It is impossible to be sure, but staggering that a proper enquiry was not afforded Galvin.

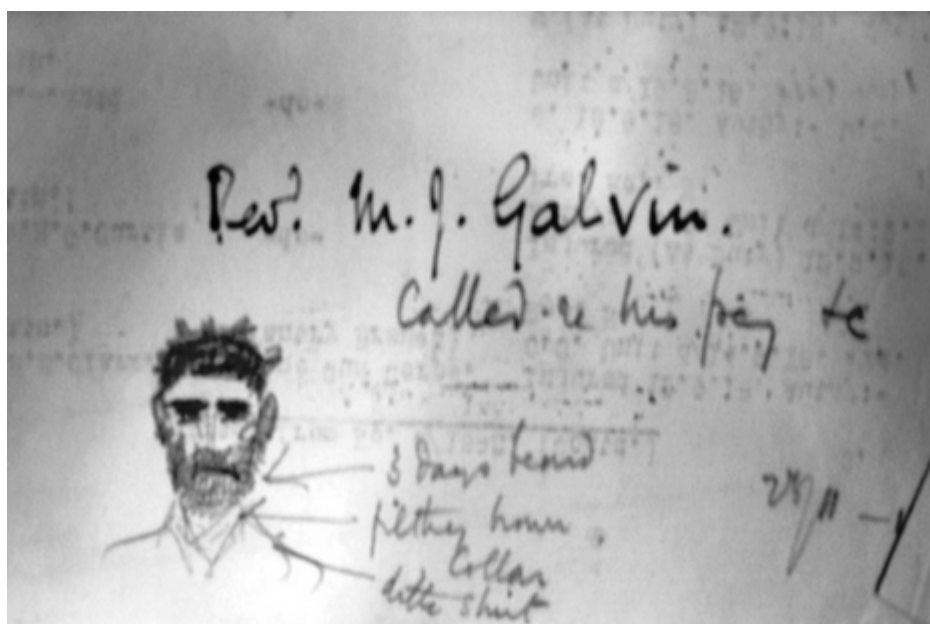
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<sup>79</sup> DAA, 3234, Hessenhauer to Rawlinson, (20<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>80</sup> PRO, WO 374/26288.

Galvin was loaned from the Glasgow Diocese and given that he went missing and does not appear in post-war Catholic Directories, it is reasonable to assume that he also gave up the priesthood. He may have had mental health problems or simply had had enough. His father offered his own plausible explanation for his disappearance. Whilst trying desperately to contact him in December 1918 he wrote: 'I am quite certain that he is suffering from shock and loss of memory not having written for several months to me'.<sup>81</sup> Galvin's address was unknown but he did pick up mail at the Charing Cross Hotel, ironically a favourite haunt of Fr Steuart. The hotel provided this extraordinary sketch and description of Galvin which resides nervously in the Public Record Office.

**Illustration 22**<sup>82</sup>



Whether his father or the villagers were correct, or perhaps another unknown reason, it was a human tragedy that a priest with three years good service should leave with the testimonial, 'Character- Fair. Health - Good. Suitability - Not Suitable'.<sup>83</sup> Evidently Rawlinson in his coded summation had pointed the finger at his 'character' and his demise was therefore inevitable, even though 'fair' suggests Rawlinson was not entirely convinced. Galvin may well have been completely innocent but the bar was set very high for Catholic priests, and human transgressions were not permissible for a chaplain who carried the Catholic good name on his

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> PRO, WO 374/26288.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Captain's shoulders. Rawlinson's judgement was usually sound and Galvin became yet another unknown casualty of war.

The study of mental health was a profession in its infancy and mental health topics were not readily acknowledged and not always easy to unravel, certainly not by Catholic chaplains. Possible incidents of mental health which arose, as with Galvin, were dealt with in the orthodox manner of the day. This translated as faults in misbehaviour, character, or mood. Occurrences like this were treated as practical problems affecting discipline and were dealt with accordingly. Stress, nervousness, and alcohol abuse, were not treated as areas for subtle analysis but regarded as weak temperamental or moral failures. The causes of mental health were generally unknown or ignored. Additionally, on occasions, ill-health was a convenient metaphor for removing chaplains quietly for other reasons.

One incident which received scant understanding from the Catholic authorities, related to Fr Cagney, which if it was not so tragic would have been farcical.<sup>84</sup> After an exchange of letters Cagney's situation is summarised by Rawlinson to Monk at the War Office:

The Rev W. Cagney, an Irish Redemptorist has been reported to me as having left his post. He was last seen tearing down the road on his horse shouting 'save yourselves while you can' – when there was a rumour that the Germans were through. He next turned up at Boulogne [in hospital] where I have tried on two occasions to get a coherent story from him without avail. He owns that he went completely 'off his head' and might have got into serious trouble spreading alarm and despondency. A private soldier acting as he did would have been executed.<sup>85</sup>

Contemporary non-acceptance of mental health questions went hand in hand with lack of institutional empathy and knowledge, although there were voices urging compassion: 'Fr Potter tells me that Fr Cagney was very upset the day before he left Brigade not to be allowed leave. His nerves were also very bad in consequence of the shelling'.<sup>86</sup> Even the Commanding Officer of the Ambulance attached to his Brigade said that Fr Cagney was: 'of a very nervous temperament and absolutely unfit for the Front line'.<sup>87</sup> Whilst the General of the 34<sup>th</sup> Division where Cagney had ended up, after he had been confined overnight as a spy, had the good sense to: 'tell him off and let him go'.<sup>88</sup> Other cases of mental anguish were more obscure. Regardless of personal circumstances, any chaplain who threatened the English Catholic ambition through actual or alleged misbehaviour was liable to be withdrawn, and Fr Cagney from Limerick had to go.

<sup>84</sup> DAA, 3234, Leo to Rawlinson, (11<sup>th</sup> April 1918).

<sup>85</sup> DAA, 3231, Rawlinson to Monk, (20<sup>th</sup> April 1918).

<sup>86</sup> DAA, 3234, Carden, [Hessenhauer], to Rawlinson, (5<sup>th</sup> April 1918).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

This study has maintained that Rawlinson treated all chaplains from both Diocesan and Religious orders equally. However, the Woodlock brothers cast some doubt on this assessment. Given that any misdemeanours or threats to the Army-Church equilibrium were dealt with rapidly, it seems that initially at least, these two Jesuit brothers were treated with a little more tolerance. Joseph Woodlock 'went missing' in the German advance in March 1918. Papers reveal that he: 'subsequently turned up at his brothers (Frank) office in Boulogne at Base. Fr Joe had been behind the German line and had managed to elude the enemy. Frank kept asking him how he managed to escape. He refused to talk about his time behind the lines'.<sup>89</sup> Joseph Woodlock explained in a letter to Rawlinson: 'I hear from my brother Frank that I was officially reported missing – I am glad to say it was an exaggeration!'<sup>90</sup> Was this a case of leaving one's post and being open to charges of desertion and if so, why was he not interviewed by Rawlinson or the Army, and why the mystery? Further, was Woodlock given special treatment because of his Jesuit status? The facts are that Joseph Woodlock, with the 16<sup>th</sup> Manchesters, had a tough time and had requested leave on several occasions because he was feeling the heat. The German offensive did cause great confusion and chaplains had been killed and captured. In the *mêlée* that ensued, it is quite possible that Woodlock's story is true and his letter of explanation plausible. Equally he may have been suffering mental stress and fatigue. Less understandable is his reluctance to tell his brother. The main criticism was why did Rawlinson not treat him as he would a Diocesan chaplain, particularly an Irish one such as Cagney? These are reasonable questions but fail to take into account Rawlinson's conduct to date. First of all Woodlock from the English Province was an Irishman so national bias can be discarded. The charge of favouritism for a Religious order priest is difficult to sustain without any evidence, the following practical reason is more plausible. As the Army appear to have had no knowledge of Joseph Woodlock's disappearance, the confusion allied to Woodlock's secretiveness left Rawlinson in a dilemma. If he was to make an example of Joseph Woodlock then his case would need to be brought to the attention of the authorities and that in itself was the obstacle. Cagney's case was out in the open and had to be tackled, Woodlock's could be quietly hushed up. It seems that Rawlinson's decision not to castigate Woodlock was based more on common sense than favouritism. This was not an unusual method to deal with embarrassing situations. The stress of these difficult days is clearly emerging through the actions of many chaplains.

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<sup>89</sup> RCBFA, Obituaries.

<sup>90</sup> DAA, 3235, Woodlock to Rawlinson, (6<sup>th</sup> April 1918).

The problem with Francis Woodlock was more severe and asks more questions. Woodlock became embroiled in a heated debate in the Officers Mess over the question of the Pope's involvement in the war. In defending the Catholic position of neutrality, he argued that the Germans could make equal claim on the Pope's support. He meant to emphasise the non-aligned approach of the Vatican and the universality of the Catholic Church, but it was interpreted by Army officers as a pro-German stance. The upshot was that after an enquiry, the Base Commander stated that:

I am quite sure that Fr Woodlock's good faith and loyalty as a British subject are not in question. I have however, informed him that by his line of argument, which was extremely injudicious, he left himself open to serious misconstruction, and that considering his position, he acted wrongly in advancing argumentative propositions which he well knew could not be accepted in a Mess of British officers'.<sup>91</sup>

Being 'extremely injudicious', and open to 'serious misconstruction', were serious challenges to the Catholic position. Furthermore, the question of loyalty was raised from his own officers' Mess. If Rawlinson was to be consistent, then Woodlock's behaviour upset the parameters that had already been applied to several priests before. By this reckoning Woodlock ought to have been on the next boat home. That he was not raises valid questions. Was he retained because of his position as APC and his usefulness in the reporting mechanisms to Rawlinson, (unlikely given Woodlock's track record), or because of his membership of the Society of Jesus? This was a serious potential breach of Catholic ambition by a senior chaplain, and Rawlinson appeared to have shown bias in this case towards a fellow priest from a Religious order. Certainly the case looked cut and dried with respect to the open involvement of the Army and the implications to *entente*. There is perhaps one redeeming feature, and that was the even-handedness of the Brigadier: 'In my opinion there were mistakes on both sides. It was most unwise for members of a Mess to raise the Pope's encyclical, and discuss it with a Roman Catholic padre'.<sup>92</sup> This was an olive branch to Catholic sensitivities and Rawlinson snatched it with alacrity. Woodlock committed the 'crime' of lack of tact which in other circumstances, earlier described, would have seen his return to England. The correspondence in Woodlock's files in the Rawlinson Papers, gives testimony to the protracted defence Woodlock was forced to undertake and the pressure he was under. The brigadier by no means came to his decision lightly, but when he had finished deliberating, the case was over and the threat contained as far as the authorities were concerned. Nevertheless, it is inconceivable that a Diocesan priest would have been dealt with so leniently. It appears that the Brigadier closed ranks with a

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<sup>91</sup> DAA, 3235, (x/6/1/3), Brigadier General Wilberforce at Boulogne Base to Rawlinson, (26<sup>th</sup> November 1917).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

fellow-officer and chaplain whom he knew, without jeopardising his position with his own military officers. Although Woodlock had not been promoted above the rank of Captain he had won the Military Cross which would have counted in his favour.<sup>93</sup> Given Rawlinson's fairness throughout the war where he carried no apparent vestiges of the inherent rivalries between Diocesan and Religious priests, in this incident the benefit of the doubt might be given to Rawlinson over the charge of favouritism. It appears pragmatism held more sway in his and the Brigadier's reasoning, and for perhaps the only occasion, the Army came to Rawlinson's rescue.

### Conclusion

The majority of incidents occurred towards the end of the war. 1918 was a year of deep concern as defeat in March-April looked likely. The situation stabilised by May-June, and was then reversed as the July Allied offensives gave justified grounds for optimism. This was a year of open warfare and intensified carnage. Catholic chaplains were under considerable stress to cope, being 100 under establishment strength and trying to adjust to the new mobility of war. Rawlinson based at GHQ probably sensed the outcome of the war without knowing precisely when. He increased his vigilance to protect the Catholic project at the very time the situation in Ireland was rapidly deteriorating. He succeeded in his responsibilities as the British Army were to do in theirs. Whether or not the exercise had value is assessed in the main conclusion.

As to the boorish attitudes of some chaplains they appear to be the by-products of immaturity, spitefulness, and social conditioning. They were not attractive traits and the vast majority of decent chaplains can afford to distance themselves from the tiny minority. They unfortunately did exist, and reflect to some degree the English Catholic society at large, and the invidious snobbishness within.<sup>94</sup> This may seem a logical outcome but these presumptions have now been tested and endorsed. Catholicism was not isolated from wider society, nonetheless, it is to be expected that those admirable tenets of Catholicism: humility, charity, piety, and being non-judgmental, might have been more closely adhered to by all Catholic chaplains and all Catholics. The whole essence of Catholicism is to follow Christ and his legitimate heirs, it is a non-negotiable religion. Within, occasional mistakes are accepted and may be reconciled, but continual and repetitive airs of arrogance and condescension have no

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<sup>93</sup> Woodlock was an APC but this was a chaplaincy arrangement, he was not promoted by the Army and remained Captain.

<sup>94</sup> A study of current English Catholicism would be helpful.

place in any Christian Faith, let alone the one which purports to be the True Church. These chaplains were a small but ugly minority, as were the sources which nourished them.

Some chaplains were damaged by the war and experienced mental and physical suffering. These were the men who deserve sympathy as contemporary society failed to understand their conditions and made few allowances, and has been noted, emotional support for priests was absent. There were others whose actions were indefensible and continued after the war. They acted dishonourably and let down their religion. The Catholic good name and hard-earned reputation owes a debt of gratitude to those senior chaplains who dealt with these men on the spot. Rawlinson appeared harsh at times, yet his contribution in identifying and disciplining the small amount of men in question, whilst not exemplary, was reasonably consistent and genuine.

At the personal level, some chaplains were caught in the middle and suffered because of their birthplace, their legitimate political aspirations, or for hierarchical expediency. If the 'Irish Question' was based on Ireland's supposed disloyalty, then perhaps the notion of the 'English Question', which was class based, could be raised? Was this an unwitting policy of putting dominant English Catholic ambition first or deliberately hard-headed pragmatism? Is it too far to claim that this showed a particular English mentality that was selfish, arrogant, and dismissive, or can this be justified by post-war ambition? Whichever interpretation, it condemns some Irish and English chaplains to be mere pawns in the larger episcopal game, based on political and social compliance. It was spectacularly imbalanced when the superior religious awareness and commitment of troops from Ireland and Lancashire, compared to those from some other areas of England, are factored into the equation. Those controlling Catholic ambition, whether Bourne or Keatinge at home, and those at the front in the shape of Rawlinson, had their roots deeply planted in the power base of southern Catholicism, namely Westminster, whose social make-up closely followed the same socially dominant pattern at home. For some, these were singularly un-Catholic ways to treat people, and no doubt the bitterness visited Ireland when chaplains returned to the new political entity that emerged. For English chaplains, the class system remained, but they did enjoy the fruits of Catholic progression after the war. The civil priorities of the Old English influenced English hierarchy, with its Westminster fountain head, was exported and flourished at war.



