

‘Our sacred and civil obligations as Christians and as Citizens’: religion, charity and governance in early nineteenth-century Dublin and Edinburgh

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ABSTRACT. *Recent historiography gives an increasingly nuanced picture of interactions between religion and wider society in nineteenth-century Ireland. Yet, when considering the relationships between religion and philanthropy, something central to everyday life in urban centres, emphasis is still placed on the role of the institutional Catholic Church, and there is a sense that lay Catholics were less involved in charity than their Protestant counterparts. Connected with this is the idea that Protestant charities used open forms of governance, but Catholic charities were secretive, an assertion that parallels claims about tensions between Catholicism and democracy. This historiography, however, also suggests that the situation in the early nineteenth century may have been different from later in the century. This article compares small-scale Catholic and Protestant parochial charities in early nineteenth-century Dublin, while also considering similar institutions associated with Presbyterian congregations in Edinburgh. It indicates that some Catholic parochial charities were at least as committed to open procedures and lay participation as their Anglican and Presbyterian counterparts. By exploring these charities and making comparisons, the article shows that some of Dublin’s middle-class Catholics were dedicated to the same ideals as early nineteenth-century British reformers.*

In 1842, the Irish lord lieutenant commissioned an investigation into philanthropy within the city of Dublin. The aim of the inquiry was to discover whether it was necessary for parliament to continue to pay annual grants to several of Dublin’s charities.¹ The inquiry tried to survey the whole philanthropic landscape of the city and assess whether Dublin could meet its charitable obligations from its own resources.² The commissioners charged with conducting the survey wrote to the managers of Dublin’s many charities to request details about their work, though their subsequent report noted that a significant number never responded.

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¹ For more on the grants, see Joe Curran, ‘Charity, finance, and legitimacy: exploring stateless-capital status in early nineteenth-century Dublin and Edinburgh’ in *Journal of Urban History*, xlvii, no. 4 (2021), pp 753–70.

² *Charitable institutions (Dublin). Copy of a letter from the under secretary to the lord lieutenant ... to the commissioners appointed to report on certain charitable institutions in Dublin*, p. 7, H.C. 1842 (337), xxxviii, 3–7.

The *Dublin Evening Mail*, a newspaper of stridently conservative Protestant views, commented on this:

We should observe, by-the-bye, that the good feeling of the commissioners has prevented them from giving the particulars of the answers, obviously to guard against any invidious comparisons being drawn between charities of different denominations. But we would venture a good wager that those from which answers have not been returned are not the Protestant charities.³

The newspaper's condemnation of Catholic charities for failing to share information with government was part of a broader set of allegations. It had formerly argued that Catholic charities were secretive as regards their administrative processes, and that their management was dominated by dogmatic clerics.⁴

Providing a voice for conservative Protestant opinion was the *Mail's raison d'être* and it never missed an opportunity to criticise Catholic institutions. It would generally be worth taking its claims with rather a large pinch of salt, but as we can find echoes of some of its assertions in the work of later historians, they are worth investigating further. Catholic charities are defined here as philanthropic organisations that declared a Catholic ethos and/or had a formal connection with an institutional church body or religious order. This definition of a denominational charity — that is, having an official connection with an institutional Church or explicitly claiming a denominational ethos — will also be applied when referring to charities of other denominations.

Alison Jordan's examination of philanthropy in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast presented Catholic charities as dominated by clerics and religious orders. For Jordan, these charities were less 'open' and less likely to communicate with the public than their Protestant counterparts.⁵ Understandably given the book's focus, Jordan did not give much attention to the 1820s and 1830s. Maria Luddy, discussing women's involvement in Irish charities more generally, contrasted a Catholic philanthropic infrastructure controlled for the most part by women religious with lay-managed Protestant charities. She noted, however, that the increasing role of women religious vis-à-vis Catholic lay women occurred gradually and became increasingly pronounced as the devotional revolution gained momentum.⁶

Luddy's analysis suggests greater exploration of Catholic philanthropy in the pre-Famine period is needed. Notwithstanding Ciarán McCabe's in-depth and wide-ranging examinations of Dublin's poor-relief charities during this time, more attention to the nature of Catholic philanthropic management and its broader social impact is required.⁷ This is particularly true for the matters raised by the *Mail* about the extent to which Catholic charities were open about their activities and how they communicated with the wider public, the relative role of lay people

³ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 25 July 1842.

⁴ See also *Dublin Evening Mail*, 10 Apr. 1840.

⁵ Alison Jordan, *Who cared? Charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast* (Belfast, n.d. [1993]), pp 194–5.

⁶ Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995), pp 21–30.

⁷ Ciarán McCabe, *Begging, charity and religion in pre-famine Ireland* (Liverpool, 2018); idem, "The going out of the voluntary and coming in of the compulsory": the impact of the 1838 Irish Poor Law on voluntary charitable societies in Dublin city' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, xlv, no. 1 (2018), pp 47–69.

and clerics within the organisations, and the ways in which philanthropic management activity was discussed and presented.

In his nuanced, detailed biography of Dublin, David Dickson claimed that the 'public profile [of Catholic charities] was low' in the early nineteenth-century city.⁸ He argued that this was a matter of self-protection for a still not fully emancipated denomination, rather than a reflection of hostility to openness *per se*. Such an approach to the outside world would not necessarily prevent the charities from achieving their immediate philanthropic goals. It might, however, have indirectly restricted lay participation within them. In particular, it may have suggested to the wider Dublin public that Catholics were not interested in open, participatory forms of philanthropic governance, something that contemporaries would have perceived as having consequences beyond charity itself.⁹

Robert Morris has rightly argued that voluntary organisations formed part of the governance landscape of nineteenth-century British and Irish towns. They interacted with local government and the central state as they attempted to respond to social problems, while also involving themselves directly in town governance.¹⁰ The nature of voluntary bodies' management structures thus helped to regulate who could or could not participate in urban administration. Discussion of charities' management, therefore, became part of contemporary debates on urban politics and the push for political reform. Indeed, 'reform sentiment' in Britain and Ireland encompassed a wide range of subjects including ecclesiastical issues, matters of trade, regulation of the professions and the ending of other monopolies.¹¹ Reformers frequently turned their attention to altering the management of charitable institutions to include a greater number of middle-class subscribers. This was sometimes a response to allegations of mismanagement, but it often had little to do with the details of organisations' day-to-day activities. Rather, it related to a commitment to the principle of more open management, at least in a way that was acceptable to middle-class reformers.¹²

Hence, issues of denominational philanthropy dovetail with wider claims about interactions between Catholicism and ideas of democracy, liberalism and participation in governance. Despite recent work challenging the view that nineteenth-century Catholicism was inherently anti-democratic or illiberal, these associations

⁸ David Dickson, *Dublin: the making of a capital city* (London, 2014), p. 299.

⁹ R. J. Morris, 'Clubs, societies, and associations' in F. M. L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge social history of Britain, 1750–1950, volume 3: social agencies and institutions* (Cambridge, 1990), pp 409–15; idem, 'A year in the life of the British bourgeoisie' in Robert Colls and Richard Rodger (eds), *Cities of ideas: civil society and urban governance in Britain, 1800–2000. Essays in honour of David Reeder* (Aldershot, Hampshire, and Burlington, Vermont, 2004), pp 121–43.

¹⁰ Robert J. Morris, 'Governance: two centuries of urban growth' in Robert J. Morris and Richard H. Trainor (eds), *Urban governance: Britain and beyond since 1750* (Aldershot, Hampshire, and Burlington, Vermont, 2000), pp 3–7, 12.

¹¹ Stewart J. Brown, *The national churches of England, Ireland, and Scotland 1801–46* (Oxford, 2001), pp 184–97; Michael Brown, 'Medicine, reform and the 'end' of charity in early nineteenth-century England' in *E.H.R.*, cxxiv, no. 511 (2009), pp 1357–61.

¹² Martin Gorsky, *Patterns of philanthropy: charity and society in nineteenth-century Bristol* (Suffolk and Rochester, New York, 1999), pp 64–6; for a Scottish example, see Gordon Pentland, *Radicalism, reform and national identity in Scotland, 1820–1833* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, and Rochester, New York, 2008), pp 27–9.

persist.¹³ Examining philanthropy provides an interesting in-depth perspective on the interactions between Catholicism and ideas of participation and governance at an everyday practical level.

