Articles

"Torn from Their Mothers' Breasts":

The Battle for Impoverished Souls in Ireland, 1853-1885

Kristin V. Brig
College of Charleston

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In May 1883, the Catholic chaplain of a Donegal workhouse quit his position after a dispute with the workhouse's board of guardians.[1] The board primarily consisted of Protestant officials, all of whom opposed the religious services the Catholic chaplain offered to the workhouse inmates. Over ninety percent of those inmates were of the Catholic faith and desperately required a Catholic chaplain. Despite the overwhelming clamor in the workhouse for a Catholic chaplain, the Protestant majority on the board refused to hire one.

While an element of holy war existed in this situation in Donegal, the workhouse's chaplaincy faced a situation that did not reflect its time. Such overt religious prejudice had been common earlier in nineteenth century, but the English government had

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[1] Boards of guardians consisted of prominent locally elected members of Poor Law Unions. The guardians came from middle-class backgrounds, usually from professional occupations. The guardians controlled almost everything about the workhouse, including its finances and hired positions, i.e. workhouse masters, schoolmasters, and workhouse hospital nurses.

turned toward political, instead of religious, control from the 1850s onward. It particularly sought to control the Irish poor through Irish charitable relief. The English government wanted control over the entire Irish charitable relief system, to control the charity upon which most of the poor relied, and not merely control over the paupers' religion. But that is not the way the Irish Catholic viewed the situation. Until the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, the English government had banned the Catholic faith in Ireland. The legacy of this ban remained in Irish minds up to the end of the nineteenth century; as a result, Catholics had difficulty separating religious control from political control. While the English fought for political control over Ireland's destitute, the Irish Catholic viewed the fight as primarily religious, claiming the English still attacked their faith through politics. The English and Irish thus waged a war of misunderstanding, each struggling at cross-purposes to provide charity for the poor.

In recent years, in conjunction with the general study of British labor history, historical work on late nineteenth-century Irish philanthropy has stagnated. In the early 1990s, Maria Luddy led the way into research on Irish philanthropy and has since written on charity both inside and outside the workhouse, particularly in the Dublin area.[2] While Luddy has made considerable headway into this history, she looks only at one piece of the Irish charity puzzle through a social history: the differences between Catholic and Protestant philanthropic practices are featured, but the competition between the two is not fully delineated, leaving a gap in Irish philanthropic historiography. Prior to Luddy, Alison Jordan wrote on the competition between Catholic and Protestant charities.[3] However, instead of challenging the conception of Protestant philanthropy in control of Catholic

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[2] Examples of Luddy's research are in her monograph *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and article "Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 7, no. 4 (December 1996): 350-364.

[3] Alison Jordan, "Voluntary Societies in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast," *Irish Economic and Social History* 17 (1990): 96-97.

Ireland through the Poor Law, her analysis remains stuck in Belfast, a predominantly Protestant city and uniquely different from other Irish cities like Dublin and Cork. The historiography of Irish philanthropy has yet to see research on the critical philanthropic struggle between Protestant and Catholic charities, both of which sought control over the Irish poor.

From the beginning of their colonial rule over Ireland, the English viewed the Irish as incapable of effectively helping their poor. Before the seventeenth century, Ireland had a capable system for dealing with the poor, mainly through monasteries and clan connections. The Reformation in the early sixteenth century, and Oliver Cromwell's subsequent invasion of Ireland between 1649 and 1653, destroyed both monasteries and clan connections. This destruction brought an end to Ireland's traditional relief system, leaving Ireland without proper poor relief for two centuries.

When, in the 1830s, the English started to investigate the problem of the impoverished Irish, they discovered the desperate need for an efficient relief system in Ireland. The English realized the number of paupers in Ireland was growing and blamed the problem on a lack of poor relief. In 1862, Irish Catholic lawyer W. Neilson Hancock published a piece on the differences between the Irish and English Poor Laws. He particularly discussed England's perception of Ireland's lack of poor relief. In his work Hancock often dealt with the Poor Laws, and his insight helps in analyzing the English motives behind promoting the Irish Poor Law. He believed the English had a superiority complex when it came to poor relief: "Englishmen deduced conclusions most flattering to themselves, and most disparaging to the poor of Ireland."[4] By "flattering themselves," the English saw themselves as superior to the Irish, which justified English control over Ireland. The English thus used the Irish poor as a mode of political control and utilized Irish scapegoats to justify their own control of the island's poor

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[4] W. Neilson Hancock, "The Difference Between the English and Irish Poor Law, as to the Treatment of Women and Unemployed Workmen," *Journal of the Dublin Statistical Society* Fourteenth Session, Part 18 (1861): 218.

relief.[5]

The English responded to this deficient relief system with the Irish Poor Law in 1838. In 1834, just four years earlier, the English instated their own relief system, the New Poor Law. The New Poor Law replaced the Old Poor Law, established in 1601 by Elizabeth I, as a more efficient system for dealing with paupers in England and Wales. The reformed law centered on what it called indoor relief, or relief through union workhouses, requiring all able-bodied paupers to receive relief through the workhouse. The law reserved "outdoor" relief, or monetary relief through local parishes, for the sick and elderly, who unlike the able-bodied lacked the ability to work. However, the Irish Poor Law contained fewer concessions for the poor than the English Poor Law did. Instead of allowing a certain amount of outdoor relief with an emphasis on indoor relief proffered by workhouses, the Irish Poor Law forced outdoor relief out of Ireland altogether and replaced it with indoor relief for all paupers, including the sick and elderly. English author of the Irish Poor Law, George Nicholls, stipulated that Irish paupers be relieved either through the workhouse or assisted emigration.[6] Neither option allowed paupers to avoid the workhouse in favor of temporary outdoor relief.[7]

Beginning in 1845 and lasting six years, the Irish famine tested the strength and efficiency of the Irish Poor Law system. The famine brought thousands of impoverished Irish to the doors of workhouses, all of them seeking food, shelter, and clothing. Yet there were too many paupers; they overcrowded the workhouses and placed heavy financial burdens on local unions. Boards of guardians gave inmates meaningless work tasks to justify giving relief, while others did not have enough work for the occupation of every inmate. Poor Law Unions additionally struggled to pay for

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[5] Hancock, "The Difference Between the English and Irish Poor Law," 217-220.