## CONCLUSION

Pre-war British society fundamentally shaped young Catholic priests. The main thrust of this study has been to examine how these influences affected their development and maturity, and why, and how, these stimuli encroached on their spiritual role during their chaplaincy years. By exploring how these mechanisms were manipulated, and by whom, has provided an insight into the wider Catholic experience in the Great War. This offered the opportunity to assess how the essential chaplaincy requirement to deliver spiritual comfort to those in need was accomplished. Deductions are drawn on all aspects of Catholic involvement. Chaplains will be assessed through their own personal endeavours and by the benefits and hindrances which impinged on their success, as part of the overall Catholic project. Key questions are: Were Catholic chaplains' protégés of the episcopacy in the spiritual sense, or were they merely vassals supporting the larger Catholic ambition? If the Catholic establishment fashioned its chaplains, to what extent did chaplains enhance Catholicism? Could religious succour, as offered by chaplains and received by troops, have been improved?

During the Great War, a 'parachutist' may claim that the Catholic Church maintained its claims of being the Apostolic, Pilgrim, and Universal Church; but not without 'Truffle hunters' who have demonstrated that chaplains expressed great commitment as pilgrim missionaries, spreading their spiritual gifts to the troops. The basis of this endeavour was the consistency of tradition linking back to the early apostles, saints, and particularly Peter and Paul. Catholic chaplains verified the universality of the Church by their commitment to foreign nationals whether military or civilian. The standardisation of liturgy, sacraments, and devotions, appealed to all Catholics in France and Belgium, from whatever part of the world from which they hailed. In the final analysis, the true worth of the chaplaincy effort will be shown to be encouragingly high, despite human and external impediments, and yes it could have been bettered as most things in World War One could have been. The Pauline tradition was generally maintained by Catholic chaplains on the Western Front not in a triumphalist way, rather as a release from the compression many Catholics felt within English Protestant society at this time. None of this would have been possible without the education and training provided by a Church which invested heavily in the development of young priests. Consequently, as far as chaplaincy is concerned, the Petrine element, that is the organisation of the Church, can only be viewed as supportive and influential in providing the platform for the total chaplaincy experience. The hierarchies at home had a management responsibility for

the growth of Catholicism which was another, albeit rarely considered part of their Petrine role. Hierarchical ambition ran adjacent to, and at times overlapped the chaplaincy mission, and was therefore an integral part of the overall Catholic Petrine mission. The effectiveness of both Saints Peter and Paul's strands of Catholicism will be determined.

It has been argued that much of history has been written from a Westminster-based viewpoint. This study has strenuously reasoned that to understand chaplains at a personal level then their regional cultures, histories, and geographies need to be accommodated. The same justification of a regional approach applies to Pauline and Petrine traditions at the conclusion stage. Hence, consistent with the geographical nature of this study, national and regional experiences will be assessed. It should be noted that the spiritual commitment of chaplains was not dependent on regional variation unlike that of the troops; any chaplaincy failure has been shown to be of a personal nature or as failure of the episcopacy to provide enough chaplains. The spiritual fate of soldiers was largely decided by the degree of their own religious inertia or activity imported from home.

The English Catholic hierarchy generally succeeded in their desire to end the war as loyal English patriots in domestic matters. It has been shown that throughout the war English bishops had incessantly beaten the drum of patriotism by writing and publishing Pastoral Letters to support that cause. The contents were reported by the press.<sup>95</sup> Non-Catholic writers, for their own reasons, also projected Catholic chaplains in a positive light.<sup>96</sup> The idea of employing chaplains as Catholic torch-bearers was part of this overall design, but in reality the chaplaincy contribution owed more to Catholic opportunism, and the intuitive desire for the protection of Catholicism's good name, than any strategic master plan. To answer the question in the first paragraph, chaplains were episcopal spiritual protégés and not vassals, but it has to be said not always carefully protected ones. Success could only be achieved by a combination of chaplaincy goodwill which operated at the individual level, and the dovetailing of the long-held Catholic desire for acceptance into English political and societal circles. If so, did Catholic chaplaincy in the Great War further benefit the ambitions of the English episcopacy by creating opportunities to expand? The answer is yes, but only marginally. Goodwill was a beneficial factor and Catholicism in England continued to flourish until the 1960s with Liverpool the dominant Archbishopric, and with Westminster the symbolic and

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<sup>95</sup> In Ireland, the Pastoral Letters for the bishop whose diocese the paper's circulation covered appeared in full, in addition to being read out at the pulpit. In England, the pulpit was the main method of disseminating the bishops' thoughts and direction.

<sup>96</sup> The much reviewed and assessed Robert Graves, is a case in point, see Hagarty and Johnson, *The Cross on the Sword* pp. 112-3, and Snape, *God and the British Soldier*, pp. 36-7, 39, 83-5, 103, 140, 194.

administrative head. Archbishop Whiteside of Liverpool, who preached in 1916 for both spiritual and social reconstruction was not disappointed, neither were his successors.<sup>97</sup> The number of Catholics in the Liverpool Archdiocese, for instance, grew from 374,000 in 1930 to 438,000 in 1955, and the clergy from 458 to 670 in the same period.<sup>98</sup>

Care should be exercised when attributing these developments to chaplains' contributions. A direct corollary is far-fetched, although good press was always beneficial. It has to be borne in mind that there were other calamities facing successive state governments, to which the Catholic project paled into insignificance within the national scale of priorities. Near state bankruptcy, social upheaval, the General Strike, the collapse of Wall Street, World War Two, the introduction of the Welfare State, Nationalisation, and more necessitated political and economic responses on a grand scale. It is more reasonable to view Catholic progress, as it always had been, as marginal within the Protestant State. The struggle for social progression and advancement was determinedly achieved and in part self-financed, but had to be conducted unobtrusively and under the scrutiny of majority concern. This is not to suggest subversion but pragmatic Catholic survival, learned over centuries.

Nevertheless, the Catholic policy of participation in the war did generate a temporary good-press from British society, but it did not last long. In 1921, Fr Rawlinson wrote to selected chaplains for their wartime experiences.<sup>99</sup> Evidently this was the peak of interest, pride, and the willingness to recount the war. It was a triumphal time and Catholicism naturally wished to capitalise on its war efforts. As such, publishing a book of their experiences was a measure of how chaplains felt concerning their contribution to the wider Catholic cause. The idea was still active in 1924 as a further request in *Freemans Journal* indicates.<sup>100</sup> Nonetheless, interest was beginning to fade. Rawlinson's correspondence with a co-writer for the eventual publication, Fr G. Anderton of Little Malvern, indicated the position in early 1925: 'I don't want to alarm you, but at the present rate of progress I shall be several years over the book, if it ever gets done at all'.<sup>101</sup> The initiative was dead when on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1930, Fr Anderton returned the file of extensive chaplaincy submissions by goods train to Rawlinson. His pithy remarks concluded any further attempts to write the Catholic history of the war:

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<sup>97</sup> Report of the Ecclesiastical Educational Fund, Archbishop Whiteside of Liverpool, (31<sup>st</sup> January 1916).

<sup>98</sup> Despite the fact that the Liverpool Archdiocese shrunk after the 1924 diocesan boundary changes where its northern boundary was marked by the river Ribble, Doyle *Mitres and Missions*, p. 269.

<sup>99</sup> DAA, Ephemera. Rawlinson to all chaplains writing from Trinity Square, Southwark SE1 in 1921. Submissions were made but the book was never produced.

<sup>100</sup> *Freemans Journal*, (6<sup>th</sup> October 1924).

<sup>101</sup> DAA, Ephemera, Anderton to Rawlinson, (25<sup>th</sup> February 1925).

For the Lord's sake don't ask me to collaborate with you in this job! [A new initiative from Keatinge] I am thoroughly fed up with the War and Histories of the War, and War Novels etc. Moreover, I have never forgotten how I wasted endless hours for a whole year in reading through all these documents, with a view to extracting something of value from them, only to realise that at last, nobody except yourself could possibly supply the extra knowledge needed to make the History alive.<sup>102</sup>

It is possible to sympathise with Fr Anderton on many levels. It seems that initial enthusiasm had evaporated a mere ten years since the war ended. Eventually, many of these submissions were archived in Downside Abbey but remain forgotten in the files.<sup>103</sup> The roseate internal Catholic community had little hope of exerting long-term external influence through chaplains' endeavours, time created an unsurmountable barrier. There had been an initial upsurge towards chaplain's positive contributions at war as represented in the Catholic media after hostilities ceased. The ubiquitous Fr Doyle had his biography published repeatedly and a string of pamphlets were derived from it,<sup>104</sup> as well as numerous obituaries and magazine articles.<sup>105</sup> Benedict Williamson and Robert Steuart have been mentioned and were somewhat typical of some ex-chaplains displaying either a sense of temporary euphoria, possibly triumphalism, or just plain relief. The great majority of war chaplains remained silent. It should be recognised that in the post-war non-Catholic world, there was an increase in spiritualism as people sought connection with the dead or to make sense of what had happened. As early as 1919 in France, Abel Gance directed a memorable film, *J'accuse*, which dealt with the insanity of war and its causes, but particularly linking dead French soldiers with their own resurrection. This was an intense period of examination, confusion, and intellectual as well as practical retribution. The advantages gained by chaplains during the war did produce an initial and short-lived opportunity to enjoy the fruits of their labours. Brevity was not for any lack of appreciation, but simply war weariness and the challenges for both the episcopacy and the government in post-war reality. At worst, the chaplains' contributions to this episcopal ambition had little measurable effect, and at best, they represented a transient boost to Catholics at home.

English Catholicism continued to change and by the 1930s after Bourne's death, the term British Catholicism had now, by default, become something of a reality.<sup>106</sup> Changes occurred partly through the efforts of planned hierarchical intent and challenges to social attitudes, but also through politics and the shifting demographics stimulated by increasing

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> The author has copies, and this data may form part of future research into propaganda in general.

<sup>104</sup> For example, *Fr Willie Doyle*, (Dublin, The Irish Messenger, 1923).

<sup>105</sup> Such as 'Soldier of Christ' in *The Month* 135 January-June 1920, (London Longmans and Green).

<sup>106</sup> More accurately English and Welsh Catholicism; Scottish Catholicism and hierarchy remained independent.

social mobility.<sup>107</sup> Irish independence in 1921, and the break-up of Lancashire Catholicism through splitting the Liverpool Archdiocese to create an additional new Lancashire Diocese in 1924, constituted the last throes of British Catholic regionalism. Expansion and a desire for northern Lancastrians to be liberated from Liverpool's episcopal control, coincidental with Irish political freedom, were the driving forces.<sup>108</sup> Regionalism had reached its apogee. Regional differences which had resounding consequences at war became largely attenuated after this period; a degree of increasing social homogeneity in England with an attendant reduction in parochialism was in its infancy. In any event, Liverpool, similar to other Catholic dioceses in general, was busy expanding social services and especially education. When Cardinal Bourne, a Londoner whose mother was Irish, died in 1935 it was the end of an era of London dominated prelates. Hinsley from Yorkshire and then Griffin from Birmingham, were consecrated Archbishop of Westminster and thus paved the way in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, for Cardinals Godfrey and Heenan, both Archbishops of Liverpool, to become head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales at Westminster.<sup>109</sup> Although Heenan was born in Ilford his parents were both Irish. He progressed via Leeds and Liverpool Dioceses. Godfrey was born in Liverpool. The winds of change were not just blowing through the Empire but British Catholicism too.<sup>110</sup>

The Irish Catholic Church had historically retained its religious independence despite determined efforts to subjugate it, and hence it retained a strong influence on all parts of Irish life. In political terms the Irish Catholic situation was quite different from the English. The Irish bishops wanted Home Rule within the Empire at the start of the war, but as the Irish Parliamentary Party disintegrated they gradually withdrew active support and instead engaged with the new political reality. 'All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born' waxed Yeats with reference to the Dublin Rising.<sup>111</sup> This was an insightful remark for future Irish independence. Yeats alluded, among other things,<sup>112</sup> to a national awakening which was also detectable at war. However, Irish nationalism was in reality of little consequence to Irish

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<sup>107</sup> Today, it is ironic that a relatively small influx of overseas Catholics from the Universal Church into the Dioceses of Lancashire, Liverpool and Salford, has in recent years failed to stem the tide of decay in numbers of churchgoers. Equally, the reverse is true of some Catholic districts in the south which have a high proportion of immigrant worshippers. The Irish are no longer the dominant Catholic immigrant group. Eastern Europeans, West Indians, and people from the Pacific basin, and others, all contribute to maintaining Catholic vitality. It is now Lancashire Catholicism which is under the threat of extinction with no apparent policy of regeneration. The roles between Lancashire and the South have been reversed. It would be an interesting comparative study to investigate if the same factors applied to this new immigration to that of the old, especially on a regional basis.

<sup>108</sup> Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 269. The part which the pre-war Lancastrian versus Irish fissures played, if any, awaits further study.

<sup>109</sup> Godfrey 1956-63; Heenan 1963-75.

<sup>110</sup> A speech in Cape Town 1960, by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan.

<sup>111</sup> William Butler Yeats, *Easter 1916: Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1920)

<sup>112</sup> Including his unrequited love for Maude Gonne.

chaplains during hostilities, at least in the public arena. Both pro and anti-Sinn Fein factions did occupy sections of the Irish episcopacies interest immediately after the Rising, but that soon faded to make way for three determining factors: conscription, the food crisis, and the increasingly revolutionary political landscape towards the end of the Great War. The bishops united behind the first two topics and rallied the population.<sup>113</sup> The latter proved more difficult. The bishops, in-line with their own conservative backgrounds were more concerned with defusing the growth of internal political and social strife. They abhorred violence, and mindful of the dangers highlighted in *Rerum Novarum*, were anxious about the growth of left-wing interventionism, avaricious capitalism, and the resultant class conflict. Ambivalence towards Sinn Fein was a result of the fear of physical-force nationalism and the rise of leftist politics within its Republican elements.<sup>114</sup> Events, not of their own making, took over during the war years and their efforts turned towards the stabilisation of a society which was becoming radicalised and unpredictable. They continued to encourage and apply conservative and conformist policies in the post-war era.

Britain continued to aggravate Irish support. The national integrity of the Dominion forces, especially Canadian and ANZACs, had been enhanced by a grateful British Empire through their war efforts. Ireland had been denied this status<sup>115</sup> or gratitude.<sup>116</sup> It would not be until the formation of the Free State in 1921 that some arrangement of self-determination was possible. For nationalist ideological reasons, Irish born ex-British Army soldiers were treated shabbily or worse, and until recently ignored if not dismissed by many Irishmen.<sup>117</sup> By the end of the war, the British had proven unwilling or unable to accommodate Ireland's legitimate political demands. Understandably, international politics were becoming too distant and it was local Irish concerns which occupied the Irish episcopacy. It is reasonable to conclude that the active participation of the Irish Catholic hierarchy in the Great War was peripheral at most, and unlike their English equivalents, they had no major part to play in influencing Irish chaplains.

