

Money, Death, and Agency in Catholic Ireland, 1850–1921

Abstract

Between the end of the Great Famine and the end of the union with Britain, the Irish Catholic Church was almost exclusively funded by ordinary lay people. This article examines the financial relationship between clergy and laity, focusing on payments related to death. In doing so, it argues three main points. First, it suggests that previous conceptions of lay people coerced into giving their money to the church are too simplistic and deny the complex agency of the people of many social classes who gave the money. Second, it argues that using the financial transactions of ordinary people gives historians a much-needed methodology for recovering lives about which the archives are otherwise silent. Third, it posits that the mediation of faith through money, specifically, must be added to the growing body of work on “material religion.”

Introduction

The Catholic Church's accumulation of wealth in post-famine, pre-independence Ireland was considerable. Hundreds of elaborate and expensive churches, cathedrals, seminaries, and convents constructed in this period stand today as visible proof of that fact. This is to say nothing of the day-to-day financial support, via biannual “dues,” sacramental fees, and other payments, that supported the thousands of religious personnel who worked in these buildings.¹ Almost all of this money was given by ordinary lay people within a “voluntary,” rather than legally mandated, tithed system. As the historian Emmet Larkin has shown, the economic strength it produced was a key reason for the church's domination of Irish life from the late nineteenth-century “devotional revolution” to the late twentieth century.² The church benefited from a new, post-famine economic reality: Ireland now had an increasingly cash-based, rather than subsistence, economy and experienced vast rates of overseas migration and therefore received plentiful cash remittances. For all of these reasons, living standards rose among all classes of those who remained in Ireland.³ Yet the financial relationship between clergy and laity provoked much contemporary comment. Writers of fiction, journalism, and travel literature questioned how a people who in their eyes

still looked impoverished paid for the expanded church.⁴ Many concluded that the money had been “extracted from a lean peasantry” by a priesthood that contained too many with a “love of money.”⁵

Historians have, in less polemical terms, tended to affirm this characterization of an extractive priesthood and a subject laity.⁶ Traditional conceptions paint the priest-parishioner relationship in terms of an uneven, conditional authority. Priests’ capacity to lead their congregations in most aspects of life, even if sometimes “only in the direction in which the people wanted to go,” has been the primary focus.⁷ As Ciaran O’Neill has well noted, this concentration on the clergy has obscured discussion of the Catholic laity and their motivations.⁸ Recent work rightly shifts the focus to ordinary people. Historian Cara Delay and sociologist Eugene Hynes are among those who have documented pockets of often violent lay resistance to clerical authority, particularly in social matters, by variously uncovering some lay people’s use of both harsh words and deeds to contain and qualify priestly power.⁹ This exposure of a form of antagonistic lay agency, based on close archival work, is an important corrective to an earlier narrative of blanket conformity. Clearly, some lay people, when confronted with clerical authority, did not mutely defer to it. Yet this reassertion of the agency of the lay person must prompt us to reexamine old notions of why the laity contributed such large sums of money to their priests. Glib assumptions about clerical coercion or bourgeois pursuit of social capital, consciously or not, have a tendency to echo precisely the kind of politicized, critical commentary made at the time. In these interpretations, the laity, poor though they may have been, handed over cash to the church in such vast amounts either because priests somehow compelled them into doing so or simply because it bought them some facet of church-sanctioned social status or respectability.¹⁰

The problem with these explanations is that they wrench agency from those who gave the cash and divorce the economic interaction from its religious context. The shift of historical analysis from an institutional level to one focused at the microlevel of individuals has presented a more nuanced understanding of the lives of those who worshipped within the Catholic faith in Ireland. Yet the focus on individual resistance of religious authority by this literature underplays an important aspect of the history of power and agency in modern Ireland. Closer examination of interpersonal relations between nineteenth-century Irish Catholics—especially those between laity and clergy—shows the nuanced ways in which individuals provided voluntary and often enthusiastic financial support for the church.

This article therefore proposes that we think of the economic relationship between priest and people using different rubrics. First, we must acknowledge the concept, increasingly put forward by scholars of “emotional capitalism,” that there is no isolated, rational, economic realm nor a separate, pure, moral realm of religion.¹¹ Rather, what Durkheim termed the sacred and the profane are imbricated in each other and coexist and interweave in lives as actually lived. Second, in thinking about the economic links between a congregation and its priest, the work of the economic sociologist Viviana Zelizer proves especially enlightening. In essence, Zelizer argues that relationships dictate both the amount and format of money exchanged. In this view, money does not create and shape the relationship; it merely confirms the existing definition of the social connection.¹² She further asserts that individuals “ earmark ” money for particular

purposes: money, then, is not a single, impersonal instrument, which rationalizes or even taints human interaction, but is something shaped by and incorporated into social relationships in multiple and different ways.¹³ Finally, Zelizer argues that financial transactions have “negotiated meanings” for those on either side of the exchange—both parties need not see them in the same way for the transaction to be of mutual benefit.¹⁴

Taking these two sets of premises together, this article argues that for lay Catholics of all classes in nineteenth-century Ireland, giving money to the church could be just as much an exercise of agency as was *not* giving money or *objecting* to giving money. By studying monetary donations within a religious context, we illuminate the variety of ways in which money punctuated the mundane expression of Irish Catholics’ faith. At one level, this might suggest a unifying experience in which all parishioners habitually gifted money to the church. However, as we show, the archival traces that remain paint a highly differentiated portrait of how believers used individual donations to express their faith, social and communal identities, and class status. What must be borne in mind at all times is that, following Zelizer’s logic, money exchanged in clergy-laity relationships had meaning for both sides but not always the same meaning. While it is tempting to make assumptions about donor motivation based on the injunctions of clergy to donate, we demonstrate that quite different intentions behind payments to the church can often be divined through the context and conditions attached to them. Hence, in exploring the seemingly esoteric realm of church finance, non-elite agency, normally so elusive in the historical record, can be brought to life.¹⁵

A normative definition of agency suggests that, “At its most visible, social structure can be said to operate through domination, and human agency through resistance. This resistance is not usually manifested in the form of open rebellion but can take a number of less dramatic forms.”¹⁶ We contend, along with Cornelia Hughes Dayton, that those “less dramatic forms” can encompass non-elite actions that are not necessarily subversive of power structures.¹⁷ The agency of “ordinary people”—that is, people not normally thought of as having power, such as women, racial or other minorities, the working class, or those lower down the social scale—is not necessarily expressed only, or even primarily, in actions that explicitly reject the status quo and their place within it. This needs to be understood if we are not to, first, deny ordinary people in the past their part in helping to create that status quo or, second, in the frequent absence of their voices coming through clearly in the archive, deny them complex inner lives. Non-elite actors related to authority in multiple, different ways, for multiple, different reasons. Bequeathing money might denote an apparent acquiescence under the authority of the church. However, understanding more clearly what the act represented to the donor—often a woman and often a person of relatively little means—can show how that person had in fact found a way to express their influence through faith-based action.