[6] Robert Torrens, *Plan of an Association in Aid of the Irish Poor Law* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1838), 11.

[7] John Crowley, William J. Smyth, and Mike Murphy, eds., *Atlas of the Great Famine* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 120-126.

food, clothing, and coffins for inmates.[8] As a result, many inmates absconded from workhouses, turning either to lives of crime or emigration instead of remaining in the workhouse to die from lack of proper care.[9]

   This mismanagement and failure of the Irish Poor Law during the famine created an Irish hatred for the workhouse. Many of the Irish saw the Poor Law as a propagator of immorality and inefficiency instead of fulfilling a moral and efficient role in society, as the government wanted it to do. Numerous reports on workhouses, especially after the famine, noted the extensive idleness and disorder inherent in Irish workhouses. The 1859 *Irish Quarterly Review* drew a connection between girls who grew up in workhouses and convictions for female crime. Idleness in the workhouse schools and inmate wards gave their female inmates time to do as they wished, and so the inmates had to devise ways of filling their time.[10] Two years after this report, inspector Delia Lidwill wrote of individual cases of disorder in workhouses in the fourteenth annual report of the poor law inspectors. Lidwill explained how she found the disorderly girls intelligent but roused by such mischief as breaking workhouse windows and tearing their clothing.[11] This time the report cited a lack of virtuous training, not merely idleness, as the reason for the immorality of the inmates.

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   [8] The Irish Poor Law divided Ireland into separate "unions," each of which managed the local poor relief and workhouse.

   [9] The Poor Law designed the workhouse as a worse state of living than what a pauper was used to, meaning that the workhouses in Ireland had to create a worse living situation than an Irish agricultural cottage had. Workhouses thus had extremely poor ventilation, worse food, and cramped living spaces. During the famine, workhouses became nightmarish places. They crammed people into small dormitories meant to turn people off from applying for relief, not to help hundreds of starving and diseased folk. G. Poulett Scrope, *The Irish Poor Law: How Far Has it Failed? And Why?* (London: James Ridgeway, 1849), 11-17.

   [10] "Irish Quarterly Review (1859)," ed. Dympna McLoughlin, vol. 5 of *The Field Day Anthology: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions,* eds. Angela Bourke el al. (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 729-730.

   [11] Delia Lidwill, "Fourteenth Annual Report of the Poor Law Inspectors (1861)," ed. Dympha McLoughlin, vol. 5 of *The Field Day Anthology: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions,* eds. Angela Bourke et al.(New York: New York University Press, 2002), 730-731.

When girls continually broke windows and tore clothing, costs in the workhouse, and subsequently the local poor law union, increased, creating a need for better economic efficiency. Accounts of these types of violent disorder are consistent: they appear in almost every report on prisons to which the workhouse officials sent the girls. Clearly, the higher morality and efficiency the English aimed for in their Irish Poor Law failed dramatically. As a result of these workhouse problems, England's moral superiority diminished in Irish minds.

Catholic lawyer Hancock supported the view that the government's policies promoted immorality in workhouses. He published a piece for the *Journal of the Dublin Statistical Society* targeting the immorality in poor law workhouses in Ireland. Hancock discussed the problems children faced in workhouses and viewed the workhouse as an unavoidable home for children that bled with immorality. Children had no escape from their surroundings in the workhouse and, as a result, they easily learned immoral patterns:

> Pauper-reared children, haplessly divested of all ties of home or kindred, and without that moral stay which only the influence of a healthy family can give, are ill prepared indeed to resist the torrent evil example and invidious temptation where here besets them.[12]

In his description of them as helpless, Hancock reached out to the heart of Ireland in hopes of finding some sympathy for these children, trapped under the fist of the Poor Law. Irish pauper children, faced with "the torrent evil example and invidious temptation," had no other place to go than the workhouse because of the Irish Poor Law and so could not escape immorality where morality ought to exist.

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[12] W. Neilson Hancock, "On the importance of substituting the Family System of rearing Orphan Children for the system now pursued in our Workhouses," *Journal of the Dublin Statistical Society* 2 (1859): 321.

The Irish often tied morality with religion, which meant that Ireland considered the threat to the morality of the poor a threat to religion. Since the majority of Ireland's population was Catholic, Catholics responded most prominently to the immoralities in the workhouses.[13] The Catholic chaplain for the workhouse, the physical representation of religion, served an important role as the primary instructor on moral behavior for workhouse inmates. When the Poor Law Commissioners stationed in England and local boards of guardians in Ireland rejected Catholic chaplains' efforts in workhouses, as seen in the rejection of the chaplain at Donegal workhouse in 1883, Catholics understood the action to mean both the rejection of a stable force of morality and the restriction of Catholic abilities. These abilities ranged from instructing inmates in their faith to visiting orphaned children who had little contact with people outside the workhouse.[14]

Catholic chaplains were not always at odds with their Protestant peers in the fight against immorality. The famine of 1845-1852 temporarily suspended the battle for control over relief in Ireland, as relief workers like chaplains focused primarily on helping the starving rather than fighting litigious battles. Chaplains of both confessions worked together to promote a sense of morality in the workhouse. Such collaborations mainly existed during the famine, when the need for morality and order trumped religious warfare. They prioritized caring for their impoverished parishioners over fighting a battle against one another or a board of guardians. In 1861 an Irishman named Denis O'Connor observed how it mattered not during the famine to what creed one belonged; the immediate concerns consisted of keeping the starving Irish alive and preserving their souls for the afterlife.[15]

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[13] My analysis for this paper does not include Ulster, which was predominantly Protestant. I principally deal with Connaught, Leinster, and Munster.

[14] Joseph Robins, *The Lost Children: A Study of Charity Children in Ireland, 1700-1900* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1980), 250-256.