The next decades confirmed the Irish clergy's leading role in Irish society as they navigated a path alongside new Irish Catholic leaders. The conservative nature of Irish society ensured that political change did not translate into the transformation of the social order.

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<sup>113</sup> Even if bishops were lukewarm over Sinn Fein.

<sup>114</sup> Stephen Bellis, 'Quadragesimo Anno and the Red Threat: Church-State Relationships in Ireland 1931', (unpublished master's thesis, Liverpool University, 2006), who argues that in reality, this was not a practical threat.

<sup>115</sup> The continual failure to implement Home Rule.

<sup>116</sup> This sense of injustice permeates much of Irish writing, for example Fr Gill's diaries,

<sup>117</sup> India would have to endure another world war, and its soldiers had to fight again for the British Empire before attaining independence.

Accordingly, civic and legal institutions imitated English models. Society in Ireland remained agricultural and traditional, continuing to export its food and people. The Pope's encyclical of 1891, *Rerum Novarum* and its successor *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931, provided blueprints for Catholic social development, but as in England the response was selective and piecemeal. The dangers of large-scale industrial-based capitalism were insignificant in rural Ireland. The Irish Church was deeply embedded in society, and if not directly political, it enjoyed an intense political influence through association. Any political leader adopting a policy against Catholic teaching would do so at their own peril, and the localism of Irish life ensured ease of compliance. The Irish Church and mainly Catholic politicians managed to control the few weak leftist movements in the 1930s, but they lurched uncomfortably towards the right and the Blueshirt Movement, until the events of 1939-1945 re-balanced the pendulum towards the middle. The Irish Government's neutrality in the *Second World War*, or the Emergency as it was known, had arguably exercised more weight on the Church than any long-term effects from the *Great War*.

These deductions would, nevertheless, benefit from further testing in the post-war era. To look at an organisation and its individuals over a mere four years of war has obvious drawbacks. The inescapable judgement is that the Irish Catholic episcopacy were necessarily involved in the new political state and had enough to cope with addressing moral, social, and state-building concerns. By the end of the Great War, as far as the Church was concerned, Ireland had re-aligned itself with the new situation which was removing itself from any further English domination. It had offered its sons in a cause that had now been overtaken by internal events. There was no longer a British government to placate, and the Irish Church and Irish Catholicism were in no way radically changed by the Great War.

In the Irish context that is where this thesis ends although some ambiguities remain to be explored in future research. Albeit within the new Free State, the sense that Ireland emerged from the war to pursue and maintain the conservative and class-based pre-war society, so redolent of Home Rulers and the Catholic élite, persists. There could be an argument that the Irish hierarchy harboured a Petrine or political ambition to position itself in line with the new state as it emerged from revolution, and that this somehow affected Irish chaplains too. Whilst this does not yet challenge the conclusions already made about the Great War, it would be interesting to evaluate if the Irish episcopacy and the majority of her senior priests, many of whom had been entrenched in the politics of Home Rule, did actually move towards radicalism as suggested, or did they merely tread water until their brand of conservatism should transfer into the coming generations? If so, the deductions drawn about

the effects of the Great War will need to be re-assessed. Major General Hickie of the 16<sup>th</sup> Irish Division is indicative of the preservation of Catholic conservative Ireland, and in conjunction with many senior Catholics and clergy was a strong Home Ruler. May we presume that when chaplains were dismissed through their politics that these equated to being Sinn Fein politics, as seems the logical inference? In other words was the ground being laid by future leaders during the war, even at the Front, by political or class discrimination? If so, the theory that English Catholic ambition was the only factor at play would be contestable. In 1925 in the Irish Free State, Hickie was elected as a member of the Senate with a record vote. Home Rule disintegrated, but he, and surely by extension the senior clergy, seamlessly adapted to, and were adopted by, the Free State. Being by nature traditionalists and conservatives, their politics shaped the new state accordingly. If this was an episcopal policy rather than by intuition, then there would indeed have been a political ambition, and thereby its effect would need testing against the hypothesis thus far. However, the evidence to date supports the position that the Irish Church's ambitions were merely an extension of their existing political and social composition and attitudes, and did not affect the war in any practical manner.

If the Irish episcopacy were largely distanced from the war, and the English episcopacy gained little, what can be said for their chaplains? Did the Pauline experience match the Petrine? Irish chaplains paid the highest price of English episcopal strategy. Some chaplains, but not all, were treated unfairly and many were Irish. Other than the temporary indignity of being mistrusted and treated shabbily, there appears to have been no long-term effect on the majority of victims. This view has to be tempered. A study which culminates in 1919 would benefit from a post-war examination of the chaplains aforementioned to ascertain if these snapshot years are truly representative over time. It would be a useful exercise to examine the years up to World War Two to see to what degree the Irish clergy took sides in the new independent Ireland, as they were now free to express political opinions denied them in the Great War. What Irish chaplains thought of their lives in the British army after demobilisation would be interesting. Fr M. J. Doyle, who wrote from Dublin on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1920, [after being given permission to wear his chaplain's army uniform on appointed public occasions] is an example:

May I ask you a favour of indicating to the same authorities [War Office] that, owing to the disgrace and degradation into which that uniform has been brought by some of those who wear it in Ireland, I cannot, in any way whatever, associate myself with it until the British Government comes to its senses and hourly saves Ireland for the Empire but also restores discipline and dignity to the army.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> DAA, 3825, Doyle to Rawlinson, (17<sup>th</sup> September 1920).



Michael Doyle's comments show that political views, and therefore their assessment, cannot always be reduced to simple black and white evaluations. He was talking about the atrocities in the War of Independence and his Irish pride is obvious, but so too is his pride in the British Army which he knew and admired in France, although clearly this did not transfer to Ireland. Interestingly, he retained Redmond's desire for empire. The attitudes of these Irish chaplains in their new political state would reveal their loyalties so often hidden, and be a measure of their developing attitudes towards the future creation of the Irish Republic. Such research would confirm or challenge the assessments made from a war scenario so far denied the contextual balance of a peacetime component.

Both Irish and English chaplains incurred the wrath of English social snobbery. In addition Irish chaplains had to endure overt racism and suspicion of their political loyalties. Given the small degree of benefit which accrued the Catholic cause, Rawlinson was heavy-handed. This should be balanced by the realisation that it would have been a dereliction of duty if he had not erred on the side of caution. Rawlinson was not motivated by personal or national animosity or gainsay, but purely the degree of potential damage that an individual might pose to the larger English Catholic objectives. If the efforts to involve chaplains in this ambition had little long-term significance, Rawlinson was not to know that. He was chosen to operate policies that would not to take chances with the British authorities, for they had the potential to destroy the good and hard-earned reputation of Catholics.

Without question, the Catholic Church maintained its claim to be the Universal Church in spiritual matters. It could not argue that it was a universal church in political terms, as it erred selfishly towards the desires of the English at the expense of the Irish Church. However, Rome never expected commonality between nations with respect to temporal matters, hence, the lack of universality in the political sense was compatible within Catholic norms. Ironically, it is the political differences between English and Irish episcopacies which make a mockery of the concept of Catholic Britishness with its implied homogeneity; neither the Irish nor English hierarchies ever assumed secular conformity and retained their own independent agendas and structures, even if they were united spiritually.

For all the shenanigans of the English episcopacy and the mechanisms of GHQ compliance, it was chaplains who provided a true picture and the real flavour of Catholic spiritual commitment. The key question when analysing the contributions made by chaplains is did they fulfil their vocations? A vocation: '[...] calls for regularity of habit, reverence of demeanour, edification of life, devotion to duty, abounding charity and a willingness to spend,

and be spent, for the salvation of souls'.<sup>119</sup> This is a tall order, but success was evident in the control group diaries and the majority of Catholic chaplains examined. This is not a scientific enquiry which is impossible given the variables. However, interpretations based on sound principles and employing a degree of solid evidence can bear fruit. Subsequently, a summation of the control group of diarists supports the general positive view of Catholic chaplains. Outside of the diaries, the misfits have been recorded by Rawlinson but should not be taken out of numerical significance. Where data is fragmented or non-existent in the voluble and meticulously collected Rawlinson Papers, which have little or nothing to say about the majority of chaplains, it is reasonable to conclude that this reflects the reality. There was nothing untoward occurring as Catholic chaplains in the main did not have serious concerns, they continued to work unnoticed as they had in their pre-war missions. External to GHQs archive little is revealed of any import.<sup>120</sup> This combination of few sources does not create a vacuum. Instead the existence of only relevant data encourages a realistic hypothesis, confirming that the majority of chaplains went unnoticed and accomplished their missions with dignity and effectiveness. Any exceptions to the rule were projected in high and disproportionate luminance. There was no hiding place for malcontents who did not reach the level of both spiritual and behavioural conduct. Rawlinson et al. would root them out if malpractice existed and dutifully record their offence and any action taken.

It has been argued throughout that in this type of thesis, sources should be primary and validated when possible. There was inadmissible evidence omitted from this study which, nonetheless, should be further investigated. Why did Fr Gill change his diaries? Was this for personal, Jesuit, or political reasons in a changing society re-emphasising its Catholic credentials? Why are the diaries of Fr McRory so different from all other diaries? They contain anti-English chaplaincy vitriol, and there are also doubts as to the motivations and the reliability of the diarist whose escapades are out of synchronisation with other evidence available. Why is it that newspapers in Lourdes and the nearby town of Pau, were censored during the war, and who made that decision and why? General Catholic propaganda also requires a full examination including war stories and newspaper and journal sensationalism. An analysis of politically motivated wartime reporting in general would be useful. To what degree did this censorship hinder or aid episcopal ambition? Censorship and the addendums suggested in the conclusion for further study, arise because of the necessary time limits

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<sup>119</sup> Archbishop Downey of Liverpool 1945, Doyle, *Mitres and Missions*, p. 263.

<sup>120</sup> The Bishops papers at Farnborough RCBFA record drink-related problems but they are small in number. It is the quietude of their handling which is relevant and reflects the removal of errant priests so that damage limitation was maintained. Some of these chaplains were recalled before being deployed.

defined in the title. It would benefit this work if these examinations were continued and either confirmation or correction deliberated.

Derring-do accounts have been deliberately ignored and acts of bravery largely unrecorded in this proposal. The reasons have been explained but it should be noted that chaplains did record acts of great courage and in many cases under-played their own part. They often showed great determination to tend to the dying and wounded. Fr Jeremiah Galvin from Macroom, Kerry, working from the Westminster Diocese was attached to the 18<sup>th</sup> Kings Liverpool Regiment, (not to be confused with Fr Jerome Galvin above, also from Kerry) was lauded for his Muscular Christianity, verve and enthusiasm; 'Fr Galvin will come back from leave like a giant refreshed and continue his excellent work with 90<sup>th</sup> Brigade'.<sup>121</sup> Fr Allchin at sixty-one, was still tramping around with his regiment so that he could be there for them. Only one priest, Fr Prevost, claimed his faith had failed him and this claim is arguable. Most of the correspondence is mundane and routine. These men had a job to do and did it to the best of their abilities. St. Thomas Aquinas dictum that priests above all people should, *Quantum potes aude*, ['dare to do all that you are able to'],<sup>122</sup> was achieved by the great majority. Rather than selecting further examples at random, a summary of the three diarists is more representative of the whole chaplaincy endeavour.

Fr Gillett was an out-and-out Lancashire Diocesan priest: hard-working, affable, devout, radiating great humility alongside humour. He shared these virtues with those French civilians, Americans, and Tommies, which he encountered in the line or out of it. Spending most of his time at the Front, he never boasted of his experiences, in fact he minimised danger at every turn. His devotion to the Virgin Mary was endless, as his Pilgrimage to Lourdes which he organised for soldiers in 1919 demonstrated.<sup>123</sup> He was a man of the people and of God. His diary plots the ordinary and in doing so reveals a very extraordinary man instead. Acquisition of his diary was without doubt the most important single contribution to understanding these men. He typified a simple and honest Lancastrian Catholicism of the time and thus provided an entrance by which to witness a priest's life. Any subsequent Lancashire priest, or the general Lancashire Catholic population, can be very proud of his chaplaincy.<sup>124</sup>

Fr Drinkwater's diary is somewhat truncated by his hospitalisation in October 1918 after which it concluded. His ease and simple assurance with all ranks elevated him above the other diarists in communication matters, as he moved seamlessly through the war. That is

<sup>121</sup> DAA, 3824 O'Shaughnessy to Rawlinson, (undated but likely to be January 1918).

<sup>122</sup> Radcliffe, *Why Go To Church?* p.99. Origins cited earlier

<sup>123</sup> SDA, Gillett Diaries, (7<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> February 1919).

<sup>124</sup> See Appendix 12.

until his internal mind-set and maturing socio-political beliefs are excavated deeper. His disgust for the carnage of war intensified almost to the point of resignation in favour of becoming a conscientious objector. His moving account of the death of his brother in a plane crash behind enemy lines, to which he held himself partly to blame, revealed a sensitive side not often forthcoming from chaplains. He shared with Gillett a love of Catholic history, but differs through his lack of intensity with people, which is probably why he dealt with them more effectively. The major contribution from Drinkwater came through his maturation towards social and religious educational development. He confirmed criticisms made in the Plater enquiry as to the poor standard of Catholic instruction in some areas. As a result, he pursued the advancement of Catholic education for children after the war ended. He saw at first-hand how this lack of religious knowledge hampered some Catholic soldiers and wanted to correct this situation.<sup>125</sup> He typified the intellectual aspect in midlands Catholicism in the shadow of Newman and added yet a further strand to the diversity of Catholic fibre.<sup>126</sup>

Fr Steuart, it has been stated, was both a victim and beneficiary of circumstance.<sup>127</sup> On the whole, a Catholic priest who is aloof, proud, and somewhat self-delusional, will not be ordinarily endearing. This should not camouflage his priestly skills, endeavour, and devotion to duty, which are not questioned. It was difficult for him being unable to mix with those in society with whom he was unfamiliar, but also those from whom he might have expected social reciprocity. His obituary refers to a 'pawky' (cunning) sense of humour<sup>128</sup> but his diary is entirely without humour. It is not without emotion. When conducting the last services for a man to be executed he was suitably moved and responded with great care and devotion, he rose above personal unease. This underscores the sadness of a priest conducting a mission inappropriate for his particular socially shaped disposition. A more suitable role may have been allotted to him civilian life. His obituary sums up his difficulties: '....his inherited and acquired culture made him "interesting" to all: he neither asked too little or too much, especially from "foreigners": he wished tacitly to "civilise": *he maintained his deep personal reserve [...]*'.<sup>129</sup> [Author's italics]. Fr Steuart typified that element of Catholicism that was out of

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<sup>125</sup> It is significant that this Birmingham priest only noticed the inadequacies of some midlands Catholics through comparing them at war with Catholics displaying a higher intensity.

<sup>126</sup> Appendix 13.

<sup>127</sup> Appendix 14.