Lastly, our methodology of “following the money” to uncover insights into non-elite lives needs to be highlighted. The financial records of institutions are dry documents, often ignored by modern historians, but they frequently contain the only archival trace that many ordinary people left. This is particularly true for Ireland where engagement with the state’s administrative infrastructure could be patchy. Yet church archives contain a rich reservoir of (mostly

English-language) sources offering insight into the economic lives of clergy and parishioners, including correspondence, receipts, wills, ledgers, and account books. As early modern scholars have argued, such economic sources can provide vivid glimpses into the rich social lives people led in the past and can be read as a form of life-writing.¹⁸ The financial transactions recorded in church archives, we argue, were two-way interactions weighted with meaning for both parties. These often occurred within intimate social relationships and demonstrated forms of agency on the part of those who gave the money, which, in the Irish case, allows us to move away from simplistic notions of clerical manipulation and begin instead to analyze a much more complicated, symbiotic relationship between clergy and laity. In a wider sense, modern social and cultural historians' deeper engagement with financial records as a way into lives otherwise lost to history ought to be encouraged: reading what appear to be purely quantitative sources qualitatively can enhance our understandings of the often-elusive people whose transactions they record.

While multiple forms of financial transactions between priests and people might be examined in this context, in this article we will focus on the various economic exchanges concerning death. Irish death cultures have their own growing literature,¹⁹ but the monetary customs and rituals surrounding death are especially illuminating for our purposes. This is because, first, in the context of an unavoidable life cycle event, they funneled considerable amounts of money from the laity to the church, and, second, legal matters surrounding them throw further light on the issue.²⁰ Although many of these transactions were ostensibly governed by the church's own regulations, canon law was often in conflict with civil law. In any case, there was no clear, codified, and universally applicable version of the former until 1917. For most of the period under review, canon law "resembled an ancient ruin buried beneath the drifting sands and accumulated debris of a thousand years"²¹ and was, as a result, wide open to local interpretation. Attempts to legislate financial transactions surrounding Catholic death, whether canonically or civilly, can therefore reveal priests' and peoples' assumptions about money and faith and provide evidence of the different meanings attached to different transactions. Likewise, the span of time we cover here and the regional nature of church governance make for a variety of transactions, although our essential argument that different forms of lay agency can be recovered through these transactions holds true across them all. The article begins by investigating the nature of economic exchanges between priests and people at the deathbed and then explores the implications of "funeral offerings," before finally addressing the power of the dead as expressed through the inclusion of Mass bequests in last wills and testaments. Each of these transactions, we argue, reveals a particular form of agency being enacted on the part of the donors: individual agency, communal agency, and the agency of the dead.

The Death Bed and Individual Agency

Deathbeds could be contested places in nineteenth-century Ireland. Emotional near-death conversions and sentimental scenes of religious preparation at the end of life, with the priest at their core, were familiar tropes of Catholic and particularly Irish-American literature.²² These are part of what anthropologist Lawrence Taylor has identified as the attempted "capturing" of

death by the Irish Catholic Church during the devotional revolution, which involved the suppression of the wilder excesses of traditional “wakes” and the recontextualization of death as a church-centered, clergy-led, set of rituals.²³ But the Catholic bedside was also the scene, contemporary critics alleged, of the financial machinations of an avaricious priesthood. According to this line of argument, finagling priests exploited their position at sick- and deathbeds as an opportunity to influence the ill, the vulnerable, and the not-of-sound-mind to hand over more of their wealth to the church than would otherwise have been the case. The ubiquity of this trope cannot be exaggerated and formed a fixture of anti-Catholic sentiment. The passage of the Charitable Donations and Bequests Act by Westminster in 1844, an ostensibly pro-Catholic piece of legislation, which legalized the leaving of money to the church, reinforced this impression. In particular, the provision that invalidated bequests made within three months of the death was “viewed by the bishops as an obvious attack on the integrity of the Catholic clergy,” with its implication that they preyed upon the dying layperson.²⁴ The greedy deathbed priest became a more obvious target for anti-Catholic opprobrium at the turn of the century, as the wealth of the church, symbolized by its vastly expanded infrastructure, became more visible.²⁵ The prolific anticlerical author Michael McCarthy claimed, perhaps not entirely inaccurately, that “It is at the deathbed priests acquire the bulk of their means.” More contentiously, he continued, “They have exceptional facilities for acquiring accurate information about the finances of their penitents. They exercise peculiar influence over elderly spinsters and widows.”²⁶

McCarthy's allegation of “peculiar influence” assumes an uneven relationship between the priest and the would-be testator and has tended to be uncritically accepted by historians of the lay-clerical financial relationship. Emmet Larkin, in rightly noting that legacies and bequests formed an important part of the church's income, highlights the case of the elderly Misses Hamill of Belfast, two spinsters who in 1906 found themselves with a hundred thousand pounds worth of assets at their disposal, no family to leave it to, and an evidently strong Catholic faith. They were, Larkin notes, the subject of competing charm offensives from various clergymen, both regular and secular, in subsequent years. Yet, unseemly though the wrangling among clergy for the Hamill sisters' attention surely was, Larkin misses a key point about the women's own conduct in the matter. As relayed by the bishop of Down and Connor, a cleric seeking to gain their legacy, the sisters secured through his efforts a personal dispensation from the pope which allowed Mass to be said in their domestic oratory. Then, to the bishop's disappointment, they cast him aside in favor of other religious suitors and, one must presume, leveraged further favors from them.²⁷ Though the bishop (and Larkin) strongly imply that internal competition between various clergy for the women's patronage was fierce, clearly, the power in this transaction was not all on the church's side. The Hamill sisters were quite willing and able to play the transaction to their personal and religious advantage.