[15] Denis O'Connor, *Seventeen Years' Experience of Workhouse Life*

After the famine, Catholics commenced the fight against governmental restrictions on Catholic charities in Ireland. In many cases, Catholics faced difficulties from Parliament when Catholic charities attempted to fix England's inefficient Poor Law system themselves. Politically, members of the Catholic Church, most notably Catholic philanthropic organizations, felt they faced continual repression and persecution from the English in terms of caring for the poor. Although Parliament passed the Roman Catholic Relief Act in 1839, making all Catholic charities in Ireland legal, Catholic social workers still faced numerous issues in establishing themselves in communities. Supporters of Catholic social work came from various places, but most vocally from the political arena. The London *Times* published an article in 1859, covering a local election in County Galway in which one unsatisfied constituent railed against Lord Dunlo and attempted to persuade his fellow citizens not to vote for Dunlo:

> From Dunlo deliver us…From a representative in whose veins the blood of a bigot runs, deliver us. From a representative whose father insulted holy nuns, deliver us…from a representative who might think it was his duty, if returned, zealously to have poor Papists martyr'd, hang'd, and burn'd – oh voters, deliver us! Catholic electors of the county, would you vote for the man who opposed the admission of the Sisters of Mercy to the Ballinasloe Workhouse, to instruct the Catholic children, or afford consolation to the dying inmates of their own persuasion?...Who has ever been the determined enemy and persecutor of your clergy and your religion?...No! Burke and Gregory forever, and down with Dunlo![16]

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with Suggestions for Reforming the Poor Law and Its Administration (Dublin: McGlashan & Gill, 1861), 14 and 38. O'Connor does not much distinguish in his piece on the efforts of chaplains during the famine. He dots his article with the word "Christian" instead of using "Catholic" and "Protestant."

[16] "Election Intelligence," *London Times*, May 11, 1859.

The unsatisfied constituent here utilized a type of prayer, the litany, which Catholics across the region understood. The language used, especially of martyring, burning, and hanging impoverished Catholics, depicts the English Anglican government as against the Irish Catholic. Dunlo sided with the Anglican government of England, an action that turned him into an enemy of Catholic efforts in Irish charity. Dunlo believed strongly in the English government, repressing Catholic charity in favor of Protestant superiority, particularly in his rejection of the Sisters of Mercy in the local workhouse. The constituent labels Dunlo "the determined enemy and persecutor" of the Catholic faith, seeking his own rise to power instead of fulfilling the needs of his Catholic constituents below him.

While the Irish Catholic fought for their rights in local areas of Ireland, they also directly addressed Parliament about restrictions on Catholic philanthropy. In April 1863, John Bagwell, MP for Clonmel, exemplified the need for political control over Catholic philanthropy during a parliamentary discussion on taxing new Catholic charities. At the time, Parliament wished to tithe funds from each Irish charity for governmental use. Bagwell immediately rejected the idea, advising the House of Commons to think carefully about how the Catholics in Ireland would react to such a tax. He pointed out that most Catholic charities ran on voluntary donations. They supported their local charities out of pocket, not through the tithing system used by Parliament. If Parliament were to touch such out of pocket expenses, Irish Catholics would not be terribly pleased, and see the act as a kind of spiritual and political threat.[17] Catholics would feel threatened by Parliament if their charities were threatened. Parliament had to be careful not to cause further misunderstanding with Irish Catholics unless it wished to promote spiritual warfare, especially in two areas of Irish philanthropy: education and medicine.

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[17] *Hansard Parliamentary Debates,* vol. 170 (April 30, 1863), col. 1017.

Philanthropic Education: Controlling the Young

Although the English government controlled much of the education in Ireland, education in Irish workhouse schools foundered in particular. Workhouse school education aimed to turn children into useful members of Irish society, to teach them skills required to make a life for themselves as well as keep them from becoming a burden on society.[18] In England, hired schoolmasters and mistresses ran workhouse schools, which the boards of guardians regularly inspected. In Ireland, boards of guardians hired schoolmasters and mistresses but failed to inspect regularly their abilities. Local Irish poor law guardians thus hardly knew the education children in workhouses received because they cared too little for that aspect of the workhouse to inspect it thoroughly.[19]

Not only did Irish workhouses fail to address the problem of thorough education for children, but also often did not compensate for sectarian issues among children. The Commissioners of National Education desired to bring both Catholic and Protestant children together under the same school roof in order to save costs hiring teachers and to unify children of different faiths. In the meantime, workhouse inspectors and guardians saw the animosity between Protestant and Catholic children, and advised that the workhouse system separate them accordingly. In this way, while the government thought to banish such animosity between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, reality did not make sectarian issues easy to fix.[20]

Outside the workhouse, the government tried to promote another form of schooling in the form of free, English-run schools. Plans for this type of free education began in the early eighteenth century with the introduction of the diocesan free schools. In this system, each Anglican diocese in Ireland was to build a schoolhouse, if it did not have one already. This schoolhouse served as a free school for children of all classes, especially those

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[18] Robins, *Lost Children*, 222.
[19] Robins, *Lost* Children, 223.
[20] Robins, *Lost Children,* 223-224.

from the poorest families, to attend and receive an elementary
education. The system required its teachers to be English or of
English descent, and these teachers had to adhere to the Anglican
faith.[21] Almost a century later Parliament repealed the statute in its
"Relaxation of the Restrictions on Education," which allowed
Catholics to teach in Irish schools once again. The Committee of
Education in Ireland confirmed the development of the act in a
routine inspection of schools in 1838.[22] This governmental
Committee in its inspection showed the progress of careers in
education for Catholics since the repeal of the statute of William
III. The Committee noted how Parliament allowed Catholic
teachers to instruct Catholic children in Irish schools, while
Protestant teachers remained to instruct Protestant children. In the
meantime, the Committee would continue its routine inspections,
informing Parliament of each school's activities. Parliament thus
sought to use Irish education in the nineteenth century as a method
of political control, but not religious control over Ireland's
children.[23]

　　　　By the mid-1850s, the English had established two
principal categories of free education: National Schools and
Charter Schools, neither of which the Irish Catholics liked. Both
types of schools still hired mainly Anglican teachers. The English
government hired these Anglicans because of their loyalty to the
government and the ease with which they would obey
governmental instructions. To Catholics, the placement of Anglican
teachers in largely Catholic schools threatened the faith of those
children. Hancock, the Catholic lawyer, claimed such schools drew
orphaned pauper children away from the Catholic faith. According
to Hancock, the English designed their diocesan free schools and
the following Charter Schools as methods of alienating children

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[21] The Statute of William III, put into effect in 1694, prohibited Roman
Catholics from becoming teachers in endowed English schools.

[22] Established in 1831 by Parliament to inspect and report on the public
education system.