<sup>128</sup> JAL, Steuart, *Obituaries*, p. 125.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

touch with ordinary people. Despite his difficulties, Fr Steuart found his niche in war and did not want to return to civilian life.<sup>130</sup>

Despite the rare rogue chaplain, and the understandably weary, anxious, and opinionated ones, the broad spectrum of Catholic chaplains were unsung heroes. Innumerable were injured and thirty-four died in World War One, twenty-two are buried on the Western Front.<sup>131</sup> Their missions were to save souls and give as much spiritual assistance as possible. It was never enough, chaplaincy shortages ensured that many soldiers would be denied access to Catholic spiritual succour, but that does not diminish individual chaplaincy efforts. The vast majority of priests and chaplains were as Gwynn concluded, 'zealous missionaries, rather than men of spectacular gifts and individual distinction...they lived and laboured until death took them'.<sup>132</sup> Chaplains went about their duties much as they had at home. It is an historic injustice that those who do not complain, and who get on with their work diligently are ignored and forgotten. It is historically prudent to recognise the part in the war effort that these toughest and yet gentlest of men played. The tendency to glorify extreme behaviour and conduct, either for good or ill, should be resisted. Their testimonies reflect their role which oscillated between danger and tedium. Historians have a duty of care to represent all their experiences with equanimity, and base their verdicts on solid primary sources.

One of the most taxing observations of Catholic chaplains, from a layman's perspective, is at the human level. From the outside it seems that the isolation and discipline required for fulfilling their vocation required an almost pitiless and selfless dedication to duty, privations at the expense of their own needs. On reflection this is the reality of the religious life. An understanding of the true meaning of being a priest reveals a devotion of one's life to God. With this comprehension Fr Doyle's asceticism appears less extreme. The consistency of satisfying this calling, and the genuine belief and commitment of the priests involved, is remarkable at every level throughout this study. But there was often a price to pay. Despite their shared religion and mission, priests rarely knew each other, or had time to build friendships. They obviously did not have their own families or external relationships of note. Often lonely, it is poignant to recall the one major flaw in their formative years which was identified as a lack of emotional support. The requirement to celibacy, poverty, and obedience for Religious priests, and celibacy and obedience for Diocesan's, makes it transparent that

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<sup>130</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries: I realised I was a civilian again with just a courtesy right to wear uniform for one month more if I chose. I feel terribly out of it and dull. It has been a good time, the like of which I shall never see again! *Ave atque vale!* [Hail and farewell], (15<sup>th</sup> November 1919)

<sup>131</sup> Appendix 3.

<sup>132</sup> Denis Gwynn, 'The Irish Immigration' in Beck, *The English Catholics*, p. 290.

dedication to vocation was always a tough regimen. That testing ground had been established in seminary and was voluntarily accepted. Celibacy had advantages when undertaking chaplains' duties with less external anxiety to manage. Obedience was concomitant with both Army and Church regimens, whilst poverty was a fact of life. Nonetheless, at the human level, a sense of being cast adrift or of solitude must have taken its toll. Gillett, Drinkwater, and even the tight-lipped Steuart complained of being lonely. Respect for chaplains was plentiful from soldiers, but priests were in many ways treated as spiritual automatons by their own bishops and religious superiors at home, many of whom regarded them as forgotten men. The situation was hardly redressed after the war, when remembering their wartime lives and deaths seemed like too much trouble.<sup>133</sup> There were exceptions, the Society of Jesus being the outstanding example.

It is clear that the priests from a wide spectrum of personalities were largely successful in their mission but what did the Catholic authorities think? Rawlinson offered his summation of Catholic chaplaincy endeavour on the Western Front:

The cessation of hostilities after four and a half years of ghastly war must be indeed to you a most happy relief. For during that time you have frequently had to minister to the living, and to the injured and dying, under shell fire or bombing or gas attacks, and in daily companionship with death; and you are worthy of very sincere congratulations for the noble and self-sacrificing way in which you have carried out your sacred trust. It has been shown by the discharge of your spiritual duties, and the remarkable response from the men, that in these days of stress, there has been 'No failure of the Church'. During the war, no Catholic man has been allowed to die without the sacraments when there was any possibility of him being reached....Whilst the work of the Catholic chaplain has been most faithfully performed, it has been seriously hampered by the shortages of priests in the Field.<sup>134</sup>

This is undoubtedly an over confident assessment. Nonetheless, Rawlinson was not too far off-the-mark with regards to spiritual affairs nor to chaplaincy shortages. It was typically diplomatic and heartfelt of Rawlinson to issue this statement, although his: 'No failure of the Church', will raise eyebrows for those chaplains who suffered from compliance matters and soldiers without adequate spiritual training. Both chaplains and soldiers suffered through insufficient chaplains in the field, the largest failing of the Church.

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<sup>133</sup> The general picture, with a few outstanding exceptions, is that historical data was ditched by bishops when they became new incumbents, and the services of amateur or professional archivists were often overlooked.

<sup>134</sup> DAA, Ephemera, Rawlinson to 'Reverend Father', (3<sup>rd</sup> December 1918). This was a round-robin letter to chaplains as a post-war thank you. It was repeated in short in *The Tablet* (14<sup>th</sup> December 1918). It is a positive message and reflects Rawlinson's genuine thanks and appreciation of chaplaincy endeavour. However, his assertion that; '[...] no Catholic man has been allowed to die without the sacraments when there was any possibility of him being reached', cannot be authenticated. Rawlinson was still wooing priests, as the war's finale was still some time away in 1919.

There was limited evidence at war to argue that the differences between Diocesan and Religious order priests prevailed, other than by social and cultural differences. Their relationships were moderated by a shared spiritual mission and generally a common military experience, the latter was a great leveller reducing any social advantages that may have previously existed. Naturally, there were bonds of friendship between religious from the same order, as there were diocesan from the same diocese, and those with a mutual educational upbringing. An Ushaw man would congregate with a fellow alumni as would an Old Clongownian, and so forth. That is normative behaviour and there was no evidence of favouritism or exclusion based on these closer bonds between chaplains. If there was personal enmity it was restricted to a few priests, but their reasoning has been obscured over time and may have simply been based on class or personal reasons rather than any sense of historic entrenchment. Future study embracing the views of the current clergy from all quarters might be illuminating. Hence, historic religious tensions were never a major concern in any measurable way and demonstrated that *Universalis Ecclesiae* had reduced frictions between the two, even if the Papal Bull was not designed to replace the relative standing of the hierarchies between the two strands of priesthood, merely to gain control over organisation.

In a similar vein of gauging the importance that pre-war influences had at war, the most important feature in the formation of modern Catholicism, and hence chaplains, was the introduction of Ultramontaniam.<sup>135</sup> The standardisation and consistency of behaviour and delivery of sacramental, devotional, and pastoral care was clearly evident at the Front. The heavily Romanised Holy Mass was the cement binding the whole Catholic mission together. The education system which informed and also encouraged chaplains, benefitted from the Roman controls applied. But perhaps underpinning all these activities and benefits was the strong discipline that priests and chaplains exhibited that was equally convincing. As a non-Catholic, Lieutenant Colonel Weldon, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers wrote: 'You, Father, can have services here always. You do something for the men. They are better after it. Your religion has discipline'.<sup>136</sup> Any undisciplined chaplain did not last long.

When the war ended, Catholic chaplains in the main returned to their bishops or religious superiors for allocation to their new missions.<sup>137</sup> Both Irish and English chaplains were, to quote Sean O'Casey's germane vocabulary, 'disremembered'.<sup>138</sup> The majority simply

<sup>135</sup> In the English experience, the restoration of the hierarchy facilitated the Roman model.

<sup>136</sup> Morrissey, *From Easter Week to Flanders Field*, p. 118.

<sup>137</sup> A small number became full-time army chaplains. Page continued with fighting units in Russia until 1921. The numbers of damaged priests, after their experiences, has never been quantified.

<sup>138</sup> Sean O'Casey, *The Plough and the Star Three Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001. The original play was first performed at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin 1926), p. 165.

slipped back into the priesthood, quietly obedient, in much the same way as they had conducted their chaplaincy mission. Fr Gillett returned to parochial work and was later promoted to honorary Canon in Lancaster. For him returning home was taken in its stride, just as war was, and he performed in the same way as a priest might be expected to. Nevertheless, when hearing he was to be demobbed in September 1919, he exclaimed with enthusiasm and in the Latin vernacular of the priesthood: '*SIC TRANSIT GLORIA KHAKI*'.<sup>139</sup> Fr Steuart returned to the Jesuit headquarters in Farm Street, London, taking administrative and teaching posts. Fr Drinkwater remained a Diocesan priest in Birmingham and distinguished himself in the fields of educational and social development, writing extensively on both subjects.<sup>140</sup> These men are a fair barometer of a cross section of Catholic chaplaincy on the Western Front. An extended study of the post-war lives of the chaplains featured in this study would provide balance to interpretations made at war. This technique was proven in the cases of Richmond and Tonge which provided crucial evidence to support Rawlinson's system of chaplaincy control.

The historical plight of Irish chaplains was sealed by Irishmen through the denial and deliberate disregarding of their efforts in the Great War, as the debate between the legitimacy of the new nationalism and imperialist Britain fluctuated, and then buried itself into oblivion. Until recently they were air-brushed out of Irish history and remain largely ignored by British historians. English Catholic chaplains as individuals have suffered much the same fate, as Catholicism in the Great War continues to be 'a curiously neglected subject' as Snape has argued. Catholics became mere sideshows in British historiography. Irish born chaplains working in the rest of Britain had the worst of two worlds, and continue to be ignored by both Irish and British historians. They were all forgotten men and deserve better representation in history.

<sup>139</sup> Thus passes the glory of the Army from the expression *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi* translated as worldly things are fleeting. This is the last entry in Fr Gillett's War Diary Friday, (19<sup>th</sup> September 1919).

<sup>140</sup> Alfred Denville, an irate Catholic, Conservative politician, offered to pay Drinkwater's expenses to Spain in the Spanish Civil War. He felt that Drinkwater had Republican sympathies and a trip might convince Drinkwater to denounce the left. *The Catholic Herald*, 5th February 1937. See Appendix 13 for full account.



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## Appendix 1 - Catholic Priests Ministering in England and Wales between 1801-1914<sup>1</sup>

The table below has been constructed to illustrate the place of birth of all priests ministering in England and Wales between the years 1801-1914. The heavy emphasis of Irish and Lancashire born priests reflects the claims made throughout of their prominent position in the growth of English Catholicism, and their geographical significance.

	Diocesan		Religious		Total	
Totals	3981		2971		6951	
1) <b>Ireland</b>	999	25%	523	17.6%	1522	<b>21.9%</b>
2) <b>Lancashire</b>	842	21%	507	17%	1349	<b>19.5%</b>
3) <b>Middlesex</b>	259	6.5%	167	5.6%	426	<b>6.1%</b>
4) <b>Yorkshire</b>	184	4.6%	121	4%	305	<b>4.4%</b>
.....						
90) Bedfordshire	2	.05%	1	.03%	3	<b>.04%</b>

### Ordinations<sup>2</sup>

The percentage period growth rate of ordinations across Britain, shows the advance of Catholicism in this period and re-enforces the surge of growth following mass Irish emigration, conversions from the Oxford Movement, the restoration of the hierarchy, and the influence of Ultramontaniam.

	1801-50	1851-1900	1901-1914
<b><u>Secular</u></b>	<b>15.58</b>	<b>54.52</b>	<b>83.71</b>
<b><u>Regular</u></b>	<b>8.16</b>	<b>39.28</b>	<b>57.14</b>

These figures are indicative only as they include transient and foreign clergy.

### Colleges which trained in excess of 100 priests 1800-1914<sup>3</sup>

Ushaw 919: Oscott 508: Ware/Hammersmith 477:

Pio/Beda Rome 329: Lisbon 249: Upholland 179: Valladolid 141:

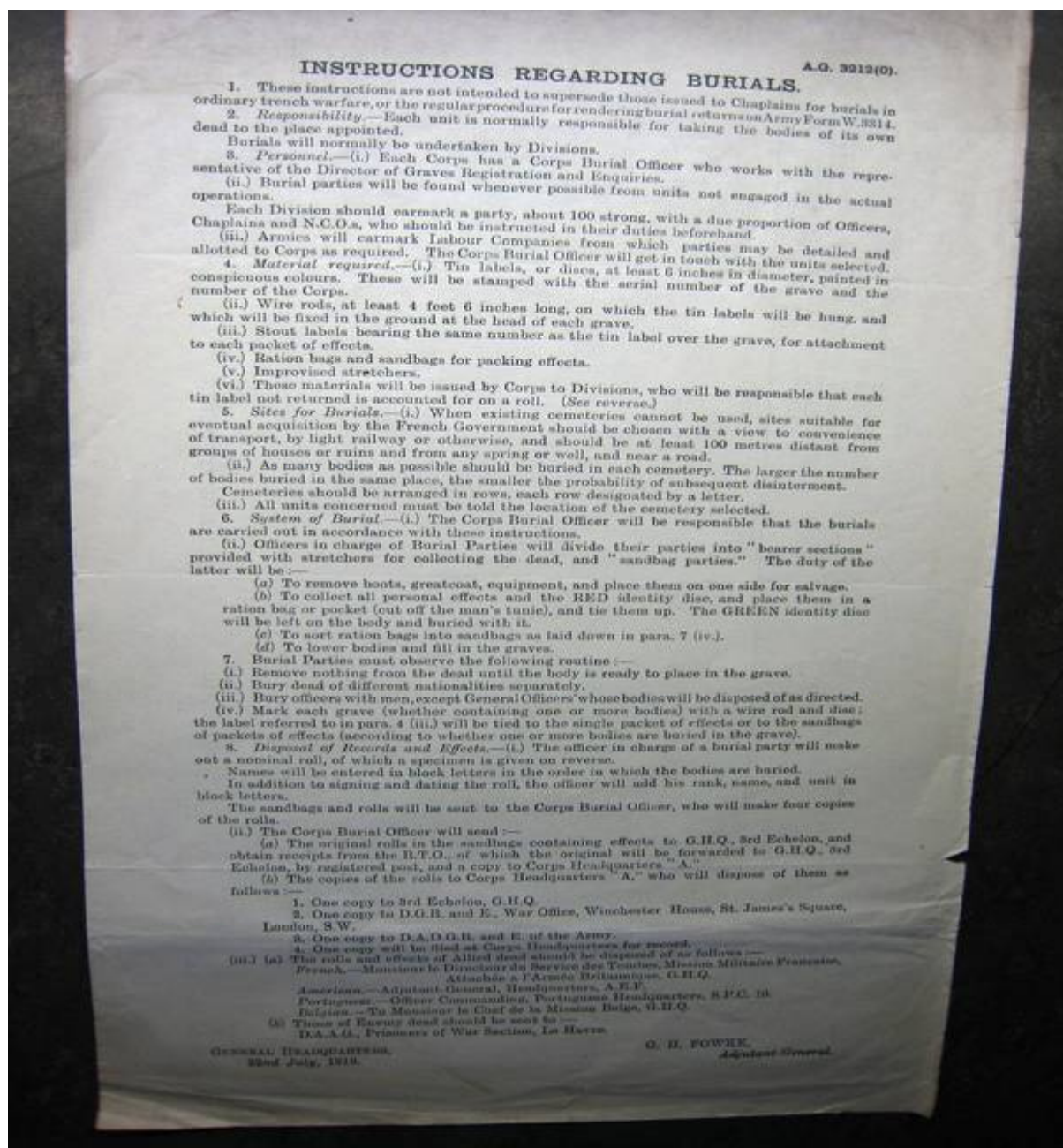
Maynooth 131: All Hallows Dublin 116: Waterford 108: Womersley 103.