Evidence on the extent to which nineteenth-century Catholic charity encouraged open governance outside of Ireland is mixed. Considering the early years of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in urban Quebec and Ontario, Michael Gauvreau claims that the society's members saw their philanthropic activity primarily as a devotional exercise, a way of improving their own piety. Demonstrating that they had an open participatory culture of management does not seem to have been a prominent concern for them.¹⁴ S. Karly Kehoe, on the other hand, has indicated that Catholic charities in Scotland closely resembled their Scots Presbyterian counterparts. Their active public articulation of familiar middle-class values such as promoting 'industriousness' among the poor, along with their development of a recognisable version of associational organisation, played a crucial role in integrating Catholic communities into mainstream nineteenth-century Scottish society.¹⁵

At first glance Kehoe's discussions of conciliation in Scotland seem far removed from the major conflicts about educational philanthropy that occurred in 1820s and 1830s Ireland. The use of the bible without note or comment in the schools of the ostensibly nondenominational Kildare Place Society (K.P.S.), for example, was hugely controversial.¹⁶ The existence of such tensions might raise questions about whether Irish philanthropy could ever highlight shared values at a cross-denominational level. Nevertheless, in spite of these conflicts, it will be seen that assessing whether Dublin's Catholic charities emphasised values of participation and openness will shed light on how their supporters viewed urban governance and the extent to which they shared values with others within the contemporary United Kingdom.

I

This article focuses primarily, though not exclusively, on parochial charity schools and other congregational and parochial educational and missionary charities. These organisations usually operated on a small scale and have received little attention in previous studies of philanthropy in Dublin. Given their size, aims and affiliations, we might expect them to have kept a low profile and be clerically dominated. Close connection between these charities and their congregations, along with a focus on the transfer of doctrinal knowledge, suggests they may have been environments where issues of religious authority and denominational control were particularly to the fore.¹⁷ Their analysis here will indicate, however, that even at this

¹³ Andrew Phemister, 'Introduction: religion and political thought in Irish history' in *History of European Ideas*, xlvi, no. 7 (2020), pp 934–50.

¹⁴ Michael Gauvreau, 'Forging a new space for lay male piety: St. Vincent de Paul Societies in urban Quebec and Ontario, 1846–1890' in *Histoire sociale/Social History*, xlii, no. 83 (2009), p. 44.

¹⁵ S. Karly Kehoe, *Creating a Scottish church: Catholicism, gender and ethnicity in nineteenth-century Scotland* (Manchester and New York, 2010), esp. chapter 5.

¹⁶ Harold John Hislop, 'The Kildare Place Society, 1811–1831: an Irish experiment in popular education' (Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1990), pp 3–5.

¹⁷ Ciarán McCabe's work has highlighted how the urban parish was far from moribund in pre-Famine Ireland: see chapter 4 in McCabe, *Begging, charity and religion*. For the significance of this in a wider U.K. context, see Brown, *National churches*.

small scale, a liberal spirit, very much in line with mainstream British reform thinking, existed within elements of Dublin's Catholicism.

The article takes a comparative approach across denomination and place. It compares Dublin's Catholic educational charities with their local Anglican counterparts and it also considers similar organisations in Edinburgh. As another 'stateless capital' that had lost its national parliament, Edinburgh like Dublin remained a major centre of religious authority. It too was a site of significant religious divisions, though in the early nineteenth century, these tended to be within the established (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland, or between that church and members of dissenting Presbyterian denominations. Since these disputes were intra-Presbyterian, there remained much common ground over the kinds of doctrinal education that charity schools should provide. The provision of such education was much more contentious in Dublin, where use of the bible in charity schools was the subject of intense conflict. Yet religious tensions could still be severe in Edinburgh. Indeed, the Church of Scotland split in 1843 in a schism known as the Disruption, when much of the church's evangelical wing seceded to found the Free Church of Scotland.¹⁸

The 1820s and 1830s was a period when the institutional Catholic Church was less powerful in Dublin than it would become later in the century. Comparison with charities connected with the Church of Scotland and with the dissenting Presbyterian United Associated Synod (U.A.S.) during this period enables a reconsideration of whether, as some scholarship would suggest, Presbyterianism fostered a more participatory associational culture than Catholicism.¹⁹ It is also possible to explore how Catholics interacted with ideas about ending monopolies and increasing participation in governance that constituted mainstream British reform thinking at this eventful time. The influence of Daniel O'Connell as a reformer, and the 'democratic' culture of the Catholic Association, are well-known.²⁰ The existing literature however gives us little sense of how these ideas of reform and participation affected everyday urban life in practice.²¹ Investigation of the administration of small-scale parochial charities allows further assessment of the extent to which reforming ideas spread into the day-to-day activities of Dublin's middle-class Catholics.

The charities examined in most detail here have been chosen because good sets of administrative records have survived for each.²² They do not represent the sum

¹⁸ Jeffrey Charles Williams, 'Edinburgh politics: 1832–1852' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1972), pp 113–17, 363–77; Stewart J. Brown, 'Religion and the rise of liberalism: the first Disestablishment campaign in Scotland, 1829–1843' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xlviii, no. 4 (1997), pp 682, 689; Graeme Morton and R. J. Morris, 'Civil society, governance and nation, 1832–1914' in R. A. Houston and W. W. J. Knox (eds), *The new penguin history of Scotland, from the earliest times to the present day* (London, 2001), pp 357–8.

¹⁹ Morton & Morris, 'Civil society, governance', pp 358–9.

²⁰ Angus D. Macintyre, 'O'Connell and British politics' in Kevin B. Nowlan and M. R. O'Connell (eds), *Daniel O'Connell: portrait of a radical* (Belfast, 1984), pp 87–99; Thomas Bartlett, *The fall and rise of the Irish nation: the Catholic question, 1690–1830* (Dublin, 1992), pp 326, 343.

²¹ Bob Cullen, *Thomas L. Synnott: the career of a Dublin Catholic 1830–70* (Dublin, 1997), is a partial exception.

²² Thanks to Noelle Dowling, archivist, Dublin Diocesan Archives (hereafter D.D.A.), for highlighting the existence of minute books for the Education Society of the United Parishes

total of the philanthropic efforts of their denominations, and they cannot be simply taken as ‘typical’ of the charities associated with that religious group. Despite this, they provide some new perspectives on the broader assumptions that have been made about the different denominations.

II

By the early nineteenth century, a vast array of philanthropic organisations was operating in Dublin and Edinburgh.²³ They varied in terms of size, aims and sources of income. Robert Morris and Graeme Morton, while recognising other types of charitable management, tended to present the ‘subscriber democracy’ as the standard form of voluntary organisation in urban Britain and Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century.²⁴ These were organisations that, in principle, allowed all those who agreed with the association’s goals and could pay a minimum subscription to join and to play a role in the organisation’s management (or at least, to ‘elect’ the managers).

Though there were many subscriber democracies in both Dublin and Edinburgh, there were also several other kinds of philanthropic organisation. As older cities, both were home to endowed charities — charitable trusts established by the wills of donors which were usually managed by enclosed groups of trustees.²⁵ There was also a range of charities exhibiting a variety of other management structures, some of which more closely approximated the ‘ideal’ subscriber democracy than others. What Morris and Morton were correct in emphasising was that the apparatus of administration and communication associated with ‘subscriber democracy’ had a social and cultural meaning.²⁶ Printed annual reports, annual meetings that were subsequently reported in the newspaper press, and common procedures such as the proposing and seconding of resolutions, all highlighted a commitment to transparent, rule-based modes of governance. They suggested to the world that the organisations were open to governance by, and accountable to, the middle classes.

Critics have emphasised the conditions that restricted ordinary subscribers’ access to the charities’ managing committees in practice, forgetting the symbolic significance of subscriber democracy’s administrative forms.²⁷ They have noted contemporary criticisms of specific voting that occurred in some charities, such

of St Mary, St Thomas, and St George, the Schools of St Michael and St John’s Parishes, and the Malachean Orphan Societies.