[23] "Endowed Schools, Ireland, Commission," in *Parliamentary Papers,
House of Commons and Command,* vol. 22 (Dublin: Alex. Thom and Sons,
1858), 15-16, 25-26, and 31-32.

from their Catholic roots. Charter Schools were additionally often boarding schools, requiring children to live away from their communities in order to gain an education. For Hancock and other Irish Catholic writers, placing children in Protestant schools beyond the reach of their Catholic community's influence proved that the English were undertaking blatant proselytization.[24]

Weary of these problems with workhouse and national schools, the Irish Catholic established their own free education system for pauper children beginning in the 1850s. Although convent schools had existed for a number of years before the famine, religious organizations such as the Christian Brothers started to found schools aimed at educating the poorest in their communities. In his speech at a special meeting of the Dublin Corporation in 1865, Sir John Gray addressed the wide reach of the Christian Brothers in the Dublin community. He explained how the Christian Brothers were teaching about 50,000 pauper children that year and how the Brothers taught at their own expense.[25] At the time the Christian Brothers lived and worked in countries around the world, many in Europe and some in the greater British Empire. In Ireland, they catered especially to the poor and established schools in slums and other areas of extreme poverty.

Gray in his Corporation speech also accused Parliament of stunting the growth of Catholic schools run by such religious groups as the Christian Brothers. He vehemently perpetuated the idea of continued Anglican warfare on Catholic philanthropy in Ireland:

> You will have every monastic order in Ireland extinguished, and these good and pious and charitable men driven from this our midst without the possibility of successors to fill their place – men who have devoted themselves, night and day, to the interests of the poor, and the poor alone – men who

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[24] Hancock, "Substituting the Family System," 319-320.
[25] John Gray, *Obnoxious Oaths and Catholic Disabilities: Speech of Sir J. Gray in the Dublin Corporation* (Dublin: John F. Fowler, 1865), 44.

> interfere not in politics, but who keep away from
> the busy hum of the world's affairs, and devote
> themselves to ministering the poor, to the feeding,
> the clothing, and the educating of the poor and the
> children of the poor.[26]

Gray portrayed Parliament as a brute force seeking to destroy helpless, godly relief workers. Claiming that the Brothers had no political agenda, he imagined that they merely sought to help innocent children in the poorest communities in Ireland. As such, Parliament had no reason to restrict the work of the Christian Brothers other than out of a desire for religious persecution.

Yet it was precisely because the Christian Brothers did not participate in governmental politics that the government took harsh measures against them, especially when the Christian Brothers did not teach what the government authorized. Parliament responded to the effect that the Christian Brothers' schools were having in Ireland with political power, passing laws to stem the schools' growth and power in order to further control Irish children's education. In August 1883, a dispute occurred on the floor of the House of Commons between a few Irish and English MPs. MPs Callan and T.P. O'Connor, both from Ireland, complained that Parliament obstructed the use of certain literature in Christian Brothers' schools. Callan pointed out how Parliament banned the Christian Brothers' information and lessons in the field of geography. However, Parliament targeted a non-religious subject, geography; it did not correct the Christian Brothers' religious teachings, rather one of their secular subjects.[27] Catholic schools run by the Christian Brothers and other religious groups were not endowed schools, which meant Parliament could not control them as it did its other charity schools. In other words, Parliament sought control not over the religious aspect of Catholic schools but over their general education.

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[26] Gray, *Obnoxious Oaths*, 44.
[27] *Hansard Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 283 (August 1883), col. 954-955.

T.P. O'Connor backed Callan's position, accusing Parliament of assigning "value-less" books merely to control Irish education. While never explicit in O'Connor's words, the control of Parliament over simple items in education like the teaching of certain subjects and required books suggested religious obstruction, seeking to bar Catholic teachings from impoverished students' education.[28] Catholics took obstruction of their education system as evidence of spiritual warfare. The English government, however, saw this obstruction as a means of secular control over Irish education. The government banned certain texts with which it disagreed, especially when the formation of poor children who had little familial guidance was involved.

Ironically, the period's predominately Anglican English government criticized its own diocesan schools in Ireland as well as those of the Catholics, exposing a lack of religious preference. In Parliament's 1857-58 *Endowed Schools in Ireland Commission Report*, the inspector called the schools "miserably inefficient." He even divided his analysis of the schools into four parts:

> I ascribe their inefficiency to the following causes:--
> To the incompetency of the teachers.
> To the defects of the system.
> To the inferiority of the school-books.
> To the ideas of the superintendents (the local clergy of the Established Church) with regard to secular education.[29]

Parliament thus criticized Anglican diocesan schools just as harshly as it did the Catholic religious schools such as the Christian Brothers'. The English government pushed for efficiency as its highest standard in regard to Ireland, criticizing without differentiation by faith all philanthropic schools in Ireland.

Another educational option existed for pauper children, particularly for children in the workhouse. In the 1850s, the

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[28] *Hansard Parliamentary Papers*, col. 954-955.
[29] "Endowed Schools, Ireland, Commission," 303.

English government created a new system of fostering outside the workhouse, a system with which Catholics in Ireland agreed. With so many children left orphaned from the famine, both Catholics and Protestants agreed that the workhouse was not the preferred environment in which to raise children. Permitting children to live with foster parents outside the workhouse during the school year gave children the chance to grow up in a more moral and stable environment than in the workhouse. The government meant for the system to substitute for secular education inside the workhouse, having children in foster families attend national schools, charter schools, and other public schools outside the house. The Poor Law Commissioners thought that government-run schools outside the workhouse prepared children better for life than the workhouse school did, as these outside schools gave children more meaningful trades.[30]

The Irish Catholics regarded fostering as an opportunity to provide religious education and reclaim the lost souls of children. One Mr. Lee noted how, while the children of Protestant charter schools were better clothed and fed, the children living with foster families and attending parochial schools retained more familial warmth and religious instruction than the children in the charter schools. Fostering thus gave Catholics the opportunity to take in poor children, who may or may not have been baptized Catholic, and bring them up in the Catholic faith instead of Protestantism. A family gave its foster child the religious instruction he or she would not likely have received in the workhouse or in a charter school, thereby securing the child's soul for Catholicism.[31]

At the same time as the introduction of fostering, the Sisters of Mercy began moving into workhouses in order to instruct Roman Catholic pauper children. A virulent fight over the Sisters took place in Ballinasloe Union in 1863, where the Sisters

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[30] Hancock, "Substituting the Family System," 321-328. Workhouse schools often taught a limited number of trades that were overstocked with workers in the world outside the house, such as needlework and spinning. National and charter schools offered a greater variety of trades, including ironworking and tailoring.