Nor was lay agency reserved for the incredibly wealthy. People with far fewer means also had such encounters. For example, in 1857 as he lay dying and reportedly “in full use of his reason,” Pat Connolly, a police subconstable in Rosslea, County Fermanagh, put twenty pounds into the hands of Fr. James Donnelly, his parish priest, asking that the money be kept in trust for his infant daughter. The transaction was witnessed and signed off by Connolly's wife, her

brother, and another policeman, and the money was deposited in a bank. It is important to note that many sick- and deathbed transactions detailed in the archives have an ostensible duality about their possible interpretation. It would be easy to paint the priest's role here as conforming to McCarthy's predatory characterization. Fr. Donnelly's rebuffing of the subsequent efforts of Connolly's distressed widow to draw down some of the money in 1859 can seem a further example of overweening clerical authority. The priest, having sought counsel from certain local members of the laity, loaned Mrs. Connolly five pounds and, noting his dismay that the loan was never paid back, refused her further cash when she requested it. Yet even though this incident was certainly relayed by the priest in a tone that suggested an uncaring attitude toward the widow, his behavior, in another interpretation, merely exercised the express will of her husband, who when alive had not seen fit, for whatever reason, to leave that particular sum of money in her care.²⁸ The priest, as he later noted, "got at sundry times great annoyance about the money" and did not benefit from it personally in any respect over the years he controlled the trust.²⁹ Thus, the deathbed could be as much a site of creating financial and administrative obligations for priests at the behest of the dying, as it was, in McCarthy's monochrome view, a place where priests "took their money."³⁰

Nonetheless, relatives and others disappointed with their inheritances tended to agree with McCarthy's charge of improper clerical influence at the deathbed. This does much to explain its appeal as an explanation for the high level of religious bequests in the entire period in our scope. The role of some priests who helped to draft or redraft wills came under particular scrutiny. Though impossible to quantify on a national scale, anecdotal evidence points toward a definite priestly ability to shape the final character of these documents. Yet one must be wary of perceiving that influence as inherently suspicious, rather than, as it clearly was for many laypeople, part of a perfectly proper, end-of-life dialogue with their priest, in which they exercised their own agency. In one case in the parish of Gort, County Galway, Monsignor Jerome Fahey found himself accused of undue influence over his parishioner Margaret Spelman. Spelman, a shopkeeper, left various bequests for religious and charitable purposes in the Diocese of Galway, including a gift of a thousand pounds for Fahey to carry out repair work on Gort's parish church, which drew suspicion.³¹ On December 8, 1910, Fahey had been called to attend to Spelman's spiritual needs as she lay on her deathbed. Perceiving she was close to death, Fahey urged her to make a will and suggested that he call a solicitor; Spelman refused because, ironically, "if her will were drawn by any solicitor her affairs would get talked about." According to Fahey's own account, he drew up Spelman's will at her request "though I was reluctant to do so."³² However, the priest's role as a will-maker appeared to be common knowledge in the locality. He had previously drawn up five others including that of Mrs. Spelman's husband at the request of both partners. Fahey's capacity to draft wills was not limited to the well-off and served an economic as well as social function. He additionally helped two small farmers "whose possessions were of such trifling value and who could not very well afford to employ a solicitor."³³ The challenge to the Spelman will was ultimately deflected, in part because an independent witness, Mary Donnellan (either a friend or caregiver of the deceased), attested that Spelman had been eager to see and obtain financial advice from the priest in the run-up to her death.³⁴

Donnellan noted that Spelman had particularly wanted to discuss forgiving all the debts on her shop's books with the priest, a move that she hoped would mean that, in turn, "God may forgive me all my sins." Evidently, if there was influence by Fahey over the provisions of the will, it was an influence that, far from being "peculiar," the testator had been keen to court.

The three incidents detailed above put the familiar image of the predatory priest at the deathbed into sharp perspective. There is evidence in each to support the notion that the elderly, the sick, and the dying, ostensibly vulnerable though they may have been, were nonetheless deeply conscious of their agency within the often intimate deathbed scene and that each were entering into economic transactions with their own distinct purposes in mind. That was an agency that might be expressed in various ways. It could mean gaining rare religious dispensations from (and then rebuffing) particular clerics who vigorously sought bequests. It could involve entrusting individual priests to administer, without compensation, sums set aside for a distant time. Or it could entail having clergy frame the last will and testament as part of a distinctly private balancing of financial and spiritual accounts. Key to our understanding here is Zelizer's emphasis on monetary transactions as two-way, often with different meanings for giver and receiver. Thus, even if one were to accept that the clerics in these particular cases were acting in hope of a bequest—and that seems certain—that still does not negate the notion, dismissed by McCarthy and others, that those making the bequests acted in full knowledge of their own minds and in pursuit of personal and spiritual aims that were deeply significant to them. Moreover, that all of these episodes left traces in the archives because they attracted a degree of controversy at the time—primarily in the form of challenges from disappointed would-be heirs and legatees excluded from these end-of-life bargains—indicates that the broader picture of deathbed financial transactions was not nearly so driven by clerical predation and greed as contemporaries like Michael McCarthy alleged. Many more mutually beneficial, if differently understood, deathbed bargains will have aroused less controversy and left no mark in the archive. Yet as even these disputed deathbed transactions show, it was very often the layperson on the bed, and not the clergyman by its side, who held most of the cards in such exchanges.

Funeral Offerings and Community Agency

If the alleged financial machinations of priests at the deathbed were the subject of much anticlerical and anti-Catholic commentary in Ireland and beyond, the next phase in the economy of a Catholic death could attract similar ire. According to some critical authors, especially visitors to the island, funerals saw an unseemly form of payment to priests. As the dissident nationalist politician Frank Hugh O'Donnell described in 1910, "At a funeral in a congested district [underdeveloped regions along the western seaboard] the pecuniary collection extorted by the Churchman from the friends of the deceased, 'on the coffin lid,' amounted to £193."³⁵ The use of the term "extorted," the scare quotes around "coffin lid," and the suspiciously high sum of money for the region indicate what may have been something of an exaggeration on the part of O'Donnell, but it did its job in conveying to readers the supposed moral dubiousness of the particular financial practice of "funeral offerings."³⁶ This trope

was echoed by Patrick MacGill in his 1915 novel *The Rat-Pit*.³⁷ The notions that priests demanded offerings be placed on the very coffin of the deceased and that they, as MacGill's fictional cleric does, rushed through funeral rites to get to the point where the congregation laid down their coins were gifts to those who wished to display the priest as venal, money-obsessed, and without decorum.