<sup>1</sup> Source Fitzgerald-Lombard, *English and Welsh Priests 1801-1914*, author's tabulation from data listed, pp. 1-346.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 361.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## Appendix 2 - Catholic Burials - Instructions<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> DAA, Miscellanea, 'Information and Hints', July 1918.

### Appendix 3 – Chaplains to the British Army KIA and Buried on Western Front<sup>5</sup>

APPENDIX 9 - Chaplains to the British Army Killed and Buried on Western Front			
Chaplain's Name	Dioc	Origin	Detail
Burdess Mathew	HEX	Durham Rome Eng Coll	kia 17/4/1917 C+S 158 b Sunderland Villers Faucon Cemetery booby trap mine
Baines Thomas L	LIV		Aire Communal Cemetery 21/8/1917 kia 31/5/1919 b Preston age 31
Leeson James	LIV	see profile	Pont de Jour Cemetery Athies 23/4/17 jnd 7/7/1915, died 24/4/17
Looby Patrick	LIV	Tipperary Paris	Poelcapelle British Cemetery 26/10/17 jnd 22/8/1915
Monteith Robert	LIV/SJ	Scotland St Bueno	Ribecourt Cemetery kia 27/11/17 age 40 Passchendaele 2 27/3/1917 b Carstairs
Shine James	PLY	Waterford	inj 19/4/1918 died 21/4/18 jnd 7/10/1915 age 37 Ballyliffin Cahir Tipp
Grobel Peter	SAL	Middlesex Valladolid	Boulogne Eastern Cemetery 1/1/17 jnd 25/12/1909, died 1/1/17
McDonnell John Joseph	SAL	Clare Lisbon	JJ McDonnell kia 9/4/18 Givenchy Beuvry Com Cemetery age 41
Whiteford Charles	SBY		jnd 29/04/1916 kia 30/5/1918 Bagneu Cemetery Gezaincourt b Ludlow
Collins Herbert J	WSM	Middlesex Oscott	03/12/1915 kia 9/4/1917 Cabaret-Rouge Souchez 2nd Black Watch 9th btn RHI
Clarke Stephen	IRL		From Ireland directly? jnd 29/3/1916
Gordon Michael Patrick	SCO	Glasgow	C+S 160 killed by shell hit billet in Coxyde testimony, Professor in Diocesan College
O'Sullivan Donal Vincent	IRL	Killamey	kia 5/7/1916 Bouzincourt Killamey
Guthrie David M	OSB	France Quarr	7/4/16-21/11/16 died of wounds Varennes Cemetery
Carey Timothy	SJ	Cork Milltown Park	Audruicq nr west end church jnd 5/2/1916 27/2/1919 age 41 Limerick
Doyle Denis	SJ	Notts St Bueno	Dive Copse Cemetery Sailly-le-Sec kia 17/8/1916 MC
Montagu WP	SJ		31/10/1918 Awoingt b Port Stewart Derry age 32
Doyle William	SJ IRL		25/04/2015 jnd 30/11/1915 kia 7/8/1917 Tyne Cot
Fitzgibbon John	SJ IRL		Trefcon Cemetery Caulaincourt kia 8/9/18 jnd 4/3/1916 Castlereagh Roscommon mc dso
Gwynn John	SJ IRL		Bethune Town Cemetery kia 12/10/1915, lost leg earlier? see profile
Knapp Francis (Simon)	ODC	Sussex	Dozinghem gravestone says SS Knapp kia 1/8/1917
Watters	PLY	Mayo	Awoingt
22 Died and Buried on Western Front			

<sup>5</sup> Compiled from the various sources generated by the author such as Catholic directories, Army Lists, CWGC, PRO and the archives listed.

## Appendix 4 - How Chaplains Died on Western Front<sup>6</sup>

APPENDIX - 9A			
Chaplains Name	Diocese or Order	How Died WESTERN FRONT	Military Unit
ENGLISH/SCOTTISH CFs			
Burdess Mathew	HEX	Booby trap bomb	Gloucester
Baines Thomas L	LIV	Killed by bomb	Royal Field Artillery
Leeson James	LIV	Killed in action - no details	Royal Fusiliers
Monteith Robert	LIV/SJ	Died of injuries after being hit by a shell in front line	Royal Field Artillery
Grobel Peter	SAL	Died of bronchial pneumonia	Catholic Club Boulogne
Whitefoord Charles	SBY	Inj by shell shrapnel whilst identifying a grave died hours later.	London Regiment
Collins Herbert J	WSM	Killed by shell supporting MO on front line.	Black Watch
Gordon Michael Patrick	SCO	Killed by shell in billet, possibly 'friendly fire'	Inniskilling Fusiliers
Guthrie David M	OSB	Died of Wounds in France	East Lancashire Regiment
Carey Timothy	SJ	Died of Flu contracted in France at his post, died in Boulogne hospital	Catholic Club at Adruicq
Montagu WP	SJ	Severe thigh wounds by shell when going to say Mass - died 3 days later	Royal Garrison Artillery
Strickland J	SJ	Died in Malta of pleurisy contracted at the front BURIED MALTA	Royal Irish Field Hospital
Irish CFs From England			
Looby Patrick	LIV	Killed by shell in front line with troops	Northumberland Fusiliers
McDonnell John Joseph	SAL	Killed by shell after ministering front line with troops	55 Division West Lancs MGC
Shine James	PLY	Wounded in action died later Boulogne hospital	Middlesex Regiment
Watters		Died of flu a week before Armistice	
Irish from South Africa			
Doyle Denis	SJ	Injured by shell at the front, died at CCS 2 hours later	Leinsters
IRISH CFs			
Clarke Stephen	IRL	Killed by shell supporting MO on front line.	Lancashire Fusiliers
Doyle William	SJ IRL	Killed by shell in front line with troops	16th Irish Division
Fitzgibbon John	SJ IRL	Burying a soldier, attending wounded received shrapnel head wound died	RAMC 17th Ambulance
Gwynn John	SJ IRL	Shell struck HQ, severe leg and back wounds, died of shock next day.	Irish Guards
Knapp Francis (Simon)	ODC	Stomach wound after ministering wounded on the road, died under surg	Irish Guards
O'Sullivan Donal Vincent	IRL	Killed by shell in front line with troops	Irish Rifles
DIED at or on way HOME			
Bertini M	OSB	Contracted pneumonia and died in England after being evacuated.	Various hospitals in France
McIlvaine John	SCO	Gassed, returning to UK on Glenart Castle hosp ship by torpedo - drowned	Notts and Derby Regiment
McAuliffe C R	OFM	Died from severe sea sickness returning from France to visit ill mother	Base Hospital Rouen
Australian Army			
Bergin Michael	SJ IRL	Killed by shell in front line with troops	51st Div AUSTRALIAN Army

<sup>6</sup> Compiled from the various sources generated by the author such as Catholic directories, Army Lists, CWGC, PRO and the archives listed.

### Appendix 5 - Chaplains who Died in other Theatres or on Way Home<sup>7</sup>

APPENDIX	9C											
Prendergast Mathew	HEX	Maynooth	9/7/1915	kia 6/9/1918	Cairo war cemetery	age 37	Ballysaggart	Lismore	Waterford			
Finn William	MBR	Yorkshire Ushaw	kia 25/4/1915	V Beach cemetery	Gallipoli							
McIlvaine John	SCO	Glasgow	gassed 2/10/17	k sunk	Glenart Castle hospital ship	26/2/1918	Hollybrook Cemetery	Southampton	age 39			
Bertini M	OSB	Italy Farnborough	kia 20/9/1918	Farnborough Abbey	orig Italy then Bournemouth							
McGinity Henry Guthbert	SJ	Liverpool (Waterloo)	3/10/1916	Giavera Brit cemetery	kia 8/11/1918							
Strickland J	SJ		jnd 10/10/1914	k 5/7/1917	Addolorata cemetery	died Malta						
Bergin Michael	SJ	IRL	Australian Army									
McAuliffe C R	OFM		6/10/1919	Limerick st Lawrence's cemetery.	See main thesis for detail							
OMeehan I J	OFM		Irish Province 4/6/1915	Amara war cemetery	Iraq 19/12/1919							
O'Dea Laurence	CAP	Ireland Kilkenny	kia 4/11/1917	jnd 2/7/1915	AGE 66! Crawley Monastery cemetery							
Kavanagh Bernard	CSR	Limerick	Jerusalem war cemetery	27/9/1914								
Watson Charles	CSR	Belgium	Basra war cemetery.	Wavertree	kia 22/7/1918	age 51						

<sup>7</sup> Compiled from the various sources generated by the author such as Catholic directories, Army Lists, CWGC, PRO and the archives listed.



## Appendix 6 – Chaplains who Died on Western Front – Their Pre-War Missions<sup>8</sup>

England	Ireland	Irish - English	Scotland	Irish - South African
Baines Thomas	Carey Timothy	Looby Patrick	Gordon Michael Patrick	Doyle Denis
Burdess Mathew	Clarke Stephen	McDonnell John Joseph	Monteith Robert	
Collins Herbert J	Doyle William	Shine James		
Grobel Peter	Fitzgibbon John	Watters		
Guthrie David M	Gwynn John			
Leeson James	Knapp Francis (Simon)			
Whitefoord Charles	Montagu WP			
	O'Sullivan Donal Vincent			

<sup>8</sup> Compiled from the various sources generated by the author such as Catholic directories, Army Lists, CWGC, PRO and the archives listed.

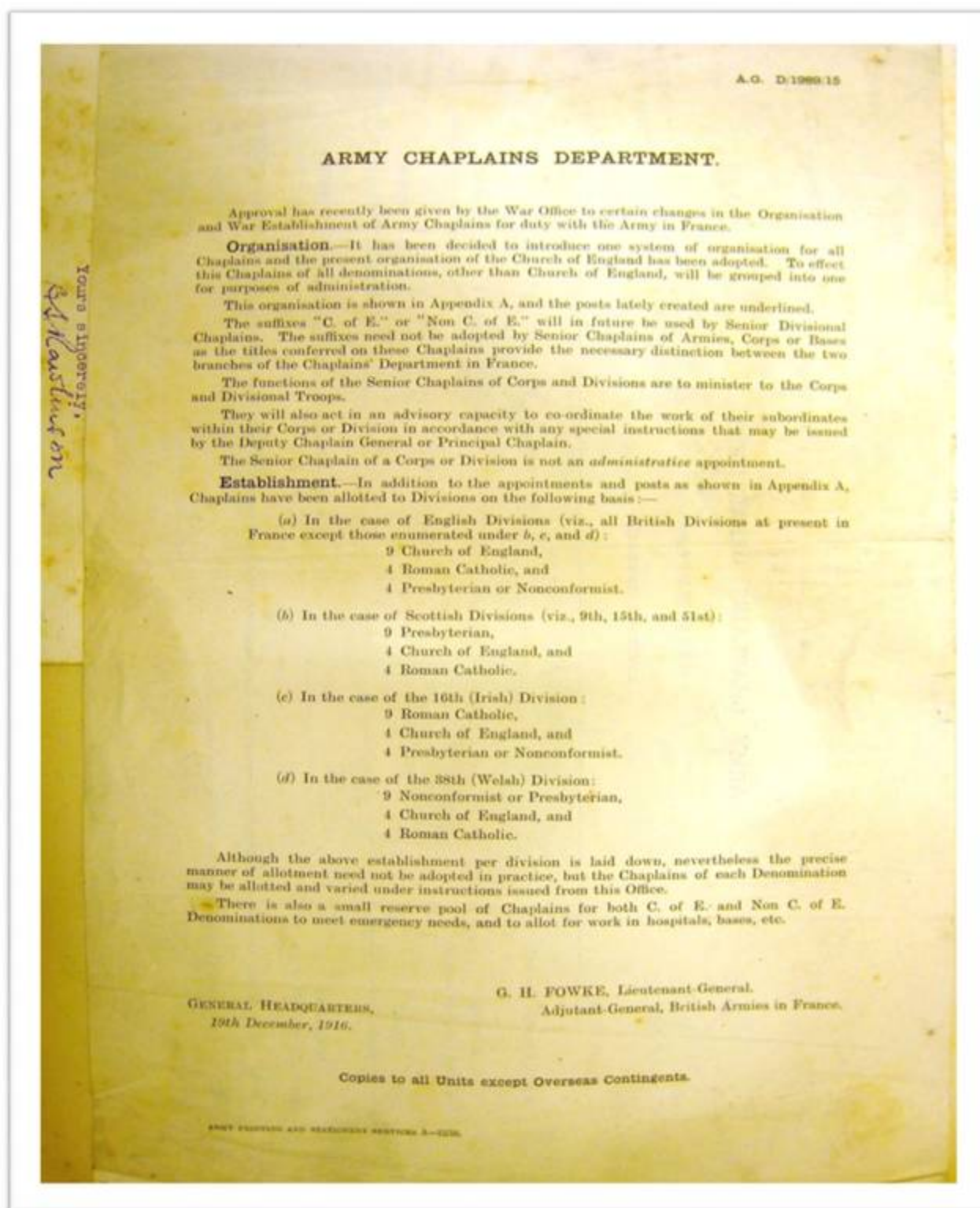
## Appendix 7 – Sample Census Tabulation Catholic Chaplains<sup>9</sup>