²³ Curran, ‘Charity, finance, and legitimacy’, pp 756–7.

²⁴ R. J. Morris, ‘Voluntary societies and British urban elites, 1780–1850: an analysis’ in *Historical Journal*, xxvi, no. 1 (1983), pp 101–09, 112–16; Graeme Morton, ‘Civil society, municipal government and the state: enshrinement, empowerment and legitimacy. Scotland, 1800–1929’ in *Urban History*, xxv, no. 3 (1998), pp 352–4.

²⁵ Joseph Simon Curran, ‘Civil society in the stateless capital: charity and authority in Dublin and Edinburgh c. 1815–c. 1845’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2017), chapter 2. These were particularly common in Edinburgh: Richard Rodger, *The transformation of Edinburgh: land, property and trust in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 2001).

²⁶ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, pp 40–41; Alice Johnson, *Middle-class life in Victorian Belfast* (Liverpool, 2020), p. 94.

²⁷ Keir Waddington, ‘Subscribing to a democracy? Management and the voluntary ideology of the London hospitals, 1850–1900’ in *E.H.R.*, cxviii, no. 476 (2003), pp 357–79; Gorsky, *Patterns*, esp. chapters 6 and 8.

as for candidates for admission to the charity, or for the charity's medical officers, rather than elections for the managing committee. They have taken contemporary criticisms of the former elections as condemnation of the organisation type more generally.²⁸ Many commentators in the 1820s and 1830s focused less on what the charity was doing, and more on the nature of management and on governance reform generally.²⁹ In Edinburgh, for example, a scandal about conditions at the Royal Infirmary led to a long-running campaign to give subscribers a greater role in the organisation's management. This was sought even though those behind the campaign agreed that a different kind of change — the introduction of visitors to assess the hospital — would be sufficient to guarantee quality patient care.³⁰ Discussion of these matters allowed for the articulation of values about who should participate in urban governance.

Examining debates on philanthropy reveals some examples of Catholic condemnation of specific subscriber democracies in 1820s Ireland. The K.P.S., for example, was heavily criticised and caused all sorts of controversy throughout Ireland and beyond, for allowing children at its schools to have uncontrolled access to the bible: these complaints were to some extent a criticism of the K.P.S.'s openness. For James Doyle, the Catholic archbishop of Kildare and Leighlin, the K.P.S.'s use of bibles without approved commentary was reckless. He emphasised the need for greater control by drawing on gender stereotypes to refer to the K.P.S.'s *laissez faire* approach as 'the demoralizing and antichristian principle, of committing the Sacred Scripture to the interpretation of every prating Sophist, of every senseless child, of every silly old woman'.³¹

Other denominations also attempted to place restrictions on charities' activities in response to religious controversy. Every year, large Irish Protestant missionary and education organisations held a week of meetings in Dublin's Rotunda rooms. Although most of the organisations were subscriber democracies, they made strict efforts to control attendance at these meetings to prevent conflict.³² In the 1820s, Edinburgh's bible societies were rocked by the Apocrypha controversy. This dispute centred on the London-based British and Foreign Bible Society (B.F.B.S.) to which some Edinburgh associations were affiliated. The B.F.B.S. was accused of tolerating the presence of the Apocrypha in bibles supplied to missionary groups in continental Europe.³³ This was not a disagreement about the truth or otherwise of the Apocrypha. Most of those involved in these disputes in Edinburgh agreed that it should not form part of the bible. The question was whether it was pragmatic to work with groups that supplied bibles containing the

²⁸ Brown, 'Medicine, reform', pp 1353–88; *Charities. Proceedings of the council of the Charity Organisation Society* (London, 1872); Shusaku Kanazawa, "'To vote or not to vote": charity voting and the other side of subscriber democracy in Victorian England' in *E.H.R.*, cxxxi, no. 549 (2016), pp 353–83. Even in the 1870s the Dublin Hospital Sunday Fund distinguished between voting for the admission of patients (which it viewed unfavourably) and methods for making governors accountable to subscribers: *Dublin Hospital Sunday Fund. Annual report of the council for the year 1874 ...* (Dublin, 1875), pp 15–16.

²⁹ Gorsky, *Patterns*, pp 64–8.

³⁰ *The Scotsman*, 18 Apr. 1818, 16, 28 Jan. 1819, 8 Dec. 1820, 29 Jan. 1823, 7, 17 Jan. 1824.

³¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 12 Apr. 1824.

³² *Dublin Evening Mail*, 2 Apr. 1824, 26 Feb., 4 Apr. 1836, 28 Mar. 1845.

³³ *Edinburgh Auxiliary Bible Society, instituted September 11, 1828* (Edinburgh, 1828), pp 1–3; *The twentieth report of the Edinburgh Bible Society* (Edinburgh, 1829), pp vi, 26–7.

Apocrypha so that readers had at least some access to scripture.³⁴ Even those who agreed on the nature of religious truth could strongly disagree about how this truth should be conveyed to others. In these cases, though, none of the religious groups were condemning the subscriber democracy form itself.

The founders of the ‘Catholic Book Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge throughout Ireland’ (C.B.S.) — an organisation that produced school-books and other approved literature within Ireland and beyond — actually added initial restrictions to the subscriber democracy form.³⁵ Although subscription entitled one to membership, the C.B.S.’s clerical founders purposely retained control of the charity’s management in the early stages of its formation in spite of the practical difficulties caused by their lack of business experience. Indeed, they stated that they wanted to prevent lay involvement:

in order that the Society might be perfectly formed, and its system and plans be matured, before it would be subjected to the indiscriminate interference of the Public, by which the original intention might be frustrated.³⁶

Yet, in spite of their wariness in this case, some of these clerical managers actively supported subscriber democracy in other contexts. The Catholic archdeacon of Dublin, the Rev. John Hamilton, was a strong promoter of Catholic missionary activity, but as governor of Jervis Street Hospital he stoutly defended the hospital’s open system of administration.³⁷ Similarly, Rev. Matthew Flanagan, the C.B.S.’s first secretary, was heavily involved in subscriber-controlled interdenominational poor relief efforts in Dublin.³⁸

More generally, Dublin Catholics participated in many other subscriber democracies in the city. These included the Mendicity Society where a few high-profile Catholics (mostly clergy) participated in management alongside high-status Protestants.³⁹ Catholics were also active in the interdenominational Society for the Relief of Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers, whose management primarily consisted of tradesmen and retailers.⁴⁰ Yet, Catholic promotion of openness in

³⁴ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap bibles: nineteenth-century publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge, 1991), pp 13–15; *Twentieth report of the Edinburgh Bible Society*, pp 26–31; *Edinburgh Auxiliary Bible Society*, p. 1.

³⁵ For more on the C.B.S., see Sean Griffin, ‘The Catholic Book Society and its role in the emerging system of national education 1824–1834’ in *Irish Educational Studies*, ii (1992), pp 86–98; Fergus D’Arcy, *Raising Dublin, raising Ireland: a friar’s campaigns. Father John Spratt, O. Carm. (1796–1871)* (Dublin, 2018), pp 56–7, 122.

³⁶ *First report of the Catholic Book Society, for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge throughout Ireland* (Dublin, 1828), pp 5–10.

³⁷ *Morning Register*, 28 Jan., 6 Feb. 1842.

³⁸ *First report of the Catholic Book Society*, p. 7; Letter from Littleton to the secretary of the commissioners of Poor Inquiry, 9 Dec. 1833 (N.A.I., Chief Secretary’s Office official papers, OP/1836/212); Francis White, *Report and observations on the state of the poor of Dublin* (Dublin, 1830), p. 12; *Dublin Mendicity Association: thirteenth annual report of the managing committee for the year 1830* (Dublin, 1831), p. 6.

³⁹ David Dickson, *The first Irish cities, an eighteenth-century transformation* (New Haven and London, 2021), p. 239.

⁴⁰ McCabe, *Begging, charity and religion*, p. 215, Deirdre Lindsay, ‘The Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers’ Society’ in David Dickson (ed.), *The gorgeous mask: Dublin 1700–1850* (Dublin, 1987), pp 132–56.

philanthropic management went well beyond poor relief charities whose goals were relatively uncontroversial.