However, other accounts of these kinds of “funeral offerings” show, particularly where they were retained into the twentieth century, that the surface onto which the plate for offerings was placed might just as easily have been the altar or an ordinary table located inside the altar rails.³⁸ Attendees at the funeral Mass made their contributions one by one, beginning with the closest relatives and working outward. According to one Clogher diocese priest familiar with the routine, “the priest standing at the table announces the name of the donor and the amount paid,” with set expectations of appropriate amounts depending on the closeness of one’s relationship to the deceased.³⁹ A final total would also be announced to the crowd. The origins of this practice are not entirely clear. By some accounts, it went back to the Famine of the 1840s, as a partial reimbursement by the congregation for occasions when individual priests might have paid for a Christian burial for destitute victims.⁴⁰ A more likely origin story dates it to the early modern period and the anti-Catholic penal laws, when Irish priests lived a twilight existence and such offerings were “the only levy allowed.”⁴¹ Others point to such a custom as being “as old almost as Christianity itself,”⁴² a plausible premise given the practice’s echoes of ancient burial rites that saw bodies buried with often precious grave-goods. It is not such a leap of imagination to see a placing of money *over* the corpse as an adaptation of these much older rituals, and indeed, folkloric evidence of money placed *in* coffins at wakes in County Longford backs this up.⁴³ By the nineteenth century, funeral offerings of this type were most closely associated with the northern dioceses in Ulster, along with a few pockets of the midlands and Galway.⁴⁴ Regardless, the Clogher priest was clear that where funeral offerings were in operation, no other funeral fees were charged directly to the family, and they tended to form the larger part of a priest’s overall income, so that other sources of clerical revenue (dues, “stole” fees, etc.) were lower as a result.

That caveat surely would not have dissuaded anticlerical writers from critiquing what they regarded as an especially primitive practice, but given the patchy geographical nature of the instances of funeral offerings—most dioceses outside Ulster had bereaved families pay a fee directly for the priest’s services—it is unsurprising that there were criticisms of their use even from sympathetic Catholic commentators and parishioners. The practice was, noted poet Padraic Colum in 1912, “galling to many families,” presumably because of the “social feeling” that entered into the amounts offered. As he explained, after a funeral, offerings could be employed as a monetary gauge of the deceased person’s popularity and respectability: “not much was thought of her. The priest didn’t get £1 in offerings at her burial”; “He was a respected man. There was £10 in offerings.”⁴⁵ Funeral offerings, publicly declared as they were, were regarded as a measure of the esteem in which the dead person was held by her family, friends, and wider community, even though the money itself went directly to the priest.⁴⁶ That was made clear in one indicative case that arose in 1921, after the codification of canon law. An anonymous Ulster priest writing to the *Irish*

Ecclesiastical Record's notes and queries column complained that canon law as written deprived him of the funeral dues of a parishioner who had recently died in another parish at the end of a seven-month stay in a hospital there. The priest of the "quasi-domicile" parish was now, "indecently" in the correspondent's view, entitled to all of the funerary offerings, even though he did not attend to the deceased throughout their life nor even conduct the funeral. The *IER* was unsympathetic to the claim that this thwarted the intentions of the parishioners who contributed the dues: "From all the inquiries which we have made on this matter we understand that the only express intention which most of the contributors have is to show respect to the deceased and to the friends of the deceased: paying offerings is practically equivalent to attendance at the funeral."⁴⁷ In other words, the amount of the offerings had nothing to do with the priest or the esteem in which the congregation held *him*.⁴⁸

In the considerable number of parishes in the north of Ireland that were subject to the funeral offering system, therefore, the priest's relationship with his congregation was potentially quite different from the "horse-whipping" characterization that certain contemporary commentators promoted.⁴⁹ While Frank Sweeney suggests that clerical pressure was brought to bear on the amounts given in offerings,⁵⁰ it seems more logical that rather than expending energy in excoriating his flock publicly and engendering social pressure and competition that might boost his coffers, the priest had an interest in promoting the opposite: social harmony. For if the families in his parish envied rather than esteemed one another, the funeral offerings on which he so relied would necessarily be depressed.⁵¹ Nonetheless, as the writer William Carleton noted, another form of "emulation" entered into the offering system, in that funeral-goers were "jealous . . . of having any degrading suspicion attached to their generosity" and thus made sure to pay visibly and pay well. Again, however, although this was all "exceedingly beneficial to the priest," he himself was not discernibly in control of the rumor-mongering and shunning to which the ungenerous might find themselves subjected.⁵² Ultimately, communities used this form of payment of the priest to serve what was for them an important social function of expressing mutual, interfamilial respect and mourning, another aspect of the important "social work" that folklorists have attributed to funerary customs.⁵³ Funeral offerings, in this sense, represented a communal expression of agency and, in Zelizerian terms, had a meaning for them as givers that was quite distinct from that which the receiver (the priest) attached to them. While the link to the personality of the individual cleric in question may have been negligible, however, the religious, ritual character of the monetary exchange was central to the meaning with which communities imbued it. The priest's public receipt of the money during a key life cycle moment made the transaction, for many, a more palpably sacred and meaningful one.

Mass Bequests and the Power of the Dead

From a secular position, death and the funeral service might be viewed as marking the inevitable endpoint of one's social and financial commitments. However, in the cosmological worldview of nineteenth-century Irish Catholicism, death ushered in an important new phase in a person's social relations and an opportunity to purchase a valued service. Prayers to God on

behalf of the soul of the departed meant that an individual's relationships continued and even gained in importance after death. The key broker in managing this complicated set of interactions between the dead, the living, and God was, especially via "Mass bequests," the priest. Catholic wills therefore document the way in which the everyday lives of Irish Catholics were defined by the fact that economic transactions, religious belief, and an intimacy with spiritual confessors mingled together.

It was money bequeathed for Mass intentions that emerged as the most controversial element of Catholic wills during this period; according to Michael McCarthy, "a bare bequest of money for masses is the most objectionable."⁵⁴ This practice entailed testators looking beyond the material world to contemplate the welfare of their own soul and those of their loved ones in purgatory, prompting them to set aside an amount of money for a priest to dedicate a Mass or Masses and offer prayers on their behalf. Even for those without the Hamill sisters' immense resources, such dedications for "the repose of one's soul" were within reach.⁵⁵ Indeed, the dead, regardless of their level of wealth in life, had a surprising degree of power over the clergy when it came to such clauses. The consequent relationship between faith and money straddled a complicated conceptual space that moved between the spiritual, the financial, and the legal. Certainly, the legalistic language used to frame the will usually failed to express the spiritual motivations behind a person's decision to leave a Mass bequest. This language was in part a consequence of the strictures and interpretations of the aforementioned Charitable Bequests Act of 1844, which had, controversially, allowed people to leave legacies to the institutions of the Catholic Church for the first time.⁵⁶ Over the following decades, opinion wavered as to whether Mass intentions qualified as charitable or not. The fact that the chief baron, Christopher Palles, delivered two different judgements on the matter in 1876 and 1906, shows the extent of the wavering.⁵⁷ In 1876, Palles found that Masses could only be considered charitable if celebrated publicly, but this was an argument essentially ignored by the Irish courts, which continued to hold these gifts as exempt from charitable status. When the older Palles met with a similar case in 1906, he dismissed the difference between private and public Masses and laid down a legal precedent, deeming that the spiritual efficacy of a service must be determined by the doctrines of the religion concerned. If the Catholic religion professed that a Mass led to a public or spiritual benefit, then according to Palles, within the law the Mass must be deemed charitable.⁵⁸ Yet throughout the period, the juridical limbo Mass bequests occupied meant that careful legal framing of such testamentary clauses was urged.⁵⁹