[31] Hancock, "Substituting the Family System," 320.

had to ask repeatedly for visitation to the workhouse in order to help Catholic children. Other workhouses across Ireland had, by this point, decided to allow the religious into workhouses in order to instruct paupers. The Sisters of Mercy in Ballinasloe wanted to do much the same, seeking to instruct only Catholic children and not Protestant and thereby making a case for instruction, not proselytization.[32]

At first, the Ballinasloe board rejected the proposal. The board would have no control over the Sisters of Mercy and their instruction had they accepted the proposal. The board members thought that such uncontrolled visits of the Sisters would cause disciplinary issues, presenting a secular argument in the face of potentially losing control over the paupers in the house. In this way, the guardians viewed the entrance of Catholic religious instruction into the workhouse not as a *religious* intrusion but largely as an unregulated source of control over inmates. The guardians derived their own control from their hold over the workhouse. Without that strong hold, they would lose their control, and the board of guardians for Ballinasloe would pass authority to non-governmental agents.[33]

As the summer of 1863 wore on, Alderman Reynolds of Ballinasloe championed the Sisters' efforts. He had to greatly modify the Sisters' proposal in order to appease the guardians by reducing the number of hours of the Sisters' visits to the workhouse, and he succeeded. The modified proposal changed a majority of the guardians' minds, including the chairman's, Lord Clancarty, who had earlier vehemently refused to pass the proposal. Reynolds in fact appealed to the Poor Law Commissioners for help, seeking a more objective and authoritative voice. While the English government preferred that the workhouse hire people it knew would be loyal to Parliament and English law, there was nothing illegal about hiring the Sisters of Mercy. On the basis of this evidence, the Poor Law Commissioners reluctantly declared the sisters' visits legal. The

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[32] "Ireland," *London Times*, August 14, 1863.
[33] "Ireland," *London Times*, June 22, 1863.

Times reported the success of Reynolds' efforts: "Consequently the Sisters of Mercy are to be admitted at all reasonable hours to visit and instruct the Roman Catholic paupers."[34] The Sisters of Mercy could not visit the workhouse at all hours of the day and night due to the previously agreed-upon hour restrictions, but Reynolds gave them the opportunity to reach out to its children.[35]

Philanthropic Hospitals: Controlling the Sick

While the education of impoverished children in Irish schools remained a hot-button issue for the Irish Catholic, they also fought the English government over the workhouse hospital, another major area of Irish philanthropy. Prior to the famine, the workhouse hospital remained largely unnoticed in Ireland. With the onset of the famine, paupers crowded workhouse hospitals in hopes of gaining affordable care in an age when money was short. These workhouse hospitals became permanent fixtures in paupers' lives in the decades following the famine. Many of them remained understaffed and without professional medical care, leaving the position of nursing to inmates of the workhouse itself. Poor Law Commissioners and guardians employed such inmate-to-inmate patient care as a method of reducing costs for the union, as hiring professional nurses placed a further financial burden upon unions. The Commissioners also used inmate-to-inmate nursing as another way that inmates could work in order to earn their keep in the workhouse.[36]

Inmate-to-inmate patient care proved ineffective, since most workhouse inmates had no medical training prior to their stay. One mismanagement in medical care occurred in the Cork workhouse in 1859. Cork mayor John Arnott ordered an

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[34] "Ireland," *London Times*, August 14, 1863.

[35] In December 1863, the *Times* reported that the friends of Alderman Reynolds presented him with a testimonial for his efforts of "his great services and merit."

[36] Maria Luddy, "Angels of Mercy: Nuns as Workhouse Nurses, 1861-1898," in *Medicine, Disease, and the State in Ireland, 1650-1940*, eds. Greta Jones and Elizabeth Malcolm (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), 103.

investigation into the causes and effects of a rampant case of
scrofula outbreak among the workhouse's children. Scrofula, a
debilitating disease beginning in the lymph nodes, consistently
infected the children, often blinding, and at times killing, them.[37]
Although Arnott tracked the cause of the disease to the quality and
quantity of the workhouse food, two of his colleagues pointed out
the role of the workhouse hospital in helping to spread infection.
Doctors Edward Thompson and Harvey thought the hospital poorly
ventilated and crowded, allowing for easy passage of infection
from person to person. With one-third of the inmates in the hospital
and no medical professionals present, scrofula killed eighteen to
twenty percent of the workhouse population annually.[38] The Cork
workhouse hospital is just one example out of dozens. Not every
workhouse had the issue of rampant scrofula, but many needed a
better system of hospital care for their inmates.

Beginning in 1861, the Sisters of Mercy began taking over
Irish workhouse hospitals, although not with ease. They first
arrived in the Limerick workhouse, not to provide religious
instruction, but to act as nurses. On the local level, they found
favor with the board of guardians in Limerick, whose members
saw the Sisters as effective nurses as well as a good influence on
the inmates. The Sisters still faced hostility from the Poor Law
Commissioners. Unlike in Ballinasloe with the workhouse school,
the Commissioners, not Limerick's board of guardians, viewed the
sisters as a threat to English control over the workhouse: the sisters
came to the workhouse without the Commissioners requesting
them to do so, and if the board of guardians allowed the Sisters to

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[37] For more information on scrofula in the late nineteenth century,
please see the article: "What Is Scrofula?" in *The British Medical Journal* 1
(March 1870): 290-291.