Small-scale parochial educational charities also show middle-class Catholics participating in and demonstrating approval of open forms of urban governance. Far from keeping a low profile, Dublin's Catholic charities featured prominently in Catholic almanacs.⁴¹ The city's Catholic parish schools enthusiastically adopted newspaper advertising to raise funds, to communicate about their meetings and activities, and to thank donors. This was mirrored in the advertisements placed by the city's many Anglican parish schools, as well as by many other charities.

From the 1830s onwards Catholic and Protestant charities began to advertise in different newspapers. Even then, the advertisements' common form and the charities' efforts to interact with the wider public helped to underline some shared values among adherents of different denominations. In fact, in the 1820s, advertisements for Protestant and Catholic parish schools appeared cheek-by-jowl in the liberal *Freeman's Journal*. Such notices adopted broadly the same visual format and emphasised their institutions' moral value in similar ways. For example, the language of an advertisement published on 20 January 1824 for the Female Orphan School connected with Bethesda Anglican chapel closely resembled a fundraising notice for schools associated with the Catholic chapel on Francis Street which appeared in the same newspaper four days later. The former said its pupils were 'carefully instructed in the knowledge of the Christian Religion, and trained up in habits of industry and cleanliness.'⁴² The latter asserted that its pupils would be provided with 'the benefit of Christian Education' and that 'the rising generation of the poor will acquire such salutary instruction as may enable them, instead of being the scourge, to become useful and even respectable Members of Society'.⁴³ Both emphasised to the public that schooling was a disciplining and morally reforming influence on the behaviour of the poor, an attitude shared by many members of the middle classes across Ireland and Britain at this time

More significantly, Dublin's Catholic charity schools adopted similar forms of rule-based governance as their Protestant counterparts and highlighted to the wider public that this was so. In fact, such organisations sometimes exemplified greater levels of 'liberalism' compared with similar charities of other denominations in both Dublin and Edinburgh. One fascinating example is the Education Society of the United Parishes of St Mary, St Thomas and St George in Dublin. This organisation was founded to support Catholic schools in these parishes in the north-east of the city. On the surface it might appear to have been a clerically-controlled educational organisation. It was established in 1826 at a meeting in the Church of the Conception, or Pro-Cathedral, with Daniel Murray, the Catholic archbishop of Dublin, in the chair.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Henry Young, *The Catholic directory dedicated to Saint Patrick ... of the dioceses of Ireland* (Dublin, n.d. [1821]), pp 10–28; see also Lisa Godson, 'Charting the material culture of the 'devotional revolution': the advertising register of the *Irish Catholic directory*, 1837–96' in *P.R.I.A.*, cxvi (C) (2016), pp 265–94.

⁴² *Freeman's Journal*, 20 Jan. 1824.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24 Jan. 1824.

⁴⁴ 'Education of the poor', printed resolutions of meeting held 12 Dec. 1826, in cover of Education Society of the United Parishes minutes (D.D.A., outsize items, E3 23/7, unpaginated); *Freeman's Journal*, 15 Dec. 1826.

Archbishop Murray was a major catalyst in the growth of education for Catholics in early nineteenth-century Ireland. Thomas J. Morrissey's recent biography of Murray briefly mentions the archbishop's involvement in the Education Society. Morrissey presents the society as Murray's 'own' organisation, noting a *Dublin Evening Post* reference to it as 'Doctor Murray's Education Society'.⁴⁵ The organisation, however, exhibited many features of a subscriber democracy. The meeting to establish it followed the same format as that of a typical subscriber democracy and was reported on in detail in the newspaper press. Subscribers of (a not insignificant) £1 per year were eligible to join the society's management committee. Safeguards were included to ensure turnover in management: officeholders were to maintain their position for a maximum of one year, unless the annual meeting approved a longer term.⁴⁶

The society's management committee encompassed the clerics of the Pro-Cathedral, but it also included significant numbers of the middle classes of the united parishes. Alongside this there were several high-profile honorary vice-presidents, including the Anglican and radical Baron Cloncurry.⁴⁷ The very fact that most of the managing committee can be identified in the 1826 *Wilson's directory* suggests a relatively elite group. Some, such as Robert McClelland of 9 Summer Hill and James A. O'Reilly of 20 Gardiner Place and Boyne Lodge, County Meath, were listed in the 'Nobility and Gentry' section without any further reference to occupation. There were also several barristers and attorneys, as well as merchants of various types, medical practitioners and grocers.⁴⁸ Overall, the group was broadly similar to, if of somewhat higher status than, the rising Catholic middle-class milieu that Bob Cullen described for Dublin's St Paul's Parish in the 1830s.⁴⁹ The differences in status probably reflected the lingering prestige of the northeast of the city for several decades after the union.⁵⁰

In the first year of its operation, lay attendance at the Education Society's committee meetings was significant. Of seventy meetings in the first year, many had lay majorities and only four were chaired by a clergyman.⁵¹ Such patterns continued into the 1830s.⁵² While not all Catholic parochial schools were administered in

⁴⁵ Thomas J. Morrissey, *The life and times of Daniel Murray, archbishop of Dublin 1823–1852* (Dublin, 2018), pp 114–15, 121.

⁴⁶ 'Education of the Poor', printed resolutions of meeting held 12 Dec. 1826. New committee members could be added for the time being by a ballot of the existing committee: see Education Society of the United Parishes minutes, 12 Dec. 1826 (D.D.A., outsize items, E3 23/7, unpaginated).

⁴⁷ Patrick M. Geoghegan, 'Lawless, Valentine Browne (1773–1853)', *D.I.B.* (online ed., dib.ie).

⁴⁸ *Wilson's Dublin directory* (in *The treble almanack for the year 1826*) (Dublin, 1826) was used to identify members of the committee listed in the society's minutes drawing on the method outlined in R. J. Morris, 'Qualitative to quantitative by way of coding and nominal record linkage: the search for the British middle class' in *History and Computing*, xi, nos 1 and 2 (1999), pp 16–17.

⁴⁹ Cullen, *Synnott*, pp 16–21.

⁵⁰ Louis M. Cullen, 'The growth of Dublin 1600–1900: character and heritage' in F. H. A. Aalen and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Dublin city and country, from prehistory to present: studies in honour of J. H. Andrews* (Dublin, 1992), pp 265–72.

⁵¹ Many meetings had lay majorities: see, for example, Education Society of the United Parishes minutes, meetings from Dec. 1826 to Dec. 1827 (D.D.A., outsize items, E3 23/7, unpaginated).

⁵² See, for example, Education Society of the United Parishes minutes, for all meetings recorded for 1831 (D.D.A., E3 23/7).

this way, many of the Catholic parish schools that applied for grants to the Commissioners of National Education were managed by lay committees.⁵³ St Michael and St John's Catholic Parish Schools were under the guardianship of their parish priest, but they also displayed many features of a subscriber democracy. The minutes for the 1820s show similar patterns of management to those of the Education Society for the United Parishes of St Mary, St Thomas and St George. They were managed by a committee with a lay president, and of the fifteen committee meetings recorded for 1824, thirteen had lay majorities and six had no clerical attendees at all.⁵⁴

The Education Society of the United Parishes was established to protect Catholic children from Protestant proselytisers, but the society's managers claimed that their organisation was of benefit to the city's whole population. They indicated that non-Catholic children were welcome to attend and that these pupils' 'religious principles' would not be interfered with.⁵⁵ This, of course, may have reflected a desire to quell fears about Catholic proselytism and intolerance, but it at least indicated an openness and a willingness to engage with non-Catholics' concerns.⁵⁶ The committee emphasised that their aim was to promote education that 'daily inculcates religious and social duties and offers no violence to the feelings of any sect or persuasion'. They declared that this was part of their 'sacred and civil obligations as Christians and as Citizens'.⁵⁷

The emphasis that the Education Society of the United Parishes placed on participation in governance can be contrasted with more restrictive practices used by some of Dublin's Anglican parochial charities. The Church of Ireland schools of St Peter's — a large, socially varied parish on Dublin's southside — were governed by the archdeacon of Dublin (their patron) and a committee of twenty-eight. Like the Education Society of the United Parishes, these schools were not simply subsumed into parochial management structures. Even by 1850/51, when clerical control over philanthropy was increasing in most denominations across Dublin and Edinburgh, the committee of twenty-eight included those who did not hold formal parochial positions, including nine women, though eight clerics and two lay church wardens were also committee members.⁵⁸ The charity relied on voluntary sources of income such as charity sermons, subscriptions and donations, rather than on parish vestry funds. It does not, however, seem to have had many of the governance features of a subscriber democracy. At least eighteen members of the committee listed in the

⁵³ See Curran, 'Civil society in the stateless capital', pp 48–9, 145, based on analysis of the following applications for schools based in Dublin: (N.A.I, Commissioners of National Education in Ireland records, ED/1/28/1, ED/1/28/5, ED/1/28/6, ED/1/28/7, ED/1/28/8, ED/1/28/12, ED/1/28/13, ED/1/28/18, ED/1/28/19, ED/1/28/29, ED/1/28/33, ED/1/28/34, ED/1/28/47, ED/1/28/50) and Young, *Catholic directory*.