Outside of these politicized tensions between canon and civil law, the phenomenon of Mass payments in wills has been little considered by historians, outside of a brief discussion in Ciara Breathnach's exploration of twentieth-century testamentary behavior.⁶⁰ Yet closer examination of earlier bequests uncovers a complex spiritual marketplace in operation. This market was defined by a differentiated series of relationships between laity and priests, within which highly complex economic transactions occurred. Mass intentions, to use Zelizer's terminology, were deemed a special form of payment by both laity and clergy, earmarked by both, albeit in different ways. The money thus given by a parishioner to a priest made sense to both parties, but that, again, did not mean that the logic and motivation that underpinned the exchange was identical for both

parties. For the lay person making their will, Mass bequests can be seen as having important spiritual and affective functions. They were, first and foremost, regarded as a way to quicken one's entry from purgatory—a liminal, penitent state of indeterminate length—into heaven, by having one's priest and fellow parishioners pray for one's soul in the afterlife. They thereby performed significant emotional work for the testator and their relatives, allowing them to remain connected after death.⁶¹ They could also reflect, in some cases, an intimate social bond between the testator and a named priest whom they regarded as their specific intermediary with God in life and whom they wished to act similarly in death.⁶²

While priests would not have disagreed that Mass intentions worked in the ways that testators believed, the money they received through these transactions was special in a different way for most clergy. First, the widespread inclusion of Mass bequests in wills by the end of the nineteenth century meant that they were one of the more frequent and important sources of church income. For example, by 1883, the Jesuits at Milltown Park in Dublin found that these sums could constitute as much as 10 percent of their overall annual income. In that year, the community received more than £440 in Mass intentions in total annual receipts of £4,400; this was the largest single type of income outside dividends from investments.⁶³ Principally, however, Mass bequests formed an important part of an individual priest's private income, as financial records from parishes and religious houses show. In 1892, for example, the archbishop of Dublin ordered Fr. Nicholas Walsh to work out the financial viability of St. Agatha's parish on North William Street. In listing each source of income that might be used to dissolve the considerable debt of fourteen hundred pounds due on the church, Fr. Walsh refused to incorporate the money the parish priest and curates received for Mass intentions, telling the archbishop that itemized funds did "not include the dead list [of] £40 which they divide equally and which I do not think is fair to take into calculation in the payment of the debt."⁶⁴ In Cloyne diocese, Mass payments were treated as part of the clergy's "indivisible dues," kept by the individual priests to whom they were paid.⁶⁵ Priests, in other words, were deemed, by widespread custom, to be entitled to this money as a part of their individual, discretionary earnings.

Disparities in earmarking such cash between the parties to the exchange made the trade in Mass intentions a fraught one. While Mass bequests had the appearance of sheer personal income for a cleric, the very strict stipulations of canon law meant that the wishes of the faithful who left the money had to be diligently carried out.⁶⁶ This created an obligation for priests and made a great claim on a cleric's time and resources, as he was limited, again by canon law, to the performance of only one such Mass per day. In essence, wills formed a type of contract in which the testator employed the priest from beyond the grave. This was in evidence even before the codification of canon law in 1917. For example, Anne Caraher of Dundalk left fifty pounds to a Fr. Harbison, in which she requested, "as a matter of conscience but not of legal obligation," that the priest "will expend said sum in masses for the repose of my soul."⁶⁷ The claim to conscience shows how an expectation existed that the priest who received the money would be duty-bound to say the Masses, which accords with canon law as later written. Eugene Hynes also notes folkloric tales of the unsettled afterlives of priests who failed to say Masses for which they had been paid.⁶⁸ The

dead therefore possessed an ability to shape the working lives of priests, and, once a bequest was bestowed, the likes of Fr. Harbison found themselves morally and canonically committed to carrying out their wishes.

In theory, there was no conflict of interests here: the testator got their Masses, and the priest got his spending money. But insofar as Mass payments represented a type of commodification of religious services, the pricing structure was opaque. In many wills, the precise number of Masses to be offered for the sum of money left was not detailed, even where specific requests for its expenditure were. For example, William Coogan of Drogheda bequeathed a sum of two hundred pounds to Archbishop Dixon of Armagh to be expended by the Sisters of Charity on poor relief. In return, he requested that the Sisters “shall pray to the Almighty for the salvation of my soul.”⁶⁹ Others could be more precise in their claim. Anthony Cassidy, a Dublin merchant, left in his will £785 of stock along with his interest in other stock options to the Trustees of St Patrick’s College, Maynooth. Cassidy applied the money to fund the education of seminarians, making a stipulation that all students who benefitted from his gift “shall be under an obligation to say each year during his life two Masses for the repose of my soul and the souls of my deceased relatives.”⁷⁰ Cassidy thus entered into a complex working relationship with priests who had yet to be trained and ordained in order to create a long-term contract in which Masses would be offered for himself and his family. However, even in this case, the set amount of time remained uncertain: the stocks may well have stopped paying dividends a century ago, or they could still, conceivably, be contributing toward seminary bursaries today.

Thus, as testators left money for Mass intentions, it was not always clear precisely what they received. How many Masses did their money purchase? For what length of time would Masses be offered in their memory? In some cases, perpetual Masses were sought and agreed, often in respect of large gifts that paid for specific projects. Bishop James Walshe of Kildare and Leighlin agreed to allow Fr. Turner of Clane parish to perform such a service for the souls of Michael and Mary Anne Dunne on “the first Monday . . . of every month *for ever.*” (italics added) Walshe allowed this because the Dunnes had donated a hundred pounds to build Clane church.⁷¹ But the case of perpetual Masses raised a problem about the feasibility of their completion. Over time the burden of Mass intentions required some pragmatic management. An exploration of perpetual Mass intentions in existence since the 1850s and offered by the Oblate Fathers in Inchicore was eventually resolved when a series of obligations were parceled up and sent overseas for missionary priests to perform instead.⁷² Requests for perpetual Mass intentions were common, therefore, but were increasingly viewed with disapproval by church leaders. In 1891, a Mrs. O’Hagan asked for Mass intentions for her late husband Judge O’Hagan and herself when she made a gift of over twenty-seven hundred pounds to erect altars and complete the Jesuits’ chapel at Milltown Park. In a memorandum on the matter, Fr. Nicholas Walsh, SJ, recounted that he requested a perpetual Mass to be offered for this generous benefactor but that “The R. Fr. General would not, could not, consent to a perpetual Mass.”⁷³ The unevenness of the Mass bequest market, both over time and from region to region, thus becomes clear: one hundred pounds bought some a perpetual Mass intention, while twenty-seven hundred pounds was not enough to secure one for others.