[38] John Arnott, *The Investigation into the Condition of the Children of
the Cork Workhouse, with an Analysis of the Evidence* (Cork: Guy Brothers,
1859). Arnott used several professionals in his investigation, including a
Catholic and a Protestant bishop, a handful of doctors, and teachers from local
schools. Arnott seems to have exaggerated his figures from time to time so as to
create a more dramatic scene, but the death percentages calculated by the local
medical professionals do register either just below or right at his own death
percentage.

work as nurses, the Commissioners would lose control over a major function of the Irish workhouse in Limerick.[39]

Despite the resistance of the government, three of the Sisters of Mercy persisted in their fight to access the Limerick workhouse hospital. The sisters proposed that if the Commissioners appointed them to this medical position, they would give their £20 salary per annum right back to the hospital, donating the money in order to benefit the health of their patients. On hearing this argument, quite tempting in terms of efficiency, the Commissioners reluctantly allowed the Sisters of Mercy entrance to the workhouse hospital. While the sisters' entrance decreased the Commissioners' control of the hospital and the general workhouse, they gradually improved the hospital, providing better care than the Commissioners' preferred persons had provided originally.[40]

Other workhouses soon followed Limerick's example in hiring the Sisters for their unions' workhouse hospitals. These boards of guardians, emboldened by Limerick's board, fought the Commissioners to allow the sisters places in their hospitals. The Commissioners again desired to retain political control over the hospitals that regular paupers as well as inmates attended for medical relief. The sisters were an intrusion, and the Commissioners could not control them as it could its own nurses. The boards of local Irishmen viewed this challenge to religious organizations as a religious battle. The English Commissioners came from Protestant backgrounds, lived in a Protestant country with medical care run largely by Protestants, and rejected Catholic sisters with medical training who sought to ameliorate a dire situation. As such, the Commissioners and the local Irish boards of guardians, most of whom were Catholics by the 1860s, fought over the issue of medical relief with different objects in mind, one for

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[39] John O'Connor, *Workhouses of Ireland: The Fate of Ireland's Poor* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1995), 180-181; Luddy, "Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," 354.

[40] O'Connor, *Workhouses of Ireland*, 180-181. For more information on the Sisters' argument, please see: Helen Burke, *The People and the Poor Law in 19th Century Ireland* (Dublin: Arlen House, 1987), 263-265.

political control over medical care and its beneficiaries, and the other for the freedom of religious organizations to help where necessary.[41]

Outside the workhouse, the English government and its Commissioners had more say about medical relief and its funding in Ireland. The government-established public hospitals existed expressly in order to provide medical care to the poor. The English government created the Dublin Hospitals Board in 1857 in order to handle the funds and divide them according to need among the fourteen public hospitals the government built in Dublin. In the meantime, Catholic religious organizations built their own charitable hospitals, separate from the public hospitals. Catholic charitable hospitals thus served as a response to government-run hospitals. Catholics felt that Catholic paupers deserved a place where they could receive medical care without fear of Protestant proselytization; a proselytization that, for the most part, no longer existed. Because of this separate establishment of hospitals, the government refused to fund Catholic hospitals.[42]

Since the government provided no funds to aid Catholic hospitals in Dublin, the Catholic hospitals had to subsist solely on private funding. St. Vincent's Hospital, run by the Sisters of Charity, gained £300 per annum from the Corporation, but had to exist on private subscription rather than government funding.[43] Mater Misericordae, run by the Sisters of Mercy, followed the same path as St. Vincent's, obtaining grant money from time to time but no government funding.[44] Because of the lack of government funding, these Catholic hospitals suffered occasional closures to the detriment of their impoverished communities. The Select Committee on Dublin Hospitals noted how St. Vincent's closed for two or three months at a time as a result of their lack of

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[41] Maria Luddy, "Angels of Mercy," 103-105.

[42] E.D. Mapother, "The Dublin Hospitals – their grants and governing bodies," *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland* 5, no. 37 (June 1869): 130.

[43] The "Corporation" was a source of grant money in Ireland. Mapother, "Dublin Hospitals," 133.

[44] Mapother, "Dublin Hospitals," 133.

public funding.[45]

In the meantime, the government funded its own philanthropic hospitals. Established in 1844 by Anglican Irish and converted to a public hospital in the late 1850s, St. Mark's Eye and Ear Hospital received £100 from the government and £100 from the Corporation. The hospital received less in grant money than St. Vincent's Catholic hospital, yet St. Mark's remained funded by the government. If St. Mark's needed financial help, the government would be more likely to help it than to help St. Vincent's or Mater Misericordae because of the government's control over St. Mark's. The government provided support for its funded hospitals, which meant that hospitals like St. Mark's, unlike St. Vincent's, had assistance when times grew rough.[46] Catholics viewed this government funding for Anglican-established hospitals as yet another assault on Catholic charity in Ireland. The Select Committee on Dublin Hospitals concluded in their 1860 report that hospitals in Dublin could not survive on voluntary contributions alone; the hospitals required government funding and security in addition to their private funding. Catholic charity hospitals received none of the government funding they required to remain open and to help the poor. To the Irish Catholic, this lack of government funding trampled on their attempts to take charity back from the English for their own people, the majority of whom were Catholic.[47]

Catholic religious organizations were not the only Catholic philanthropists in the medical field seeking Catholic control of poor relief. Just as Catholic sisters gradually took over workhouse hospitals, Catholic middle-class leaders in Ireland gained control of some the medical boards of public hospitals. St. Stephen's Hospital in Dublin, for example, saw the rise of Catholic men on its board of officials. Anglicans had previously sat in their place, as Ireland's first officer of health, Dr. Mapother, noted:

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[45] *Report from the Select Committee on Dublin Hospitals*, 213.

[46] Mapother, "Dublin Hospitals," 132.

[47] Select Committee, *Report from the Select Committee on Dublin Hospitals; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index* (Dublin: House of Commons, 1854), 213.

> The *ex officio* governors are high clerical and legal
> functionaries, whose places the testator believed
> would be always of the Established [Anglican]
> Church, and owing to this constitution, medical men
> of another creed had not been elected.[48]

The "testator" mentioned in Mapother's description attested how
the Irish loyal to the Anglican Church controlled a significant
charity hospital in the middle of one of Ireland's major cities.
Nonetheless, the board of St. Steven's Hospital gradually changed
hands from Anglicans to Catholics as a method of Catholic
response to governmental control of medical relief. The Irish
Catholics thus began to retake government-funded hospitals by
infiltrating some of the most important hospitals in Ireland.

Despite Catholic perceptions, the English government
hardly promoted religious discrimination in parliamentary-funded
hospitals. Dr. Mapother wrote that the board of St. Stephen's
Hospital did indeed see faith-based discrimination in its elected
officials, but the hospital itself treated peoples of all faiths,
including Catholics.[49] In workhouse hospitals, officials allowed
Catholics to care for Catholic patients, Anglicans for Anglican
patients. Governmental officials did not often concern themselves
with confessional differences; in fact, they segregated patients
based on faith in hospitals. Instead, the English government sought
control in running hospitals. Once Catholics chose to take positions
for themselves, as with the Sisters of Mercy in Limerick
workhouse and the board of St. Stephen's Hospital, the English
government had less control over these charitable institutions.