Appendix 7 – Sample Census Tabulation Catholic Chaplains										
CENSUS TABULATION										
									Working Class	WC
									Upper Working Class	UWC
									Artisan Working Class	AWC
									Artisan Middle Class	AMC
									Lower Middle Class	LM
									Middle Class	M
									Upper Middle Class	UM
									Aristocracy	A
Name	Dioc	Born	Address	Father	Mother	Bros	Sis	Other	Occupation	Class
Adamson Robert	LIV	1883	10 Sadler St West Derby Liverpool	Thomas 36	None	0	0	3 visitors all Gilletts	Silversmith (tinsmith)	AWC
Alcock Wilfrid	LIV		Bakers Shop Liverpool Rd Gt Crosby	Edward 35	Sarah 34	0	3		Flour Dealers Manager	UWC
Atkin James	LIV	1888	185 Orwell Road Kirkdale	James 28	Julia 28	1	1	Father in law	Certificated teacher	UM
Baines T L	LIV	1886	165 St Georges Rd Preston	James 25	Elizabeth 3	0			Corn and seed warehouseman	UWC
Bartley William	SJ	1870	Alma Cottages Newton - le - Willows	Richard 23	Mary 24	0	0		Tailor	AWC
			Mill Lane Newton - le - Willows			4	2	1 nephew 1 servant	Tailor	LM
			27 High Street Newton - le - Willows			5	5	1 servant	Tailor and Draper	M
Collingridge EC	SJ		4 Langham Place Northampton	Thos 38	Sophia 38	1	1		Manager of Leather Works	LM
Crisp Charles	SAL	1880	Regent Road Salford	John 49	Martha 42	3	1		Sergeant Instructor of Volunteers	?
Devine Patrick	LIV	1879	Bootle	Peter 207	Mary 39	1	1	2 boarders	Contractor	
Dorran William	BRM	1870	22 Marlborough st Oldham	William 34	none died	0	1	1 servant	Cotton waste dealer	LM
Drinkwater Francis	BRM	1886	37 High St Wednesbury			2	2	3 servants	Draper	M
Flanagan Peter	CAP	1880	Silver St, Kidderminster	Martin 52	Wife 54	2	1		Bricklayers labourer	WC
Gillett Frederick	LIV	1882	Lytham	John 48	Alice 52	4	1		Hairdresser Owner	LM
Gillett Henry	LIV	1882	Lytham	John 48	Alice 52	4	1		Hairdresser Owner	LM
Gorman Patrick	SAL	1883	Canal St Bootle	Michael 44	Mary Ann 0	2			Dock labourer	WC
Grafton Francis	SJ	1878	26 Oliver Road Birmingham	Francis W 32	Elizabeth 1	1	1	1 servant	Master carpenter	AMC
Green Louis	LIV		97 Rosalind St	Nicholas 30	Elizabeth 0	1			Storekeeper	WC
Higgins Peter	LIV	1886	Park St Liverpool					1 HK 1 lodger	Boiler riveter	AWC
Leeson James	LIV	1877	12 Plum St Liverpool	James 34	Mary 30	0	2	1 sis in law, 1 boarder	Labourer	WC
Longstaff Bernard	WSM	1881	Haywards Heath, West Sussex	Leonard 52	Helena 52	2	1	3 servants	"Living on own means"	UM/A
Managan Richard	SJ	1878	Bairstow St, Preston	Richard 44	Alice 36	2	3	1 servant 1 visitor	Leather merchant	UM
McGrath Denis J										
O'Neill Herbert Vinc	LIV	1884	Traced to SFX and Upholland	Poss Irish						
Power Edward	SAL		Faraday Street Liverpool						Machinist. Tool square cutter	AWC
Prescott James	LIV	1882	Heapey Chorley	John 43	Elizabeth 2	2	2	1 servant	Grocer	LM
Rigby Thomas	LIV	1875	E Gordon st Wavertree Liverpool	Richard 45	Mary 37	2	1	2 servants (1 a dairyman)	Cowkeeper	UWC
Thompson James	HEX	1889	Preston	Robert 41	Betty 46	2	2	0		
Woods Osmund	SAL	1871	Regent St Salford	William 48	Sarah 47	3	2		0 Railway worker/ she shopkeeper	WC
Whiteside Denis	SJ	1880	24 Elizabeth St Blackpool	John		5	3	1 servant	Builder	UWC
Whiteside Denis	SJ	1880	24 Elizabeth St Blackpool	John		5	3	1 servant	Builder	UWC
Whiteside Denis	SJ	1880	24 Elizabeth St Blackpool	John		5	3	1 servant	Builder	UWC
Wilson Francis Sheri	SJ	1875	15 St Thomas St Blackburn	Robert 42	Elizabeth 1	3			GP Extensive Practice	UM

<sup>9</sup> Compiled from 1891, 1901 and 1911 Census figures.

## Appendix 8 – Army Chaplaincy Establishment 1916<sup>10</sup>

This organisational chart of 1916 was rarely achieved due to continual shortages of priests.



<sup>10</sup> DAA, Miscellanea, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1916.

Appendix 9 - Daily Average of Prisoners in Walton Gaol (Liverpool) During the Great War<sup>11</sup>

Daily Average of Prisoners' according to Religion							
Date	Male		Female		Total		Total Average
	R.C.	All other Religions	R.C.	All other Religions	R.C.	All other Religions	
31.3.13	350	425	304	199	654	624	1278
31.3.14	347	412	271	199	618	611	1229
31.3.15	297	351	229	174	526	525	1051
31.3.16	224	286	165	126	389	412	801
31.3.17	176	334	104	90	280	424	704
31.3.18	142	324	69	85	211	409	620

<sup>11</sup> LAA ECS2/102, pp. 18-120.

### Appendix 10 – Letters to Deceased Families<sup>12</sup>

Fr Keating SJ's first letter:

Shortly after he entered the hospital I was by his bedside, but could do nothing at the time as he was not quite himself. A day or two later I was able to hear his Confession and administer Extreme Unction: I judged it more prudent to defer Viaticum for the time. Meanwhile he seemed to be progressing favourably and was put down on the list for England. However, about two days before his death a sudden change took place and he relapsed into unconsciousness, in which state he remained till the end. He received Viaticum nearly four days previously and I gave him his last blessing and plenary indulgence before he lost consciousness. Thank God he was well prepared to go. The nurses and myself had grown fond of him: he was so patient and uncomplaining and cheerful also. Whenever, I asked him how he was, the reply was: - "I'm doing bravely today". He was buried by me.... and I was able to say Mass for the repose of his soul the morning after his death. During his illness both nurses and Doctors gave him every attention and nothing was omitted that could add to his comfort. You have my deepest sympathy, dear Mrs Halfpenny in your great loss. Your husband was a good, pious man and I am sure that God has shown him mercy. He died well and he died in a good cause. May he rest in peace, and may God give you all consolation in your sorrow.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1916 he replied to Mrs Halfpenny:

Your letter with enclosure reached me safely. Your good husband was not in a condition to make any lengthy or connected remarks while under my care: his state was too lethargic to admit of that. So I heard nothing from him about yourself and the children. I am very sorry that this was so: otherwise a message would have given you much comfort. But his thoughts would surely have been of you and yours. Next week I hope to be able to say 4 Masses for the repose of his soul. I thank you from my heart for your good prayers in my behalf, I need them. We are very busy just now. Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>12</sup> These letters were supplied by Mr Tony Halpin and family and copies are retained by the author. Fr Keating was the chaplain at the base hospital. This correspondence gives a flavour of the many letters that chaplains wrote to the descendants of the dead.



Appendix 11 Lenten Returns Archdiocese of Liverpool 1890-1914<sup>13</sup>

*Summary of LENTEN RETURNS, Archdiocese of Liverpool (1890—1914.)*

Year.	Infant Baptisms.	Converts.	Marriages.	Mass Attendance.	Afternoon Service.	Evening Service.	Easter Duties.	Total Communions.
1890	13,974	864	1,959	138,065	38,018	34,538	146,836	...
1891	13,912	1,005	2,132	145,854	41,788	36,784	150,483	...
1892	14,233	930	2,139	140,831	38,345	33,287	151,787	...
1893	14,288	929	2,175	145,531	40,227	34,977	153,120	...
1894	14,235	991	2,037	143,171	41,041	33,145	150,453	...
1895	14,446	1,012	2,062	146,684	37,832	34,223	152,091	...
1896	14,579	1,023	2,096	152,813	42,220	36,639	160,182	...
1897	14,741	1,073	2,116	156,938	40,691	38,926	164,659	...
1898	14,716	1,092	2,099	160,392	42,437	42,813	162,336	...
1899	14,565	1,169	2,206	166,107	40,860	38,814	167,506	...
1900	15,198	1,008	2,204	159,157	41,296	34,090	164,679	...
1901	14,774	1,036	2,171	163,988	41,084	36,267	169,759	...
1902	14,391	964	2,309	162,095	42,072	35,270	174,485	...
1903	15,300	836	2,121	173,288	44,988	39,799	179,565	...
1904	15,592	935	2,152	170,589	45,371	39,665	179,069	...
1905	15,860	858	2,077	180,281	46,584	43,431	186,239	...
1906	15,891	861	2,215	180,677	45,558	40,857	187,898	...
1907	15,775	1,005	2,254	176,925	47,758	45,466	187,987	...
1908	15,490	989	2,307	175,903	47,161	44,048	194,788	1,955,012
1909	15,982	1,033	2,296	177,094	47,628	42,549	190,504	2,422,505
1910	15,607	1,084	2,377	185,795	46,773	40,758	197,814	2,789,858
1911	15,299	1,097	2,556	193,033	48,627	42,075	221,130	3,375,843
1912	15,227	1,072	2,756	191,091	50,322	43,524	224,660	4,067,783
1913	14,968	1,102	2,846	192,673	64,106	47,372	220,422	4,353,997
1914	15,498	1,216	3,101	195,952	51,415	42,189	233,365	4,742,070

<sup>13</sup> Lenten returns appeared in Archbishops Lenten Pastoral, 1915.

## Appendix 12 – Fr Fred Gillett - A Portrait

Born in Lytham in 1882, his identical twin brother Harry and he both went to Ushaw and were ordained by Bishop Whiteside at St. Peter's Church, Lytham, Lancashire, in 1906. Both became CFs and on their return from the Western Front worked in Liverpool before the formation of the new Lancashire Diocese in 1924. Harry was a CF for 6 months, Fred 46 months. Fred died in 1969, his brother in 1958. Fred and Harry were the names used by both priests throughout their lives.

Fr Gillett was an active man. For relaxation he enjoyed sports at war as he had done at Ushaw. Football mainly, but also cricket, rugby, and athletics in general. He made his time in France and Belgium count by embracing the physical aspects of life: walking, marching, and riding a bicycle, horse, and occasionally in 1919 a dilapidated motorcycle. These activities which he relished allowed him to explore the countryside and especially historical and religious places. He developed a love and understanding of the French agricultural peasantry for whom he had a great respect for their toil and frugality: 'One notices the number of old folks left in the villages, the young ones have been called up. And what workers the old people are; they seem to be forever occupied and apparently live on nothing, never a square good meal such as we are accustomed to'.<sup>14</sup> His compassion for the 'Tommy' and their suffering ran adjacent to the torment he noticed in the French peasant. His circle of chaplains was wide and tended to be diocesan but not exclusively so. He reunited with many of those who had been at Ushaw seminary: Frs. McBrearty, Pickering and Harker, either at chaplaincy meetings or by accident. His socialising was limited to entertainment or sports on offer and perhaps sharing an occasional meal or drink, or religious services, for example: 'Met Fr Harker. Mass and did Arras with him - Cathedral - Hotel de Ville - met several other chaplains during our tour. And we did well, did ourselves well. Met Haney and what a day I had'.<sup>15</sup> Fr Gillett often wrote in a minimal manner about emotional or personal aspects of his life, even about his mother's illness and death. He mentioned his twin brother Harry only when he enlisted in late 1918, and again when Harry was demobbed some six months later. When he said Mass for 'dear father' it was a rarity. He wrote very little about anyone else, his was a priest's life punctuated by loneliness. On leave he mentioned the occasional place, usually Lytham his hometown or Liverpool his adopted one. He liked the occasional drink or 'clerical tea': 'Hospital work still. Met Fr Flanagan of Ipswich, or rather Canterbury and Ashford acquaintance. Celebrated the meeting very worthily - a swagger lunch in café on the square and later dinner there and some

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<sup>14</sup> SDA Gillett Diaries (7<sup>th</sup> October 1916).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., (29<sup>th</sup> April 1917).

drink'.<sup>16</sup> These moments were few and far between and conducted in the appropriate manner although he does seem to have had a Christmas celebration in 1916. On St. Stephens Day he wrote in his dairy: 'Rested to get over our previous celebrations – my servant [Toogood] well away'. His diary was not restarted until January 1st 1917. Fr Gillett took it in his stride, and the next time Toogood was mentioned was retreating from the German Spring Offensive: 'All nestle down on the floor - poor Toogood out with rations, lost. At 4am roused up to know where Toogood is - getting ready to move'. Having found Toogood two days later Gillett recorded: 'Beastly wet day - everybody soaked through - poor Toogood in very bad spirits. However, we all got beds and finally got snug for the night'.<sup>17</sup> These were the only references to his servant but show compassion and responsibility of care.

### 1919 Post-Armistice

Fr Gillett stayed with the rump of the British army in France awaiting demobilisation and in the meantime helping to restore order. He embarked on an exercise of consecrating new cemeteries and graves, and took it upon himself to visit scenes of battle which his units had been engaged in. He acted something like a Cook's Tour for fascinated Americans and developed many friendships with the 'doughboys'. He liked their joy and positive attitude but particularly their devout Catholicism. This admiration is no surprise, given the paucity of Catholics in his Brigade and his thorny relationships with senior British Army officers, clearly the Americans provided a respite from this reserve. In mid-1918 he recorded that: 'Idle day. Met Kilgannon and O'Donnell USA - in evening USA band gave us a treat in the wood - these doughboys some boys and no mistake'.<sup>18</sup> Fr Fred Gillett was impressed by Americans during the war and continued this empathy after the Armistice: 'American Independence Day! - American Review in Place de la Concorde - in afternoon went to stadium and saw feast of games - boxing, running, jumping, baseball and goodness knows what. In evening an American variety – excellent'.<sup>19</sup> Few can begrudge Fr Fred this momentary escapism.

His main responsibility in 1919 was to deliver Mass and perform a priest's functions as normal, although the French priests took over the civilian function once more. He celebrated Mass at the church of Madeleine in Paris on a number of occasions, and when he escorted a party of British troops to Lourdes took the opportunity of giving them an escorted tour of Catholic churches and shrines in the capital. His religious accommodation of the 'Yanks', combined with social and religious tourism, continued until demobilisation on 19th

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., (20<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., (30<sup>th</sup> March 1918).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., (25<sup>th</sup> June 1918).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., (4<sup>th</sup> July 1919).



September 1919, his diary states: 'Mass at Meaulte and Morlancourt then toured Paris again with the Yanks'. On that demobilisation day he concluded his diary and army life with: 'SIC TRANSIT GLORIA KHAKI!'

To conclude Gillett was a solid, reliable, unassuming, affable chaplain and priest. As a man he was personable and showed great compassion for those less well off, whether soldiers or French civilians. His pragmatic qualities mark him as a man true to himself and his vocation. He was treated very indifferently by his own Catholic authorities during the war but was recognised later and made a Canon. He suffered a long-term illness which began in 1956. Despite this, he returned to active priesthood after his retirement. He died on February 1st 1969. The Longridge News, a non-denominational publication summed up Fr Fred: 'He was very human and approachable to everyone he met. His walks around the parish were prompted by halts for a chat at the various farms he was passing, and he was ready to talk to anyone at all from children to adults and from farmer to local landowner'.<sup>20</sup> Fr Fred Gillett was an extraordinary, ordinary man, and his diary and subsequent study 'in his shoes' provided a great insight into not only the man, but the role of a chaplain on the Western Front.

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<sup>20</sup> *Lancaster Catholic Directory 1970*, p.127.

### Appendix 13 – Fr Francis Drinkwater – A Portrait

Francis Drinkwater was born in Staffordshire in 1886 and educated at Oscott. Ordained in 1910, he died in 1982.