⁵⁴ St Michael and St John's Charity School minutes for all meetings recorded for 1824 (D.D.A., outsize items, E4 P/23/1, unpaginated). Attendees at these meetings are more difficult to identify from *Wilson's directory* than those mentioned in the Education Society of the United Parishes' minutes, suggesting they may have been of lower social status.

⁵⁵ 'Education of the Poor' printed resolutions, 12 Dec. 1826.

⁵⁶ This was a feature that characterised some versions of middle-class Catholic philanthropy, such as the Mater Hospital, in the post-Famine period: *Freeman's Journal*, 4 Aug. 1857, 11 Apr. 1860.

⁵⁷ 'Education of the Poor' printed resolutions, 15 Dec. 1826.

⁵⁸ *Report of the St. Peter's parochial male and female boarding, Sunday, daily and infant schools, for the year 1850* (Dublin, 1851), p. 2.

schools' annual report for 1850 did not appear in the subscription list.⁵⁹ The administrative records for the earlier years considered in this article suggest a similar story. In the 1830s there were some parallels with the records of the United Parishes and other organisations as the meetings followed a general rule-bound structure. Yet, they contained no mention of subscribers electing governors. Lay governors' attendance at meetings was frequently poor and clerics often dominated numerically.⁶⁰

Charities associated with Edinburgh's Presbyterian congregations also yield contrasts as well as similarities with Dublin's Catholic parochial charities. In 1826 a school was founded in the wealthy New Town parish of St Mary's. Referred to as a parochial school, it was designed to serve all the inhabitants of the parish, not just the Church of Scotland congregation.⁶¹ Though stated to be for 'all classes', the school was founded to provide an affordable education for working-class children. The schoolmaster's salary was paid using pupils' fees, but provision was made to cover the fees of those who could not afford to pay them. The building of the school was financed mainly by subscription and there was an element of 'subscriber democracy' in its governance: those who donated a hefty three guineas or more towards its construction were entitled to a permanent role in its administration.⁶² Yet, the kirk session, the parish's governing body, was also given a permanent role in the school's management. One third of directors' places were reserved for members of the session, reflecting the often blurred and complex relationships between church-run and voluntary activity in many parts of Britain.

It might have been expected that organisations associated with Edinburgh's non-conformist Presbyterian congregations would have been the most 'open' and democratic of charities, and that this would have strongly encouraged a culture of participation that historians have associated with both Presbyterianism and nonconformity.⁶³ There is a grain of truth in this. Charities affiliated to one such denomination, the U.A.S., were more 'geographically open' than their Church of Scotland counterparts in principle, as they were designed to gain support from their congregation, which was scattered throughout Edinburgh rather than centred on one parish. As Stewart Jay Brown has noted, this represented a different view of society than the parish-centred vision of community being championed by some contemporaries, most notably Rev. Thomas Chalmers.⁶⁴ It was instead a society consisting of many diverse religious congregations active across a city. In some

⁵⁹ *Report of the St. Peter's*, pp 2, 9–10. This potential overestimate of involvement comes from the fact just surnames were used to identify committee members in the subscription list.

⁶⁰ See, for example, St Peter's Female Boarding School minutes, attendance at meetings between Jan. and Nov. 1836 (Representative Church Body Library, St Peter's parish records, P.45.13.1.1).

⁶¹ St Mary's School minutes 17 Feb. 1830, pp 21–38 (National Records of Scotland [hereafter, N.R.S.], Church of Scotland records, CH2/139/33); *ibid.*, 8 Feb. 1837, pp 161–3; *ibid.*, 21 Apr. 1837, p 166; 'Proposal to erect a parochial school for the parish of St. Mary's' (N.R.S., Church of Scotland records, CH2/139/33); 'Report by the directors of St Marys [*sic*] school April 1834 (handwritten draft)'.
⁶² See also *First report of the commissioners of religious instruction Scotland*, p. 31, H.C. 1837 (31), xxi, 139.

⁶³ Michael Ledger-Lomas, 'Introduction' in Timothy Larsen and Michael Ledger-Lomas (eds), *The Oxford history of the Protestant dissenting traditions, volume III: the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 2017), pp 6–8; Morton & Morris, 'Civil society, governance', pp 358–9.

⁶⁴ Stewart J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the godly commonwealth in Scotland* (Oxford, 1982), pp 96–104; Brown, 'Religion and the rise of liberalism', pp 690–92.

ways it highlighted a greater ease with contemporary urban life, and its social mores, than exhibited by many other denominations.

In practice though, financial problems forced the parochial-focused charities in both cities to look beyond their parishes. This was sometimes emphasised in their publicity material. The Catholic parochial schools of the Dublin parish of St Nicholas Without, for example, informed potential donors in their newspaper advertisements that they accepted pupils without making 'religious or parochial distinctions'.⁶⁵ Even the Education Society of the United Parishes, the vast majority of whose committee resided within those parochial boundaries, appealed across the city for funds.⁶⁶

As might be expected, given the central role played by lay people in Presbyterian Church government, clerical attendance tended to be lower at meetings of Edinburgh's congregational charities than at those of their Catholic or Anglican counterparts in Dublin. This was certainly the case if one compares meetings of the missionary societies associated with the U.A.S. congregations of Bristo Street and Rose Street with the Education Society of the United Parishes. The day-to-day administrative processes were, however, very similar in both the U.A.S. organisations and the Education Society of the United Parishes, and all the associations' minutes closely resembled each other in form and content.⁶⁷

The U.A.S. missionary societies did not set a minimum membership subscription, but they were not subscriber democracies since they insisted that members be regular attenders at their respective chapels. Although both these societies and the Education Society of United Parishes, may each have, in practice, been governed by a relatively small, motivated group, the Education Society put forward a more inclusive face to the public. Indeed, two other organisations associated with the Bristo Street congregation — the Christian Instruction Society and the Young Men's Association — required that new members not only be part of the Bristo Street congregation but also that they be proposed and seconded by existing members of the respective organisation, further restricting openness.⁶⁸

As noted, discussions of issues in relation to charities' management structures, and their connections with the wider world, could shed light on contemporary ideas about urban governance, and political and social reform. The supporters of the Education Society of the United Parishes sometimes appeared to be more like liberal political reformers than dedicated promoters of institutional Catholicism. The Catholic Association provided some financial aid for the education of Catholics, and the Education Society of the United Parishes applied for such assistance in 1826, in the face of protests by one of its clerical supporters, who thought the association was trying to usurp the clergy's educational role.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 18 Jan. 1834.

⁶⁶ Education Society of the United Parishes minutes, 16 Jan. 1827 (D.D.A., outsize items, E3 23/7, (unpaginated)).

⁶⁷ R. J. Morris, *Class, sect, and party: the making of the British middle class, Leeds 1820–1850* (Manchester and New York, 1990), p. 186.

⁶⁸ Rose Street United Associate Session congregational missionary society minutes, 13 Dec. 1831, pp 1–4 (N.R.S., records of Presbyterian churches later united with the Church of Scotland, CH3/950/163); *Reports of the religious societies in connexion with United Associate Congregation of Bristo Street, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1845), pp 9, 11.