Conventual religious groups and Catholic men were not the
sole visitors to hospitals fighting for Catholic souls.[50] Irish
Catholic laywomen formed their own philanthropic associations in

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[48] Committee, *Report from the Select Committee on Dublin Hospitals*,
135.

[49] Mapother, "Dublin Hospitals," 135.

[50] Term used to define all organizations in Ireland run by Catholic
brothers and sisters, hence the "convent" in "conventual."

post-famine Ireland. Following their duty to the impoverished in their communities, these laywomen realized the threat of allowing Protestants to control relief; as with Irish Catholic men, Irish Catholic women specifically feared the forced conversion of Catholics to Protestantism through Protestant control. This realization caused laywomen's associations to specifically target Catholic communities, usually in hospitals and schools, in the hope that they would save Catholic souls from converting to the Protestantism of those who administered their relief.[51]

Established in 1873, the Women's Association for Visiting Hospitals concurred with the Catholic cause against Protestant relief. The Catholic ladies involved in the association visited Catholics in hospitals in which Catholic patients had little contact with visitors and medical staff of their own faith. The Association had a three-fold goal:

> To visit, console, instruct, and otherwise help some of the great multitude of every age and condition.
> To remove in some measure the reproach which the Catholic women of the easier classes had incurred, of standing apart too markedly whenever there was a question of undertaking any kind of organized charitable work; to make the way easy even for the most timid and self-distrusting to do the deeds to blessed of God so valued by His poor.
> To oppose a barrier against the intrusive zeal of a host of Protestant visitors who enjoyed, naturally enough, free access to the wards of hospitals, of which their husbands, fathers, brothers were the governors, the physicians, and, in truth, the principal supporters.[52]

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[51] Luddy, "Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," 356-357.

[52] "The Association for Visiting Hospitals (1878)," ed. Maria Luddy, vol. 5 of *The Field Day Anthology: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions*, eds. Angela Bourke et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 702-703.

Through its goals, the Association aimed to remove barriers that had stymied Catholic philanthropic relief in hospitals up to the Association's establishment. It sought to help where lay Catholic women had not done so previously, giving these women a way to serve their community with religious intent if for nothing else. In providing the Irish lay Catholic women with charitable work, the Association additionally fought against the easy entrance of Protestant visitors to hospitals.

The Association believed that these Protestant visitors gained entrance through their connections on medical boards, many of which Catholics did not have due to their lack of board representation. While the Protestants who frequented public hospitals most likely benefitted primarily from political and not religious connections, the Association blamed these connections for a type of religious warfare against Catholics. The Association pointed out this fact to its pamphlet readers and used it to draw more Catholic support. With more Catholic members, the Association had more leverage in obtaining entrance to hospitals treating Catholic patients and continued to fight any suspected Protestant proselytization.

The Association saw and understood a damaging aspect of Catholic philanthropy in Ireland: the lack of Catholic laywomen in the field of relief. The *Irish Monthly* published an article on this problem in 1878, only a few years after the creation of the Association for Visiting Hospitals.[53] The article's author sought to explain why so few Catholic laywomen joined the cause of charity in Ireland, explaining how for every Catholic woman performing charity, there were twenty Protestant women. The article identified four principal causes, yet the argument that runs through them is clear: the majority of Catholic laywomen never thought about serving the poor in their communities.[54] They required more reason and purpose than purely charity. Such need may explain why Catholic lay philanthropic organizations focused so wholly on the

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[53] "The Association for Visiting Hospitals (1878)," 700-702.

[54] "The Association for Visiting Hospitals (1878)," 700-702. For more information, please see: Luddy, "Women and Philanthropy," 361-362.

problem of lost souls. In order to gain more support for organizations' efforts, leaders of the organizations had to make the situation appear more urgent than it was. Losing Catholic souls to the Protestants who controlled relief in Ireland created that sense of urgency, as religion figured so prominently in Irish Catholic lives.

One woman, Margaret Aylward, utilized this sense of urgency to her charity's advantage. A devout Catholic brought up in Waterford, Aylward had extensive experience with the poor before establishing her own philanthropic institution. She grew up with a father who donated much of the family's second-hand clothing and materials to the local Sisters of Charity. A workhouse and slums were additionally located down the road from her home, forcing her to experience the effects of the Poor Law in the Waterford community. In 1834, she became a Sister of Charity, although she left soon afterward due to an internal conflict about the purpose of the order.[55] She reached Dublin in 1840, on the eve of the famine, and consequently worked with those who filled Dublin's slums throughout the following decade. Aylward involved herself with the Ladies of Charity in Dublin, a community of laywomen committed to helping the impoverished of the city. The Ladies of Charity not only ministered through physical means of food and gifts but also through spiritual means, praying rosaries with the impoverished and coordinating priestly visits for homes when needed.[56] By the time Aylward decided to set up her own institution, St. Brigid's Orphanage, she knew exactly how to run a charity and how to minister effectively to the poor.

During her time doing relief work in Dublin from the 1840s onward, both with the Ladies and Charity and St. Brigid's, Aylward recruited laywomen by whatever means she could, each time bringing the subject back to the Catholic Church. She often went from door to door, seeking out women to join her charity's cause

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[55] One sister from Aylward's own convent, Sister Ignatious, believed and preached that the sisters wasted their scholarly talents in serving the poor. Aylward was one of thirteen novices who left the order as a result of Sister Ignatious's teaching.

[56] Jacinta Prunty, *Margaret Aylward, 1810-1889: Lady of Charity, Sister of Faith* (Portland, Oregon: Four Courts Press, 1999), 14-29.

and exhorting them to recognize the grave threat of Protestantism in the lives of impoverished Catholics. She additionally asked priests to promote her charities from the ambo to exemplify the Church's involvement in Irish philanthropic relief and to give the women a sense of the moral urgency inherent in the situation.[57] Aylward even wrote letters to middle- and upper-class Irish Catholic families in order to obtain more subscriptions and volunteers for her charities. Margaret Aylward became a prominent figure in the war on Protestant relief in Ireland, persisting in her efforts to gain members for her physical and spiritual cause.