Fr Drinkwater's diaries tell a lot about the maturing young priest. They stand out for three reasons. The first is his close relationship and the incredible experience which he shared after his brother (Oxo) was killed when his plane was hit by German anti-aircraft fire, for which he felt he bore responsibility. The second is his vision for political and social change and particularly Catholic education for the young. These events mark him out as compassionate and visionary. Thirdly he appears to have had the talent of not being directly identifiable with any particular class, status, or reputation, which meant that he was confident and assured, seemingly free to mix freely among all types without hindrance. He represented an area of Catholicism that needed to learn from the war and his educational and social reforms were advanced for the period. These intellectual capabilities raise him above many chaplains and remind us that not all specialisms were the exclusive territory of the religious orders. He was developing an intellectual blueprint for the future and was consequently something of a loner.

Socially, Drinkwater was closer to Gillett than Steuart, somewhere in the middle. He tried to play rugby and failed, went to many of the army concerts and was happy to walk, ride and comment on history, particularly reliquary for which he held a specific fascination. His eating, drinking, and accommodation habits were similar to Gillett's, as were his arrangements for leave, but it was his ability to mix with everyone in a seemingly normal and effortless fashion, that was the significant differentiator. He shared Fr Steuart's custom of occasional letters. His were to and from the girls from the school in which he taught pre-war, and contributed to their magazine. His family relationships, particularly with his two brothers Julian and 'Oxo', highlight Drinkwater's human brotherly love.

He had frequently written to his brother Julian, who was a bomber with the infantry, and he appears to have survived the war. On April 16th 1916 he wrote to his younger brother Oxo on the subject of enlisting. In October he wrote again: 'Bringing my advice up to date'.<sup>21</sup> Oxo joined the Royal Flying Corps and took his brother for a ride: 'Up to 2,500 feet, I came down feeling a bit seedy'.<sup>22</sup> Three days later he reported: 'Oxo chased by 5 Huns today'. His luck was to run out: 'An RAF officer called to say that Oxo was brought down by anti-aircraft guns behind the German lines near Le Basse canal; he left a photo and it looks hopeful

<sup>21</sup> BAA, Drinkwater Diaries, (April 16th 1916).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., (28<sup>th</sup> May 1918).

enough. Wrote to Ruby and to Mother'.<sup>23</sup> The next day he went to #2 Squadron and saw Lieutenant Luck who saw Oxo come down: 'They all think he should be alright'. On August 26th a call was made to the 55th West Lancashire gunners on Francis's behalf: 'they saw Oxo come down but couldn't see the machine on the ground, and didn't see anyone leave it'. The next day: 'Went to Pernes with Grieve to interview some wounded Germans who were taken at Givenchy, the day after Oxo's descent. They saw him come down but didn't see him after landing'. There were two silent and stressful days until September 1st when he wrote: 'Bad news about Oxo – a new German prisoner says the observer was killed and the pilot badly wounded'. Then:

Next day I got a car to Ranchicourt and saw the prisoner (Franz Dittman, an agricultural labourer from 369 Regiment), a decent looking young fellow and he looked very sympathetic. The plane was winged by Ack Ack and then fired on by machine gun fire and fell nose first six or seven hundred feet to the ground. He went to see it half an hour after, the observer's body was still there, leg broken in several places, but the pilot had been taken to the ADS (five minutes away) unconscious.

Still Francis had no official word. Having said Mass for the 1/1 Lancashire's they contacted the Lovatt Scouts, official observers who reported: 'No one left the machine and they saw Germans round it. The machine disappeared after being fired upon pretty constantly by our guns'.<sup>24</sup> That, alas, is all we hear of Oxo. Fr Drinkwater just got on with his mission without apparently bearing any grudges.

Private Owen was Drinkwater's first batman and groom. He described him as: 'a quite elderly R C, an Old Regular, and he looked after me like a father'. He does not re-appear but his second batman Private Frayne was mentioned regularly, but simply as a record of his payment by the chaplain.

After being gassed he arrived home in October 21st 1918 suffering from double pneumonia. His last diary entry was October 27th: 'Said Mass at Rosary Church, St. Marylebone'. He was demobbed in spring 1919 although after his diary was completed, there is no further information at war.

Fr Drinkwater continued to mature as a direct result of the conflict. His intellectualism was expressed through Catholic children's education by way of a revised catechism. His social concern brought him into conflict with the political right as the following article explained:<sup>25</sup>

MP's OFFER: To Send Fr Drinkwater To Red Spain EXPENSE PAID

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., (24<sup>th</sup> August 1918).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., (10th September 1918).

<sup>25</sup> *The Catholic Herald*, 5th February 1937.

Last week Fr Drinkwater, parish priest of the Holy Family church, Birmingham, wrote a letter to the Catholic Herald, throwing doubts on the truth of the picture drawn of Red Spain by the great majority of English Catholics and the Catholic Press.

Mr. Alfred Denville, MP, has answered him this week in a letter containing the following challenge and invitation:

Would he (Fr Drinkwater) like to see the desecrated altars and the filth in the churches which have been burned down? If so, I would like him to have my experience, and to follow out the same tour. If there is any difficulty re finance, I will undertake to remove same and provide for his tour out of my own pocket. If he finds he has been wrong, then let his penance be that he shall pay for the largest hall in Birmingham and tell there what he experienced. If his Opinions are still the same, I will be responsible for the expenses.

Mr. Denville's letter in full is as follows: To the Editor of the Catholic Herald:

SIR,—My attention has been drawn to the letter of Fr F. H. Drinkwater which appeared in the Catholic Herald on January 29. Father Drinkwater is suffering from the dope issued by the propagandists of the Red Government (under their Governmental stamp) to Members of the House of Commons, who—irrespective of their religious opinions—always, of course, excepting the Red supporters—throw the communications into the nearest waste-paper basket. I have Fr Drinkwater's letter to the father of a girl - he lives quite close to me - whose daughter (aged 17) was being schooled in a religious institution on the outskirts of Barcelona. She has disappeared altogether, but then, being British, she is seemingly of no account. The clergy whom I met in Rome—take it they are all liars, they must be, the one who had just a stump where previously there had been a hand the Holy Father has suffered so much through the horrible business of which he has had personal experience that he has developed a depression which his medical attendants are unable to combat. Obviously my ears and eyes deceived me. 'Would Fr Drinkwater like to have seen the following: An ' Aunt Sally' set up for the amusement of the public—the main objects being a figure of Our Lord with a very red nose, and Our Lady in a similar get-up, the crowd invited to throw balls at them to the accompaniments of roars of laughter every time the figures were knocked over. Would he like to see the desecrated altars and the filth in the churches which have been burned down? If so, I would like him to have my experience, and to follow out the same tour. If there is a difficulty re finance. I will undertake to remove same and provide for his tour out of my own pocket. First, let him go to Paris to visit the Red ' recruiting stations, and then to the Gare d'Orsay where each evening for some time past a train has left for Perpignan just after 10 p.m., to the sound of cheers and flag-flying for the occupants of two special carriages—these carriages being packed full with gentlemen whose salute is a raised clenched left fist. Stranger still amongst these gentlemen we find one or two dressed in French regular uniforms. Extraordinary, isn't it? From Perpignan, let him enter Spain and wander through the Red country visiting Huelva, and working up to Seville, Badajoz, Toledo, and so on to the Basque, and then exit by 'run and so home. This is a definite challenge: If he finds he has been wrong, then let his penance be that he shall pay for the largest hall in Birmingham and tell there actually what he experienced. If his opinions are still the same. I will be responsible for the expenses. I think we shall find his opinion from actual evidence will

be slightly different to that formed through reading propaganda from the only source which he evidently favours. In the same issue I note a letter written by Mrs. V. F. Robson, of 40, Victoria Road, Aberavon, re Communist recruits. She was perfectly in order in writing to you about a blasphemous Roman Catholic. Good luck to you, Mrs. Robson. You and your Nonconformist friends and our Anglican friends will have to combine presently to fight the common enemy in our midst. It is women such as you, who have the pluck to stand up for your Chapel and your Faith that shows an example which might worthily be followed by a party of the name of Drinkwater who lives at 763, Coventry Road, Birmingham. ALFRFED D DENVILLE.

Fr Drinkwater had clearly enraged the right and the response was typical of the deep-seated anti-communism in the 1930s. His calm approach and deeply felt experiences at war stood him in good stead for these latest challenges. The scholarly aspects of his priesthood were not out of step with the intellectualism of midlands Catholicism of a century before, with Newman its most prominent exponent.

#### Appendix 14 - Fr Robert Henry Joseph Steuart SJ – A Portrait

Born in Reigate, Surrey in 1874. Educated at St. Bueno's and Stonyhurst. Died 1948. His family home was Tulliepowrie House, Strathtay, near Dunkeld, Perth, Scotland. **Illustration 23.**



Fr Steuart was a victim of circumstance. His lofty background ought to have suited him to a position with senior army personnel with which he shared many social advantages. Alas, the British Army was not an extension of Catholic opportunity at home. Sadly Fr Steuart did not grasp this, and appeared lost and disillusioned as a consequence. This can be seen when his attitudes and behaviour led him to believe that he was automatically associated with those that he admired greatest in rank and status.

His diary is a litany of name-dropping, which becomes irritable after some time, such as references to Haig, whom he was never actually acquainted with, and also Brigadiers, Colonels, Generals, grand hotels, and expensive wines or food. Just three examples will suffice: 'Met Sir Douglas Haig and staff on the way. He gave me the usual "Good afternoon"'.<sup>26</sup> Steuart implies that 'the usual good afternoon' is a close and regular relationship that simply did not exist. Not only was Haig a rather busy general but Steuart's own diaries only claim to have seen Haig on four occasions, all at a distance. Similarly: 'Mass at Club at 10:30. An American General at Mass. Brigadier to tea. Major returned to Etietet',<sup>27</sup> and: 'Dined with MO, Majors Cox & Campbell at the Hotel du Commerce. Had two bottles of Veuve Chequot (at 24 francs apiece)'.<sup>28</sup> In reality, his only real success with officers was Major Dixon who wrote to Rawlinson that: 'he would appreciate it if he [Steuart] could remain with the Brigade [after

<sup>26</sup> JAD, Steuart Diaries, (9<sup>th</sup> November 1916).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., (21<sup>st</sup> October 1917).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., (16<sup>th</sup> December 1916).

reorganisation] as having been so long with us he naturally has a great influence'.<sup>29</sup> Major Dixon had been on cordial terms with Steuart but not so close that he could spell his name correctly, (Stewart).

Fr Steuart enjoyed a relatively lavish life style away from the Front, but only in so much as a gentleman of his day might reasonably expect. By contrast there were limitations imposed on him by his background, he could not be expected to have a beer in an estaminet for example. Relationships with others were profoundly insular. He rarely mentioned chaplains' even fellow Jesuits whom he described in the minima. This entry when seeing a fellow Jesuit from the same Province is odd: 'Passed Wolverston riding, going in the opposite direction through Millencourt. Didn't speak'.<sup>30</sup> Does he mean he ignored him, or the reverse, or simply were they unable to converse? It is altogether a mystifying statement which he obviously felt warranted a diary entry. He does write interminably to relatives in England, but it his relationship with ordinary people that, even allowing for the period and class structures, seem indifferent and un-Christian. He refers to Chinese and Portuguese as: 'Told that Calais was in insurrection. Chinks & Portugooses (sic) joining in',<sup>31</sup> and: 'Went out in the night with the DAPM Williams after deserters. Raided the Rosenhof and got 2 civilians, 1 nigger and a soldier'.<sup>32</sup> This might have been vocabulary in common usage, but this type of derogatory language was not compulsive and it is highly unlikely that Gillett or Drinkwater would have written in this manner. What success Fr Steuart achieved in a military role raises more questions. His claims earlier that he was interrogating German prisoners and his allegation that he: 'went after deserters' probably owes more to exaggeration and self-delusion than fact.<sup>33</sup> He probably acted as a temporary interpreter as his German language skills were excellent, but interrogation was a strictly military matter, as were any overt military policing activities.

Fr Steuart was part of an old Scottish Catholic tradition. He was a man of his times which became a trap from which he could not escape. He, or his mission, derived very little if any benefit from social advantage, and in the final analysis he appeared anachronistic to the humble Fred, and advanced Francis. Robert Steuart deserves a degree of understanding, but this is difficult to sustain when considering the area of relationships. The warmth emanating from Drinkwater and Gillett is hard to discover with Steuart. His lack of compassion and

<sup>29</sup> DAA, 3825, Dixon to Rawlinson, (2<sup>nd</sup> February 1918).

<sup>30</sup> JAD, Steuart Diaries, (1<sup>st</sup> December 1916).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., (29<sup>th</sup> January 1919).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., (25<sup>th</sup> July 1919).

<sup>33</sup> There are many instances of this and frequent references to expecting military recognition – which never came.

humanity permeates his diary, these are of course impressions gained from the style of his writing and the choice of subject, but they are strong, nonetheless. Despite his personality, he devoted his life to his vocation and there are no question marks over his spiritual endeavours.

His human weakness is nowhere more apparent than in his relationships with servants. The closest human contact a chaplain might have at war was his servant. Servants cooked, shopped, washed, and generally fulfilled the domestic chores that a priest at home would delegate to the parish housekeeper. Paid by the army it was expected that the chaplain would also make a contribution. Fr Steuart had at least four batmen which is unusual. Fisher was the first and longest-serving being mentioned forty times in the diary. His role was very much an active one being involved in accompanying his chaplain on his daily rounds. Things, for some reason went awry and Fisher attached himself to another officer when Steuart was on leave. 'Can't make out whether or not he wants to come back to me'.<sup>34</sup> Four days later came this reply: 'Letter from Colonel Jones QMG to say that Fisher prefers to remain with him',<sup>35</sup> there is no explanation offered. This does not automatically mean that Steuart was at fault, but he did appear to treat Fisher rather like a servant at home, demanding constant attention on the one hand and yet showing kindness, some might call it patronisation, on the other. In any event, Steuart did not waste time finding a replacement, the next day: 'Wrote to Col. Jones to tell him to keep Fisher, I have a new man Private Brennan (57579) very willing and a good Catholic'.<sup>36</sup> He and Brennan were to share the time in Germany up to March 1919 with occasional substitutions such as Private Quinn. When Brennan was demobbed, his batman was 64211 Pte H Hendry: 'a RC from Edinburgh, very young but willing and handy'.<sup>37</sup>

Fr Steuart's diaries reveal his faults and strengths. He was true to his type, a good priest and a brave one. Nevertheless, he was delusional, haughty, sad, and at times lonely. He was not a likeable man and in many ways exemplified the decay of the values to which he was enslaved. This was brought into sharp relief by the war, and the unfortunate fact that his training, upbringing, and social skills, were simply not wanted by the Army at the level he was anticipating. He was a chaplain and, therefore, a Captain 4th class. At home he may have been suitable in a senior Catholic role dealing with that echelon of Catholic society with which he was familiar. This was not the situation at war, he was, as 'Information and Hints' had advised all Catholic chaplains: 'You are probably a Captain in rank, and as such you are only "small fry"

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., (13<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., (17<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., (18<sup>th</sup> September 1918).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., (12<sup>th</sup> March 1919).



in the Army'.<sup>38</sup> Fr Steuart never grasped this even to the end of the war. He could not escape the values he had acquired in peacetime, as his obituary implies: 'Privilege connected to it [life] carried a certain obligation'.<sup>39</sup>

### Post 1919

Fr Steuart took it upon himself to re-visit old burial places of his own military units and made appropriated religious accommodation. But that ended when in early 1919 he was seconded to the British army of the Rhine. His life in Germany consisted of normal priestly duties and a good deal of leisure. Theatre and opera included: 'Went to "Die Lustige Witwe". Very good'.<sup>40</sup> Then: 'Went with Wake to concert at Deutsches Theatre. Very good. Backhaus played a lot of Brahms & Chopin. There was a really first class violinist Barker, and an excellent tenor, Morgan'.<sup>41</sup> Further: 'Went to Carmen at the opera with Wake. Good, but the Toreador had one of those wobbling, uncertain voices that rather spoilt it'.<sup>42</sup> He continued: 'Went to see Tales of Hoffman at the opera with Wake. Excellent',<sup>43</sup> and many more which he thoroughly enjoyed and surely deserved being isolated for so long.