⁶⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Dec. 1826; c.f. Jacqueline Hill, 'Nationalism and the Catholic Church in the 1840s: views of Dublin repealers' in *I.H.S.*, xix, no. 76 (1975), pp 384–7, 391–5.

Freeman's Journal, 13 Dec. 1826.

A speaker at the meeting establishing the Education Society claimed that ‘the Protestant wealth of Ireland had always been arrayed on the side of liberality, their [Catholics’] only enemies were the Corporation of the Church [of Ireland] and the swindling Corporation of Dublin’.⁷⁰ This may have been an attempt to maintain the support of wealthy Protestants but in condemning the ‘close Corporations’ of local government and the established church, the charity’s supporters demonstrated that they shared the concerns of contemporary British reformers.⁷¹ Although a Catholic organisation, the Education Society’s procedures, the ways that its management communicated with the wider public and the concerns expressed by its supporters were very much in line with liberal and reform sentiment. The Education Society was more than ‘Dr Murray’s Education Society’ or a counter-proselytism measure. Located in the heart of Catholic parishes, it provided a practical way through which some could show their support for liberal ideals.

This emphasis on participation included a much stronger focus on the rights of lay people to control charities than would be seen in Catholic charities later in the century. Lay members of Dublin’s other Catholic charities were sometimes also prepared to condemn undue interference by Catholic clerics. In December 1828, for example, the lay trustees of St Peter’s free (Catholic) schools wrote to Archbishop Murray to protest their parish priest Fr William Young’s announcement that he would close the schools if subscriptions did not increase. That the trustees appealed to the archbishop does, of course, indicate that they valued clerical authority, but their letter clearly stated that they believed that they alone had the power to close the institution.⁷²

III

We should not forget other motivations for presenting an image of open management, including the need to gain as many subscriptions as possible. Simply finding enough volunteers to constitute a working managing committee might have also encouraged such an emphasis. Still, as we have seen, the openness of philanthropic governance was itself of significance. Philanthropists’ comments could also highlight the limits of the ‘openness’ they spoke about, even as they were defending the principle. This was particularly true in relation to women’s involvement in philanthropy.

Historians of the later nineteenth century have frequently noted how involvement in philanthropy played a major role in enabling some women to enter public and professional life. These opportunities increased as local and central government became more interested in allied fields such as sanitary reform. Campaigners for national-level women’s suffrage in the early twentieth century emphasised the role of women in social service when arguing for access to the franchise.⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *The Scotsman*, 29 Jan. 1823; Matthew Potter, *The municipal revolution in Ireland: a handbook of urban government in Ireland since 1800* (Dublin and Portland, Oregon, 2011).

⁷² ‘The trustees of St Peter’s R.C. Free Schools and Chapel, N.C. Road, to Fr Wm Young, P.P.’, 16 Dec. 1828 (D.D.A., Murray papers 1828, ordinary file, 30/11/11–12).

⁷³ F. K. Prochaska, ‘Philanthropy’ in Thompson (ed.), *Cambridge social history of Britain, volume 3*, pp 384–6; Elizabeth Crawford, *The women’s suffrage movement in Ireland and Britain: a regional survey* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, and New York, 2006), pp 15, 258, 278.

Luddy has explored the ways in which later nineteenth-century philanthropy, and associated concerns about poverty, encouraged some lay women in Ireland to become political activists, though she noted that this was much more common among Protestant women than Catholics.⁷⁴

Yet, as Luddy also indicated, the later nineteenth century was quite different from its early decades. Karen Sonnelitter has argued that philanthropy did not provide a linear path to public participation for women. In fact, the greater institutionalisation of philanthropy during the eighteenth century, and the formalisation of charities' rules, undermined women's traditional philanthropic roles in Ireland, with a few notable public exceptions such as the work of Arabella Denny.⁷⁵ This erasure could still be seen in early nineteenth-century Dublin where women undertook a significant amount of the philanthropic work, but the public face of charity tended to be male. The same is true for Edinburgh, where even the name of the Scottish Ladies' Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India was a misnomer: the organisation was governed by a male treasurer, secretary and presidents, with women relegated to a sub-committee.⁷⁶

This relegation of women also occurred in other Irish and British towns at this time. Martin Gorsky has highlighted similar trends in Bristol.⁷⁷ Alice Johnson finds that some Belfast female charitable societies, such as the Ladies' Institute and the Belfast Female Mission, presented a more masculine public face than might have been expected. Although their committees were composed solely of women, they were spoken for by men in public. The Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick in Belfast was managed by female officers, but still had a male treasurer.⁷⁸

One might have imagined that the small parochial and congregational charities considered in this article would have afforded more space for women to be involved in management. In both Edinburgh and Dublin, the Education Society of the United Parishes, the U.A.S. congregational charities of Rose Street, the schools of St Michael and St John's, St Mary's Parish School, and St Peter's Church of Ireland parish school, all employed women as collectors. The specifically 'female U.A.S. charities' — Bristo Street Juvenile Female Missionary Society and Bristo Street Ladies Benevolent Society — included women in their management, but the other U.A.S. charities did not, nor did St Mary's Church of Scotland school.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, pp 19–20, 212–18.

⁷⁵ Karen Sonnelitter, *Charity movements in eighteenth-century Ireland: philanthropy and improvement* (Martlesham, Suffolk, and Rochester, New York, 2016), pp 123–5, 132–40; see also Luddy's comments on the need to consider these issues in more detail: Maria Luddy, 'Women's history' in Laurence M. Geary and Margaret Kelleher (eds), *Nineteenth-century Ireland: a guide to recent research* (Dublin, 2005), p. 48.

⁷⁶ Oliver and Boyd's *new Edinburgh almanac and national repository...for 1845* (Edinburgh, 1845), p. 410. This was not merely a legal convenience to secure property. Jane Rendall has indicated that it was possible for female societies in Scotland to manage property issues informally through a male friend rather than requiring he be an officeholder in their organisation: Jane Rendall, "'The principle of mutual support': female friendly societies in Scotland, 1798–1830", unpublished paper at joint meeting of the Gender History Network and Scottish History Seminar, University of Edinburgh, 16 Mar. 2016.

⁷⁷ Gorsky, *Patterns*, pp 169–70.

⁷⁸ Johnson, *Middle-class life*, pp 267–8.

⁷⁹ St Mary's kirk session reports on St Mary's school, with subscription list for 1827, and other papers, 1827–38 (N.R.S., Church of Scotland records, CH2/139/183); *Reports of the*

Similarly, the managing committees of the Education Society of the United Parishes and St Michael and St John's schools did not include women. St Peter's Church of Ireland schools, however, did have women in their management. In fact, they sometimes outnumbered men at committee meetings, although the minutes are too sparse to provide a more detailed insight into women's impact on day-to-day decision making.

Luddy emphasised that there were greater opportunities for lay Protestant women to participate in philanthropy, partly because Catholic women's involvement became increasingly confined to female religious orders.⁸⁰ However, early in the century significant numbers of lay Catholic women were still involved in charities in Dublin. Several parochial schools were at least partly managed by a 'committee of Ladies'. Alongside the Education Society of the United Parishes there were separate Catholic 'Female Free Schools' serving the same union of parishes. These schools were managed by a ladies' committee. This organisation also made its presence known through newspaper advertisements for fundraising sermons and through acknowledgement notices for donations.⁸¹ It is less clear if these schools were run along subscriber democracy lines. This may reflect an absence of sources, or the fact that less public emphasis was placed on the procedures that female managers used.

Although women were doing much of the philanthropic work in practice, the public face of philanthropy and especially its administration remained relatively masculine in both Dublin and Edinburgh, and this does not seem to have been a particular concern for those who championed greater openness in charitable governance. A language that actively excluded women by focusing on 'brotherhood' had been a feature of reform movements in Ireland since the late 1700s.⁸² O'Connellite movements were notably more inclusive in terms of their membership, though even here women generally played a passive role, receiving compliments at meetings but given few opportunities to speak.⁸³ Dublin was certainly not unique in this regard. Reform, including the reform of charities, was sometimes discussed in highly gendered terms which served to further exclude women. Those attempting to make the governance of Edinburgh's Royal Infirmary more open, for example, were praised for acting in a 'manly and honourable' way.⁸⁴ The language of philanthropic reform was sometimes used to exclude on the basis of class. A letter to *The Scotsman* in 1823, calling for the reform of the Royal Infirmary, favourably compared the less 'aristocratic' Glasgow infirmary with its Edinburgh counterpart:

religious societies; Bristo Street Missionary Society minutes; Rose Street Missionary Society minutes.