One of Aylward's letters on St. Brigid's Orphanage especially invoked this sense of spiritual and moral urgency on behalf of the poor. St. Brigid's Orphanage became a shelter for Catholic orphans in the Dublin community: without a Catholic orphanage for Catholic orphans, they would go to local government-run orphanages, often run by Protestants without Catholic oversight. In her battle to sustain her orphanage, Aylward wrote a letter to the Dublin Catholic community in 1859 detailing the necessity of a Catholic orphanage in the city. She described the orphans as "torn from their mothers' breasts – and dragged in their helplessness into the net of heresy."[58] The Protestant "heresy" promoted at government-run orphanages thus drew orphans away from their Catholic faith without the orphans' consent. Aylward described this act of tearing as a physical one, turning a spiritual conversion into an act of physical force.

If the physical act of tearing a child from its faith failed to rouse the sympathies of an Irish Catholic parishioner, Aylward's following invocation of the Blessed Mother likely did. Aylward depicted Mary as weeping over her lost children, children over whom she watched diligently. A Catholic would have known the reverence owed to Mary in their faith; Mary was and remains a central figure of the Catholic faith, the mother of humanity and the

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[57] Prunty, *Margaret Aylward*, 30-31.

[58] Margaret Aylward, "Letter Regarding St. Brigid's Orphanage (1857),"ed. Maria Luddy, vol. 5 of *The Field Day Anthology: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions*, eds. Angela Bourke et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 699.

one person to whom Jesus always listened. A vision of Mary weeping appealed to Catholics' sympathies, since Catholics looked to Mary as another mother. In order to end Mary's weeping, Aylward asked that Catholics help her orphanage and save the souls of the children otherwise doomed to heretical teachings.[59]

Aylward and her charities never made their way into Parliamentary discussions, even though religious organizations such as the Christian Brothers and the Sisters of Mercy did. In fact, Parliament hardly mentioned lay organizations like Aylward's. Even though the Association for Visiting Hospitals and St. Brigid's Orphanage existed, Parliament spent no time discussing them. The impact of conventual organizations[60] in Ireland was more pronounced than that of the lay organizations, which meant the government devoted its efforts in controlling Irish philanthropy to the conventual organizations. These organizations gained more money and performed more philanthropic activity on a larger scale than did the lay organization. For example, Aylward's orphanage gave shelter to hundreds of orphans, but it typically took in orphans solely from Dublin; in the meantime, the Sisters of Mercy spread across the country's workhouses as it did in Ballinasloe and Limerick, teaching, healing, and securing the souls of children for the Catholic faith. Conventual organizations thus had more influence in Ireland than lay organizations did. Parliament took more interest where it could theoretically control more, and so it strove to control places where the conventual religious wished to intervene.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, however, Parliament began to work with many Irish Catholic charities instead of against them. At the end of the 1890s, religious groups including the Sisters of Mercy and the Christian Brothers managed the majority of Irish philanthropic institutions, even those funded

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[59] Margaret Aylward, "Letter Regarding St. Brigid's Orphanage (1857)," ed. Maria Luddy, vol. 5 of *The Field Day Anthology: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions*, eds. Angela Bourke et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 699.

[60] Term used to define all organizations in Ireland run by Catholic brothers and sisters, hence the "convent" in "conventual."

by the English government. The Christian Brothers became more widely known for their charity schools in the twentieth century, and the Sisters of Mercy took over other public institutions aside from the workhouse, particularly Magdalene Asylums and Industrial Schools. These religious groups became more involved with the theme of morality as a societal virtue rather than just a religious one, making the groups more amenable to the government. Both the government and Catholic conventual organizations agreed that Ireland's poor necessitated order and the will to become respectable members of society. This agreement promoted a better relationship between the two groups, and they worked together in attempting to eliminate poverty in Ireland.[61]

In the meantime, Catholic lay organizations remained opposed to governmental actions that they deemed Protestant in nature. Fourteen years after lay Catholic women founded it, the Association for Visiting Hospitals kept its promise to promote Catholicism in public hospitals across Ireland.[62] Margaret Aylward additionally fought for Catholic children's souls through St. Brigid's until her death in October 1889; after 1885, however, she faced more antagonism from her own bishop than from a Protestant threat.[63] Both lay organizations continued to recruit en masse, and their numbers of lay members steadily rose into the twentieth century. Yet lay organizations still had a difficult time obtaining the effort of the majority of Ireland's Catholic lay female population, even with their lively speeches and pamphlets on the battle for the souls of impoverished Catholics.

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[61] Anna Clark, "Wild Workhouse Girls and the Liberal Imperial State in Mid-Nineteenth Century Ireland," *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2005): 402.

[62] "About Visiting the Poor," *The Irish Monthly* 6 (1887): 702-703.

[63] Jacinta Prunty, "Margaret Aylward," in *Women, Power, and Consciousness in 19th Century Ireland*, eds. Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy (Dublin: Attic Street, 1995), 80-81. At the end of 1884, the bishop of Dublin, Dr. Donnelly, claimed that Aylward mismanaged St. Brigid's because she often refused help from the local clergy. Aylward had started to notice corruption present in Dublin's clergy, and so she believed that she and her female aids could better save children's souls without the clergy's help. The bishop took this charge of corruption personally.

From the conclusion of the Irish famine to the end of the nineteenth century, Irish poor relief faced two different battles: Catholics against a government supposedly out to convert the Catholic poor to Protestantism, and the English government against the political control of Catholics over the Irish poor. Neither side truly understood for what the other fought. Both Catholic charitable organizations and the government had a separate agenda, one religious and the other political. Such a misunderstanding made it difficult to reconcile differences, since both the government and Catholic philanthropic organizations intended to determine how Ireland relieved the impoverished Irish. Through their political power, the government controlled a key part of Irish society, one with a population that outnumbered the Irish middle and upper classes. At the same time, Catholic charities viewed the government's actions as hostile to the Catholic faith, mirroring government actions from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Irish Catholics could not see what the English government truly wanted. As such, Catholics in Ireland took governmental restrictions on Catholic charities as a continued holy war against the Catholic faith.

Yet in the end, a large portion of Catholic charities changed their attitude toward the government, seeking more cooperation in ending poverty and teaching Irish paupers how to become useful and respectable in society. The government learned how to better deal with and control these charities, so that this cooperation became possible. The war of misunderstanding thus came to an end by the turn of the century, bringing about a new era for Irish poor relief based on mutual values.