On occasion, it is possible to discern a clear market value attached to Masses. These prices seem to reflect local customs and reveal some change over time. The price paid for Masses with the Capuchin Order in Kilkenny in 1866 ranged between two shillings and two shillings six pence.⁷⁴ In Limerick in 1883, Fr. Denis Hallinan at Newcastle received a ten-pound bequest, which worked out as five shillings per Mass.⁷⁵ But the value of Masses could oscillate wildly. In November 1915, William Delaney of Bolebeg, Queen's County, left five hundred pounds to three local priests, stating that he valued the gift at "one Pound for each Mass."⁷⁶ Most mass bequests were neither so clear nor so generous, however, and they could cause genuine irritation to the priests who were obliged to fulfil them. Fr. O'Donnell from Limerick diocese expressed his confusion and annoyance to his bishop in one case in 1917. "I have seen by the Munster News" he wrote,

that a sum of £100 has been left to me for Masses by the late Mr Power. I have not yet got this money and perhaps may not get it for months, nor have I heard how many Masses are to be said, but I suppose they will be at the rate of 5/- each—although I am told his offering during life was only 2/6 . . . I cannot complain of want of intentions here, as latterly I have had to give away over £20 for Masses every year. It looks a big thing, but between Sunday, retrenched holidays and corpse Masses (for many of which no offering is given) there are really only from three to four days in the week free for other intentions. Consequently should I get the bequest of £100, I cannot put more than about £10 of it into my own pocket. Latterly I have a difficulty in getting priests to accept intentions as those I offer them are only at the rate of 2/6.⁷⁷

This is worth unpacking: the priest was given a legacy for saying Masses, of which he had no warning, having to read about it in the press. He was unlikely to have the time to say most of the Masses for which the money was left and therefore could keep little of the legacy himself. He might have difficulty off-loading them to other clergymen if the Masses were capped at too low a rate. Nonetheless, under canon law, the priest was still obligated to ensure these Masses were said. The legacy, in other words, proved to be more an administrative headache and a financial burden than the great boon it seemed to those looking in from the outside.⁷⁸

The trade in Mass intentions is therefore an interesting case study of divergent meanings attached to the same monetary exchange by those on either end of the transaction and is, further, indicative of Zelizer's theory of "special monies," "earmarked" for particular purposes in particular social relationships, and therefore separate from utilitarian, market-derived understandings of finance.⁷⁹ The money behind a Mass intention was special for both priests and people but in different ways. It was, from the layperson's point of view, a payment that seemed to ease the path to heaven and ensure ongoing communication with the living; while from the priest's perspective, it was either an important part of his personal discretionary income or, in the case of some larger gifts, a sum that funded a favored building project. The money set aside in wills in respect of Masses for the souls of the departed came loaded with sacred and emotional meaning for the donor but loaded with obligations for the recipient. Custom, morality, and later canon law dictated that much of the agency in the exchange fell on the side of the person making the Mass bequest. If even the dead could

thus calmly exercise their agency in respect of a supposedly dominant priesthood in late nineteenth-century Ireland, the capacity of the living, of all classes, to do likewise should not be underestimated.

Conclusion

Fiction, travel journalism, and pamphlet literature addressing late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ireland offer us stereotypical renderings of clerical avarice for every occasion. Yet historians, although confronted with a church and clergy that reaped huge dividends even as much of its laity remained relatively poor, must not fall into the trap of simplistically echoing these contemporary critiques, nor, conversely, of passively accepting clerical defenses against them. The archives of the church offer ample evidence that many lay people challenged certain clergy on the basis of their greedy financial demands.⁸⁰ But the full spectrum of the archive needs to be considered when evaluating these complaints. First, that individual lay people, across the class spectrum, felt able to complain directly, and often vociferously, to bishops suggests that everyone was aware that clerical greed was an objective wrong, ought to have been an anomaly, and was something that could and should be curtailed.⁸¹ Second, if we turn our eyes from correspondence files, which by their nature contain much that is out of the ordinary, to more mundane, everyday, financial records, we find lengthy lists of payments from laity that suggest far more of them gave unquestioningly to the church than complained about giving or being asked to give. That they gave unquestioningly, however, is not the same as saying that they gave unconditionally.

It must be emphasized that those giving their money exercised various forms of agency and choice in doing so. As this article has shown, lay men and women gave money to their clergy because it served multiple and important purposes in their outward social and their interior religious lives, in both its earthly and anticipated spiritual forms. It is not satisfactory to imply, as contemporary critics did, that a kind of mass deception or mass delusion drove financial payments to the church; rather, genuine belief and self-interest on the part of lay people dictated much of it. Whether that belief took the form, in matters of death, of an intimate trust in the priest as a social and religious mediator; a communal resort to ritual customs of respect with potentially ancient, quasi-pagan roots; or an acceptance in the existence of purgatory and seeking end-of-life comfort by paying for a way out of that state of suffering, it was, as the evidence of the church's considerable income generation shows, deeply held by many lay people. Mediating one's spiritual faith through the material, as work on consumption of ecclesiastical and domestic religious goods is beginning to show, was an important factor in late-modern piety;⁸² we suggest that mediating one's faith through money, specifically, was equally significant and merits further investigation.

Finally, examining the nature of monetary gifts to the church also presents us with both a new perspective on non-elite agency, and new ways of accessing it. First, the above demonstrates that agency does not always entail deviation from convention. While scholars of Irish Catholicism have, rightly, identified protest against clerical payments via "collective pressure and overt griping" as "quintessential weapons of the weak,"⁸³ historians need also to find ways to accommodate the idea that evidence of ordinary people's agency is not found only

in irruptions *against* authority (in this case clerical authority) but also in subtle and not-so-subtle molding *of* authority. The voices of these people are only rarely found in the archive and tend to come through only in mediated form. But if we can assume with some confidence that, more often than not, they put their money where their mouth was, then using extant financial records to carefully uncover the economic exchanges that ordinary people were party to goes some way toward also uncovering their lost voices.