⁸⁰ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, pp 21–3, 83–4.

⁸¹ See, for example, *Freeman's Journal*, 26 Feb. 1825, 7 Dec. 1833.

⁸² Ian McBride, *Eighteenth-century Ireland: the isle of slaves* (Dublin, 2009), pp 388–98; Padhraig Higgins, *A nation of politicians: gender, patriotism and political culture in late eighteenth-century Ireland* (Madison, WI, 2010), chapters 6 and 7.

⁸³ Mary O'Dowd, 'O'Connell and the lady patriots: women and O'Connellite politics, 1824–1845' in A. Blackstock and E. Magennis (eds), *Politics and political culture in Britain and Ireland, 1750–1850: essays in tribute to Peter Jupp* (Belfast, 2007), pp 283–303.

⁸⁴ *The Scotsman*, 7 Jan. 1824 (emphasis in original). For other comments on the 'manliness' of those involved in religious education provision, see *The Witness*, 29 Apr. 1840, 2 Mar. 1844.

The contrast which their [the Glasgow infirmary's managers'] conduct — though that of merchants chiefly — form with that of the titled and respectable Managers of *our* Infirmary, is *striking* enough; and proves that the spirit generated by self-election and close corporations, is exceedingly different from that which accompanies open elections, and a dependence on constituents.⁸⁵

Reforming the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary's management would, it was suggested, bring benefits associated with governance by upper middle-class subscribers. There is no mention of anyone further down the social scale.

The gendered language, however, is perhaps more significant, given that traditionally charity was understood to be an activity to which women were particularly suited. A growing body of research is demonstrating the ways in which nineteenth-century women were sometimes able to circumvent the strictures on their roles, and exert great social influence, but to understand the ways in which contemporary gender roles were shaped, we also need to investigate how these restrictions were constructed. The practical role that the language of liberalism and reform played in reinforcing gender roles needs significantly more attention.⁸⁶

IV

Luddy has highlighted the growth of institutional Catholic church power in philanthropy over the course of the nineteenth century. One of the most obvious examples of this was the handing over of the management of charities such as Magdalen asylums from lay women to female religious orders.⁸⁷ Some of the organisations considered in this article also shed light on how clerical control began to tighten in Dublin's Catholic charities from the 1830s onwards, as did their connections with formal church and parochial structures.

In the 1820s, the presidents of St Michael and St John's schools were elected by subscribers, but by 1834 their presidents were being elected by parishioners.⁸⁸ The Education Society of the United Parishes had ceased to exist by 1845 for reasons that are unclear. Fears about Protestant proselytism persisted, and in 1851, such anxieties prompted the establishment of a new Catholic educational organisation to serve the union of parishes. This new organisation — the Association for Preservation of Faith — was much more clerically dominated than its predecessor. Its management included the clergy of the united parishes, those of the nearby parish of St Laurence O'Toole, and several groups of regular clerics. Only 'a limited Number of the Catholic Laity of the Parish' were involved. The Association was not averse to working with some Catholic lay organisations, such as the Ladies'

⁸⁵ *The Scotsman*, 29 Jan. 1823 (emphasis in original).

⁸⁶ Catherine Hall, 'Competing masculinities: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill and the case of Governor Eyre' in eadem (ed.), *White, male and middle-class: explorations in feminism and history* (Cambridge, 1992), pp 255–95;. See also Linda Colley on supporters of Catholic Emancipation criticising the 'womanly' nature of opponents: Linda Colley, *Britons, forging the nation 1707–1837* (new ed., New Haven, CT, and London, 2009), pp 339–40.

⁸⁷ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, pp 21–3.

⁸⁸ St Michael and St John's Charity School minutes for all meetings recorded for 1824 (D.D.A., outsize items, E4 P/23/1, unpaginated); *ibid.*, 18 Feb. 1834.

Association of Charity, but comparing its management structure with that of the Education Society of the United Parishes suggests that a significant increase in church control had occurred.⁸⁹ A growing confessionalisation of charities' newspaper advertising, with, for example, a diminishment of notices for Church of Ireland charities in the *Freeman's Journal*, may have also furthered the sense that the Catholic Church was exerting an increasing role in Dublin society.⁹⁰

As Luddy has discussed, there are likely to have been multiple reasons for this trend, including the need for financial stability — a significant issue at a time when many voluntary endeavours proved short lived — and an interest in improving efficiency.⁹¹ Extending control over charities in order to strengthen the whole institutional Catholic Church was also an end in itself, and would become increasingly important during the archbishopate of Paul Cullen.⁹² It was, however, not an exclusively Catholic phenomenon, and none of the religious denominations operating in these islands existed in a vacuum. Each responded to broader social conditions, and they also reacted to each other's activities. More energetic efforts by one denomination to gain or retain adherents could result in another reaching for similar tools.

In Edinburgh, the Church of Scotland engaged in church extension: raising funds to build more places of worship and make the established church more accessible to the population, especially the urban poor. This prompted other denominations to increase their philanthropic activities. The Disruption itself demonstrated that denominational authority was taken seriously, and it resulted in the development of a whole network of new Free Church of Scotland parishes and associated organisations.⁹³ The split also put pressure on officeholders in Church of Scotland charities who joined the Free Church. One such officeholder, Patrick Dalmahoy, secretary of St Mary's Church parochial school, resigned in response to assertions by some school managers that the position should be held by a member of the Church of Scotland.⁹⁴

In this fluid and highly charged religious environment, Edinburgh's nonconformist Presbyterian denominations also saw efforts by their church bodies to exert greater control. The U.A.S. Synod, for example, attempted to extend its reach over congregational philanthropy by taking over missions previously administered by individual congregational societies, and by endeavouring to construct a more centralised funding system to subsidise poorer congregations' missionary efforts.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Education Society of the United Parishes minutes: 'general meeting of the clergy, secular & regular of the United Parishes of St Mary St Thomas & St George ... 24th of November 1851' (D.D.A., outsize items, E3 23/7, unpaginated).

⁹⁰ Curran, 'Civil society in the stateless capital', pp 52–3.

⁹¹ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, pp 35–6.

⁹² Mary E. Daly, 'Catholic Dublin: the public expression in the age of Paul Cullen', and Virginia Crossman, "'Attending to the wants of poverty": Paul Cullen, the relief of poverty and the development of social welfare in Ireland', both in Dáire Keogh and Albert McDonnell (eds) *Cardinal Paul Cullen and his world* (Dublin and Portland, Oregon, 2011), pp 130–45 and pp 146–65 respectively.

⁹³ Brown, *National churches*, pp 68–74, 170–73.

⁹⁴ St Mary's School minutes, letters following the meeting of 6 May 1844, pp 269–70 (N.R.S., Church of Scotland records, CH2/139/33).