Culture was not his only passion with tennis, golf, rifle practice, gambling at horse meetings, and boxing matches high on his social agenda. He also managed to ride a motorcycle and see much of the Rhine near Cologne and take walks when he reached his destination. Similar to Fr Gillett he managed to indulge his interests while fulfilling his spiritual duties. There were two distinctions between the two diarists'. Steuart, forever believing he was a military man of some note, indulged in pseudo military activism and thought himself something of a strategist. For example:

There are strong rumours - or rather evidences - that we may have to advance and occupy more German territory. Apparently there are grounds for thinking that the Boche will try the effect of refusal to sign the Peace, in that case we advance, but as our strength is overwhelming they care for nothing in the way of fighting beyond, perhaps, a sort of guerrilla warfare.<sup>44</sup>

If this was the perception in the Army, then Steuart is making a valuable contribution to recording the military situation, however, it is just as likely that he was somewhat exaggerating his own importance in speculating on the course of events. He could not resist

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<sup>38</sup> DAA, Ephemera, Roman Catholic Chaplains: 'Information and Hints', p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> JAL, Steuart, *Obituaries*, p. 128.

<sup>40</sup> JAL, Steuart Diaries, (18th May 1919).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., (14<sup>th</sup> September 1919).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., (16th September 1919).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., (18th September 1919).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., (22nd May 1919).

claiming a part of this day in history for himself, even if only by association: 'The German Plenipotentiaries passed through Cologne station about 11 yesterday morning in full view. News came tonight that the Peace had been signed between 3 & 4pm. this afternoon'.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, he does make an interesting political and social observation: 'Great liveliness in the Schildergasse & Hohestrasse where the military and civil police were breaking up attempted meetings of discharged Boche soldiers. They were demanding the resignation of the (civil) Chief Constable & had already tried to force in their nominee, a shoe-maker!'<sup>46</sup> Finally, after demobilisation he accompanied some of his unit back to Scotland, but again his military self-image and his unremitting need to be associated with senior political or military figures was revealed: 'Paraded at 8:45. Marched my 10 men to the docks. Left Calais about 11. Passed President Poincaré in mid-channel'.<sup>47</sup>

Steuart was, given his background, unsurprisingly impressed by men of similar value systems: 'Capt. Williams, an APM, called at the Mess after dinner. In private life he is a big-game collector in Africa. Very interesting'.<sup>48</sup> His revulsion with the new Corps (unnamed) to which he was attached caused him to lament: 'I wish Rawlinson could have found a Battalion for me instead of these mechanics, water tank navvies & grocers'.<sup>49</sup> The following remarks suggest that he was not, after all, thrilled by demobilisation: 'Official notice that the V1 Corps will be broken up on the 31st of this month. Don't know what will become of me, demob I presume',<sup>50</sup> followed by: 'Called on Sheehan and found that my demobilisation papers have come! I am to go on the 11th. Heartily sorry, now I know the time has come',<sup>51</sup> and finally:

Arrived Edinburgh about 7:30 and Kinross about 9:30. Got my draft to the Camp and then went to the office where I was demobbed myself. My (with effect from Nov 17) service has been exactly three years, one month & two days. As soon as the process was over, I realised I was a civilian again with just a courtesy right to wear uniform for one month more if I chose. I feel terribly out of it and dull. It has been a good time, the like of which I shall never see again! Ave atque vale!<sup>52</sup>

Fr Robert Steuart is a difficult man to understand and his obituary does not help in this matter attesting to: '....his attention alike to University personages and to the poor of the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., (28th June 1919).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., (27th August 1919).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., (14th November 1919).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., (26th May 1919).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., (24th June 1919).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., (20th October 1919).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., (5th November 1919).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., (15th November 1919).

Oxford slums'.<sup>53</sup> This was 1923 and he may have changed but it seems highly improbable given his apparently staunch and apparent impermeable nature. The same obituary gets closer to explaining Steuart's difficulties: 'He had not been parish priest so far: possibly the war had left his touch a little hesitating'.<sup>54</sup> In the final analysis he did not have the preparation for his role as Army chaplain because he had not been prepared for conventional priesthood. He was increasingly anachronistic and would have been better utilised in another role commensurate with his advantages. He was another victim of the war but assuredly an unknowing one.

There has to be a caveat when examining a character one hundred years hence, and that is, was his demeanour simply outside modern understanding? This is possible, but highly unlikely, given the other two diarists as comparators. Was he then simply reflecting the status of a Religious over Diocesan priest? That is not sustainable as the Jesuit priests studied were as diverse as individuals as were their social backgrounds. He was simply a man of his time from a certain narrow, but not uncommon, social perspective. Paradoxically, his diary has been of great value in the main thesis. The comparisons with Frs. Gillett and Drinkwater, demonstrate the wide range of Catholic social complexity. Above all, and despite the sometimes unfortunate idiosyncracies, it also validates the unity and consistency of the Catholic missionary ethos and spiritual practice. These men were good priests and honest men and never claimed to be saints.

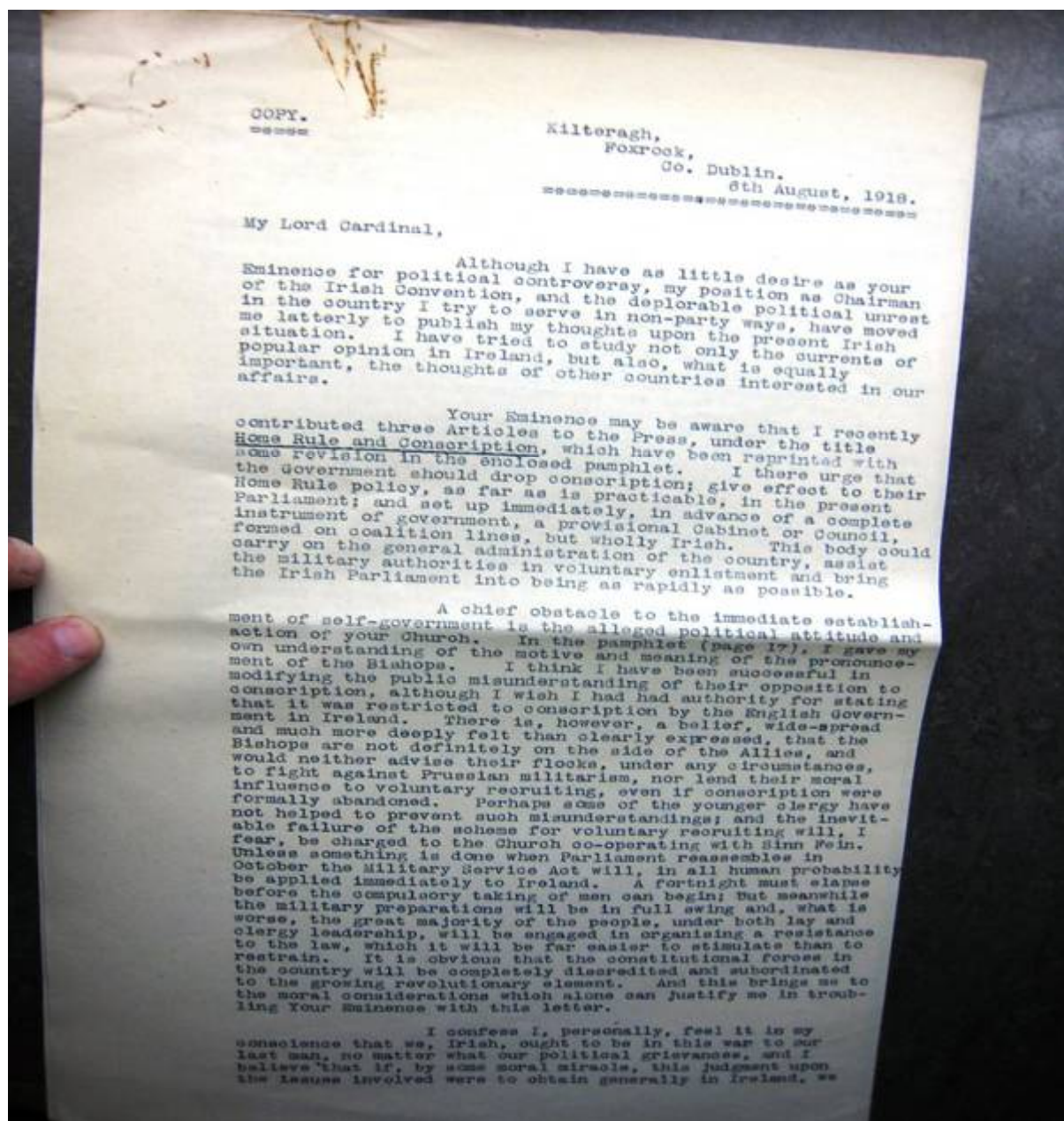
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<sup>53</sup>JAL, Steuart, *Obituaries*, p. 128.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

## Appendix 16 - Cardinal Logue and Horace Plunkett – Political Relationships<sup>55</sup>

The following documents demonstrate the gap between the Irish and British positions. They show the attempt to coerce Ireland into supporting conscription in Ireland through her bishops, by the duplicitous means of promising an Irish Convention the carrot of Home Rule. This was already a hackneyed idea and the bishops had moved considerably towards total mistrust of British politicians. Plunkett, an Irishman, was attempting to mediate.



<sup>55</sup> DAA, Ephemera. Arguments between Logue and Plunkett, (6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> August 1918).



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we might yet play a great and glorious part in bringing the war to a triumphant conclusion, with the certainty of gaining for ourselves the liberties for which we had fought. But I recognise that the miracle will not happen; and must content myself with emphasising the moral consequences of failing to take such lesser part in the war as seems to be within the field of the practical.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the general demoralisation which must result from continued disobedience to constituted authority. The evil is aggravated when accompanied by a bitter hatred against another people on account of misgovernment of which that people has no understanding. But this conflict in our domestic politics, with all its possibilities of disorder and actual bloodshed, in which innocent and guilty may alike suffer, does not only operate to prevent our facing - much less discharging - our responsibility in regard to the war; it has a further effect, which is too little considered. No student of national life in the countries passing through this appalling crisis can fail to be struck by the way in which the whole population seems to be engaged, as never before, in an infinite variety of national service with the double purpose of meeting the exigencies of the time and preparing for the problems of the future. No country will benefit more than Ireland by a similar experience, or will suffer more from the want of it.

To redeem a situation so difficult and complicated many things will have to be done in different spheres. But nothing would be of greater help than to remove the grave misunderstanding as to the attitude of your Church to the war, which, undoubtedly, embarrasses many influential friends of Ireland. Once it were known that if a sincere and generous attempt were made to remedy the political grievance, the clergy would lend their moral support to voluntary recruiting, and the Government might before Parliament adjourns, give us definite encouragement to continue our work for a settlement by agreement. I believe Your Eminence shares the view that the war makes its appeal on the ground of right and not merely on that of a narrow patriotism. And, if Your Eminence saw fit to express your opinion in some public way, or even in a private letter to myself which I might communicate in confidence to the Government, I am convinced that it would offer the best hope, now at the eleventh hour, of averting the calamity which threatens the public life of our country.

Believe me, My Lord Cardinal,

To be very faithfully yours,

(Signed) HORACE PLUNKETT.

P.S.

If your Eminence should wish to write a letter to me, which would be published, it might be better that it should be a criticism on the pamphlet rather than a reply to this letter, which is not suitable for publication.

Ara Coeli,  
 Armagh,  
 9th August, 1918.  
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My dear Sir Horace,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th inst.

I have read your articles, as they appeared, with deep interest, and read them again in the pamphlet, which you have kindly sent me, with deeper interest still. In the first place, they confirmed a conviction, which I had already felt, of your earnest concern for the welfare of the country and of your zealous and persevering efforts to give practical effect to that concern.

In the second place I could not fail to admire, and according to my limited knowledge, to agree with your clear candid and judicious statement of the Irish difficulty, as it at present stands.

In the third place, though I am not enough of a politician to pass a definitive judgment on the remedies which you suggest, in every detail, I feel that they merit the most careful consideration of every one who is anxious for the peace progress and future prosperity of Ireland.

I cannot, however, agree with your statement in your letter, that "a chief obstacle to the immediate establishment of self-government is the alleged political attitude and action of your Church". I think I can point to a more unsurmountable obstacle, the insincerity, bad faith, and what someone has called, the political strategy of the present British Ministry. I believe I can point to a more unsurmountable obstacle still - and as Chairman of the late Convention it cannot have escaped your knowledge - a determination which has been the bane of the country for generations, to subordinate the interests of four-fifths of the people of Ireland to the interests and prejudices of a small minority in the North-eastern corner of Ulster. Before, therefore, attaching responsibility to the political action and attitude of my Church, it might be well to bestow a little consideration on the political action and attitude of the other side.

I believe I have sufficient warranty for what I state regarding the very dubious action of the present Ministry. Every step taken by them since the close of the Convention, and one step, at least, taken before its close, go far to justify the general impression, that they have kept Home Rule dangling before our eyes for a purpose, and cast it aside when the purpose was served. Now that America is involved in the war beyond the possibility of retreat or slackening, it is no longer necessary to keep up pretences.

There is only one other point in your letter to which I think it necessary to advert. You say, "There is, however, a belief, wide-spread and much more deeply felt than clearly expressed, that the Bishops are not definitely on the side of the Allies, and would not advise their flocks, under any circumstances, to fight against Prussian militarism". This is a complete misrepresentation both of the motives and of the action of the Bishops. Neither indifference to the cause of the Allies, nor sympathy with Prussian militarism had anything whatever to do with their opposition to conscription. Both in the past and recently we have suffered too much from



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from Prussian methods to have any sympathy with them or any desire to make a closer acquaintance with them.

I think you will find that in the past, under more favourable auspices, when our people were volunteering freely for the service of the Army, no Bishop, as far as I know, said a word to discourage the movement.

What, in the end of your letter, you seem to expect me to do, that is to make - in a representative capacity - a pronouncement of public policy, is what I have no authority to do and have never done. I might express my personal views freely enough; but I have never made such a pronouncement, except in consultation with and in union with my colleagues of the Episcopate.

I am, dear Sir Horace,

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) MICHAEL CARD, LOGUE.

The Right Hon. Sir Horace Plunkett.