Endnotes

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1. See "Reports on Church Improvements, 1864: Return for Armagh Archdiocese from 1800 to 1864," Cardinal O Fiaich Library, Armagh, Archbishop Dixon Papers, ARCH/6/8.
2. Emmet Larkin, "Economic Growth, Capital Investment and the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland," in Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (Washington, DC, 1984), 13–55. Larkin identified 1850–75 as a period of particular "consolidation" of Irish Catholicism. Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850–1875," in Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (Washington, DC, 1984), 57–89.
3. L. M. Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660* (Bristol, UK, 1972), 134–70; James S. Donnelly, *The Land and the People of Nineteenth-Century Cork* (London, 1975), 219–50; Kevin O'Rourke, "Emigration and Living Standards in Ireland since the Famine," *Journal of Population Economics* 8, no. 4 (1995): 408–12.
4. Such questions came from those both sympathetic to and critical of the Catholic Church's money-raising activity. Thomas Dowler Murphy, *In Unfamiliar England . . . and Ireland* (Boston, 1910), 353, 356; Sydney Brooks, *The New Ireland* (Dublin, 1907), 77; Firmin Roz, *Under the English Crown* (London, 1906), 48; R. A. Scott-James, *An Englishman in Ireland* (London, 1910), 110; Nathan Hubbell, *My Journey to Jerusalem Including Travels in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Belgium, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Palestine, and Egypt* (New York, 1890), 104.
5. Michael J.F. McCarthy, *Priests and People in Ireland* (Dublin, 1902), 148; Robert Lynd, *Home Life in Ireland* (Chicago, 1912), 135. See multiple variations on this sentiment: David A. Doudney, *Ireland: Its Priests and Its People Gleaned from Plain Matters of Fact during a Nearly Twelve Years' Residence among Them* (London, 1892), 18–20, 25–26; Junius Junior, *The Truth about Ireland. The Priests Pests and Perils* (Guernsey, 1921), 78, 80, 84–91; Filson Young, *Ireland at the Cross Roads: An Essay in Explanation* (London, 1904), 82–83; E. Lynn Linton, *About Ireland* (London, 1890), 53.
6. Not least among these historians was Larkin, who described the church's money-raising from the laity in terms of an "appropriation" that kept Ireland poor. Emmet Larkin, "Economic Growth," 34. Liam Kennedy successfully countered Larkin's argument that the church's prodigious fundraising sucked capital from the Irish economy but himself used the term "siphoning" to describe the transfer of money from the laity to the church, hardly a rejection of contemporary notions of a greedy clergy. Liam Kennedy, "The Roman Catholic Church and Economic Growth in Nineteenth-century Ireland," *Economic and Social Review* 10, no. 10 (1978): 49.

7. S. J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland* (Dublin, 1982), 260; Eugene Hynes, "The Great Hunger and Irish Catholicism," *Societas* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 147–48; J. H. White, "The Influence of Catholic Clergy on Elections in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," *English Historical Review* 75, no. 295 (1960): 239–59.

8. Ciaran O'Neill, "Power, Wealth and Catholic Identity in Ireland, 1850–1900," in *Irish Catholic Identities*, ed. Oliver Rafferty (Manchester, UK, 2013), 259.

9. Cara Delay, "'Language Which Will Move Their Hearts': Speaking Power, Performance, and the Lay–Clerical Relationship in Modern Catholic Ireland," *Journal of British Studies* 53, no. 2 (2014): 426–52; Cara Delay, "'The Gates Were Shut': Catholics, Chapels, and Power in Late Nineteenth-Century Ireland," *New Hibernia Review* 14, no. 1 (2010): 14–35; Cara Delay, "Confidantes or Competitors? Women, Priests, and Conflict in Post-Famine Ireland," *Eire-Ireland* 40, no. 1 (2005): 107–25; Eugene Hynes, *Knock: The Virgin's Apparition in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Cork, Ireland, 2008).

10. Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Church in Modern Irish Society* (Dublin, 1987), 118–20; J. A. Murphy, "The Support of the Catholic Clergy in Ireland, 1750–1850," *Historical Studies* 5 (1965): 107.

11. Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* (Cambridge, 2007); Martijn Konings, *The Emotional Logic of Capitalism: What Progressives Have Missed* (Stanford, CA, 2015).

12. Viviana A. Zelizer, *The Purchase of Intimacy* (Princeton, NJ, 2005), 7–46.

13. Viviana A. Zelizer, *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief and Other Currencies* (New York, 1994).

14. Viviana A. Zelizer, "How I Became a Relational Economic Sociologist and What Does That Mean?," *Politics & Society* 40, no. 2 (2012): 151.

15. See also Giovanna Benadusi, "Investing the Riches of the Poor: Servant Women and Their Last Wills," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 3 (2004): 805–26.

16. Donald M. MacRaild and Avram Taylor, *Social Theory and Social History* (Basingstoke, UK, 2004), 116–17.

17. Cornelia Hughes Dayton, "Rethinking Agency, Recovering Voices," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 3 (2004): 842. See also Walter Johnson's critique of the conflation of "agency" and "resistance" in histories of slavery. Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113–24.

18. Adam Smyth, "Almanacs, Annotators, and Life-Writing in Early Modern England," *English Literary Renaissance* 38, no. 2 (2008): 200–44; Jason Scott-Warren, "Book-Keeping and Life-Writing Revisited: Accounting for Richard Stonley," *Past and Present* 230, suppl. 11 (2016): 151–70.

19. Mary Ann Lyons and James Kelly, eds., *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives* (Dublin, 2013); Ciara Breathnach and Eunan O'Halpin, "Scripting Blame: Irish Coroners' Courts and Unnamed Infant Dead, 1916–32," *Social History* 39, no. 2 (2014): 210–28; Salvador Ryan, ed., *Death and the Irish: A Miscellany* (Dublin, 2016); Lisa-Marie Griffith and Ciaran Wallace, eds., *Grave Matters: Death and Dying in Dublin, 1800–Present* (Dublin, 2016); Nina Witoszek and Pat Sheeran, *Talking to the Dead: A Study of Irish Funerary Traditions* (Amsterdam, 1998).

20. Zelizer also found legal disputes over financial interactions a fruitful source for analysis. Zelizer, *Purchase of Intimacy*.