⁹⁵ Rose Street United Associate Session congregational missionary society minutes, 18 Nov. 1844, pp 324–5 (N.R.S., records of Presbyterian churches later united with the

Even Presbyterian denominations, with their traditions of lay authority, marked out specific roles for clerics in some of their charitable endeavours. For example, the Rose Street Missionary Society employed lay missionaries, but when they chose Mr Jamieson as 'their Foreign agent in Jamaica', they felt it necessary for him to be ordained.⁹⁶ Clergymen from other congregations were invited to speak at the general meetings of the Bristo Street Missionary Society, reflecting and bolstering their authority.⁹⁷ Clerical influence was also revered and increasingly reinforced within Church of Scotland charities. In 1845, a St Mary's minister, Rev. Dr Grant, circulated an address via the parochial school's managers to encourage parents to send their children to the parochial sabbath schools and to church services, using the charities' structures to try to extend the established church's spiritual reach.⁹⁸

The tightening of clerical and institutional church authority, wherever it occurred, represented a move away from liberal ideals of governance. None of these presented quite as extreme a remove from openness as the Catholic religious sisters who later in the century, presented their charities' accounts to their clerical superiors and not to the wider public. This emphasised to whom it was that the orders felt accountable.⁹⁹ The introduction of the Society of St Vincent de Paul to Dublin in 1844 was also a move away from a subscriber democracy model, as each conference or council of the organisation was required to include a spiritual director appointed by the bishop of the diocese.¹⁰⁰ The organisation did publish annual reports, however.¹⁰¹ Increasing control by Catholic religious bodies did not have the same effects in all cases. Some charities managed by Catholic religious orders, such as the Mater Hospital (opened 1861), continued to use some of the familiar apparatus of public interaction into the late 1860s at least.¹⁰² However, in the 1820s and 1830s there had been several examples of Catholic charities

Church of Scotland, CH3/950/163); Bristo Street Associate Congregation Missionary Society minutes, 2 Nov. 1844, pp 325–6 (N.R.S., records of Presbyterian churches later united with the Church of Scotland, CH3/313/16); *ibid.*, 26 Jan. 1846, pp 342–4; *ibid.*, 2 Dec. 1844, pp 6–7; *ibid.*, 8 Oct. 1845, pp 7–8.

⁹⁶ Rose Street United Associate Session congregational missionary society minutes, 21 Apr. 1836, p. 105 (N.R.S., CH3/950/163); *ibid.*, 5 May 1836, pp 108–09; *ibid.*, 24 May 1836, pp 109–10; *ibid.*, 23 July 1844, pp 319–21, 324–5.

⁹⁷ Bristo Street Associate Congregation Missionary Society minutes, 25 Sept. 1843, pp 1–2 (N.R.S., records of Presbyterian churches later united with the Church of Scotland, CH3/313/16); *ibid.*, 6 Sept. 1844, pp 4–5.

⁹⁸ St Mary's School minutes, 16 Oct. 1845, pp 301–02.

⁹⁹ Luddy, *Women & philanthropy*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁰ James Gerard Martin, 'The Society of St. Vincent de Paul as an emerging social phenomenon in mid-nineteenth century Ireland' (M.A. thesis, National College of Industrial Relations, 1993), p. 96.

¹⁰¹ The fact that the social investigator Dr Thomas Willis was involved in the organisation's establishment in Dublin suggests responding to poverty was a significant part of the charity's mission: Dickson, *Dublin*, p. 375. According to Martin, the founding group consisted of eight legal professionals, two doctors, two clergy and four 'others': Martin, 'Society of St. Vincent de Paul', pp 61, 201. See also Máire Ní Chearbhaill, 'The Society of St Vincent De Paul in Dublin, 1926–1975' (Ph.D. thesis, NUI Maynooth, 2008), pp 1–5.

¹⁰² For example, *Annual report of the council of the Mater Misericordæ Hospital, for the year ending, December 31, 1866, presented to his eminence the cardinal archbishop of Dublin* (Dublin, 1867).

that in their everyday activities demonstrated a strong commitment to ‘reform’ ideals of governance.

Despite the growing role given to clerics, there were other ways in which some of Dublin’s small-scale Catholic charities continued to promote a commitment to more open and participatory forms of governance into the 1840s. Dublin boasted several charities designed to ensure orphans would be raised in the religious denomination of their parents. Two such organisations, St Bridget’s Female Orphan Charity and the Malachean Orphan Society, were founded to raise and educate the orphans of Catholic parents as Catholics. Both charities held annual dinners to raise funds, which in the 1830s and 1840s were usually chaired by Daniel O’Connell.¹⁰³

Engaging such a high profile and talkative chair ensured that these events, especially O’Connell’s speeches, were covered in detail by the *Freeman’s Journal*. His orations focused more on his political interests and campaigns than on the charities’ work, but they provided another means through which Catholic philanthropy was connected with issues of governance reform.¹⁰⁴ The importance of achieving political representation and a broad franchise was a common theme. At the annual dinner for St Bridget’s charity in 1836, he praised a Dublin resident for valuing the franchise so highly that he sold his shoes to pay the qualifying tax.¹⁰⁵ At the same charity’s dinner in 1841, O’Connell criticised the limited nature of the Irish parliamentary franchise, and while he welcomed the recently passed municipal reform legislation, he condemned the delay in introducing such measures to Ireland.¹⁰⁶ Again these small-scale Catholic charities could provide a platform for those who wished to advocate for the opening up of urban governance to a greater range of people, though we must also remember who reformers might exclude as well as include.

V

In her essay ‘Catholic Dublin: the public expression in the age of Paul Cullen’, Mary E. Daly highlighted the celebration of Dublin’s ‘reclamation’ for the Catholic faith during Cullen’s tenure (1852–78). A significant part of this involved visually emphasising the Catholicism of the city’s inhabitants through the building of an elaborate and intertwined set of Catholic institutions, including charitable establishments, thereby simultaneously bolstering the strength of the institutional church.¹⁰⁷ Developments in charitable provision during this time period still strongly shape assessments of nineteenth-century Catholic philanthropy overall. This article has indicated that despite significant Catholic involvement in philanthropy during the 1820s and 1830s, the ways in which Catholic charities were presented to the public were somewhat different. The increased architectural presence

¹⁰³ *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 Jan. 1841. The minutes for the Malachean Orphan Society for 1825–39 are held in the D.D.A.; though somewhat more chaotic, they resemble the Minutes of the Education Society of the United Parishes, and the schools of St Michael and John’s in form and content (Malachean Orphan Society minutes and accounts, 1825–9 (D.D.A., E3).

¹⁰⁴ *Freeman’s Journal*, 27 Nov. 1838, 10 Jan. 1844.

¹⁰⁵ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 14 Dec. 1836.

¹⁰⁶ *Freeman’s Journal*, 21 Sept. 1841.

¹⁰⁷ Daly, ‘Catholic Dublin’, pp 140–45.

and pomp of the post-Famine period no doubt reflected the growing confidence and power of the city's Catholic middle classes, yet there was a change in emphasis, compared with the 1820s and 1830s, that went beyond this. There was a more significant and vocal commitment to liberal reform in those earlier decades. This was reflected in the procedures of the charities discussed above, as well as in the language used to describe them.

Alice Johnson argues that by the 1840s and 1850s Belfast's charities closely resembled those in British cities, while Dublin's philanthropic organisations were much less like their British counterparts.¹⁰⁸ By contrast, in the 1820s and 1830s there were many similarities between Dublin's charities and those in Scotland, both in terms of their governance and in how they were publicly discussed. Indeed, some of the changes that occurred later, such as growing clerical control, were neither unique to Catholicism nor to Dublin, hinting that developments in Dublin did not occur in a vacuum.¹⁰⁹ A growing assertiveness by some religious denominations fuelled similar patterns in others across the British and Irish Isles. In the 1820s and 1830s, many of Dublin's Catholics shared similar attitudes about urban governance with British middle-class reformers and, like their British counterparts, they used philanthropy as one way of emphasising their commitment to 'open' governance. This is evident in the procedures they adopted, the ways in which they talked about charitable management and their use of the platform philanthropy offered to criticise more restrictive institutions and procedures. In some cases, Catholic charities championed open participatory forms of management to a greater extent than contemporary Presbyterians.

The language used to discuss charities, as well as the procedures they adopted, sheds light on ideas about who should be included or excluded in philanthropic management and in broader urban administration. Those using philanthropy to argue for greater openness in urban governance were still happy to signal that others, especially women or those of lower social status, were less welcome. Small-scale parochial and congregational charities have received little attention from historians, but analysis of them can reveal considerably more than the details of these organisations' everyday administration. The early nineteenth century was a time of new possibilities for Dublin's middle-class Catholics, and many used the opportunity of participating in philanthropy to emphasise and advance their liberal principles.

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, *Middle-class life*, pp 289–90.

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion of Dublin's position in the context of European ideas about welfare, see Jacinta Prunty, *Dublin slums, 1800–1925: a study in urban geography* (Dublin, 1998), pp 12–13, 197–8.