21. T. Lincoln Bouscaren, Adam C. Ellis, and Francis N. North, "Introduction," in *Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, 4th ed. (Milwaukee, WI, 1963), 4.
22. Charles Fanning, *The Irish Voice in America: Irish-American Fiction from the 1760s to the 1980s* (Lexington, KY, 1990), 207; Hugh Quigley, *The Cross and the Shamrock, or, How to Defend the Faith* (Boston, 1853), 13–22. This ties in with Christian deathbed cultures elsewhere. See Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford, 1996); Mary Riso, *The Narrative of the Good Death: The Evangelical Deathbed in Victorian England* (Farnham, UK, 2015).
23. Lawrence J. Taylor, "Bás in Eirinn: Cultural Constructions of Death in Ireland," *Anthropological Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (1989), 180; Connolly, *Priests and People*, 152–66.
24. Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year* (Lexington, KY, 1966), 219.
25. F. Hugh O'Donnell, *Political Priests and Irish Ruins: Paraguay on Shannon up to Date* (London, 1910), 138; *The Bystander: An Illustrated Weekly Devoted to Travel Literature, Art, the Drama, Progress, Locomotion* 18 (1908), 128.
26. McCarthy, *Priests and People in Ireland*, 329. See also M. J. F. McCarthy, *Gallowglass* (London, 1904). McCarthy was a barrister and a Catholic who had attended the Vincentian seminary in Cork. James Murphy refers to him as a "maverick," although his books appeared to sell well in Ireland and elsewhere. *Five Years in Ireland 1895–1900* (Dublin, 1902) went to at least eight editions within two years of publication. James H. Murphy, *Catholic Fiction and Social Reality, 1873–1922* (Santa Barbara, CA, 1997), 93.
27. Larkin, "Economic Growth," 867–69.
28. Book of accounts connected with Bishop James Donnelly, December 3, 1857, Diocese of Clogher papers, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland [PRONI], DIORC/1/11C.
29. Book of accounts, December 31, 1877, PRONI, DIORC/1/11C. According to Donnelly, Pat Connolly left other money to his widow at the time. The trust money sat in the bank gathering interest until it was wound up in 1889: it was never claimed by its intended recipient, Connolly's daughter, who appears to have left the country before reaching adulthood.
30. McCarthy, *Priests and People*, 18.
31. Will of Margaret Spelman, signed December 8, 1910. Galway Diocesan Archive (GDA), F1/16.
32. Monsignor Fahey's statement in regard to the making of the late Mrs. Spelman's Will. GDA, F1/16.
33. Fahey's statement on Mrs. Spelman's Will.
34. Mary Donnellan to Fahey, February 24, 1913, GDA, F1/16.
35. O'Donnell, *Political Priests and Irish Ruins*, 35–36.
36. This abhorrence of funerary offerings is consistent with contemporary criticism of supposed working-class "extravagance" in relation to funerals observed in contemporary America and Britain. Zelizer, *Social Meaning of Money*, 177–78; Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, 2005), 98–100.
37. Patrick MacGill, *The Rat-Pit* (New York, 1915), 93. See also MacGill, *Children of the Dead End* (London, 1914), 23–24.

38. B. Higgins, Ballymahon, Co. Longford, National Folklore Collection, UCD, Schools' Collection, 340, <https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/5009138>.
39. Donal McCarthy, "The Funeral Service II: Office, Mass and Burial," *The Furrow* 8, no. 10 (1957): 648.
40. McCarthy, "Funeral Service," 648; Frank J. Sweeney, "Wake and Funeral Offerings in the Province of Armagh," *Death and the Irish*, 190.
41. Padraic Colum, *My Irish Year* (London, 1912), 114. In the same period, as folklorists have shown, the church encouraged alms-giving at funerals in lieu of excessive spending on funeral hospitality. Patricia Lysaght, "Hospitality at Wakes and Funerals in Ireland from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century: Some Evidence from the Written Record," *Folklore* 114, no. 3 (2003): 405; Seán Ó Súilleabháin, *Irish Wake Amusements* (Cork, Ireland, 1967), 19, 147; Gearóid Ó Cruaioich, "The Merry Wake," *Irish Popular Culture 1650–1850*, ed. James S. Donnelly Jr. and Kerby A. Miller (Dublin, 1998), 173–200.
42. Murphy, "Support of the Catholic Clergy," 106.
43. George Eogan and Michael Herity, *Ireland in Pre-History* (London, 2013); Thomas Moran, Sleavehaun, Co. Longford, National Folklore Collection, UCD, Schools' Collection, 300, <https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/5009210/4998076/51110549>.
44. McCarthy, "Funeral Service," 648; Colum, *Irish Year*, 114.
45. Colum, *Irish Year*, 114.
46. Séamus MacGhabhann, Carrowkeel, Co. Donegal, National Folklore Collection, UCD, Schools' Collection, 217, <https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4493670>. A variation of this, with the collection used for paying the publican for postfuneral drinking, was similarly a "reckoning" of intracommunity respect. Hugh Dorian, *The Outer Edge of Ulster: A Memoir of Social Life in Nineteenth-Century Donegal*, ed. Breandán Mac Suibhne and David Dickson (Notre Dame, IN, 2000), 320.
47. "Notes and Queries," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, xviii, (1921), 422. Folklore records from Co. Westmeath confirm this. William MacDermott, Foyran, Co. Westmeath, National Folklore Collection, UCD, Schools' Collection, 186, <https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/5009022/4978258/5116237>. Where offerings were not in operation, attendance at the funeral was itself a socially monitored and valued custom. See Dorian, *Outer Edge of Ulster*, 315–16; Tomás Ó Crohan, *The Islandman* (Oxford, 1978), 188.
48. In the case cited by Padraic Colum, "Father Michael" who received the money was not popular and had a reputation for being "close-fisted with money," yet the offerings were plentiful. Colum, *Irish Year*, 114.
49. See, for example, pulpit denunciations of laity as detailed in Philippe Daryl [Paschal Grousset], *Ireland's Disease: Notes and Impressions* (London, 1888), 220, 224–25; Terence McGrath, *Pictures from Ireland* (New York, 1881), 60–61; and Mary Carbery, *The Farm by Lough Gur: The Story of Mary Fogarty* (Dublin, 1973), 26.
50. Sweeney, "Wake and Funeral Offerings," 192.
51. As a result, disputes between (as well as within) families, often bitter ones, might frequently find an arbitrator in the priest, as solicitor files tend to confirm. Kerry Local History Archive, John O'Connell (Solicitor) Papers, Out Letter Books.
52. William Carleton, "The Party Fight and the Funeral," *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1834, repr., London, 1877), 139–93.

53. Ray Cashman, "Dying the Good Death: Wake and Funeral Customs in County Tyrone." *New Hibernia Review* 10, no. 2 (2006), 24.
54. McCarthy, *Priests and People*, 129.
55. For example, unmarried Fermanagh woman Maggie Ann McAdam's estate totalled just £15, with all of it bequeathed for Masses for the repose of her soul. Probate record of Maggie Ann McAdam, February 22, 1918, PRONI wills calendar, https://apps.proni.gov.uk/WillsCalendar_IE/willsSearchResultsDetails.aspx.
56. J. C. Brady, "Legal Developments, 1801–79," *A New History of Ireland V: Ireland under the Union 1801–70*, ed. W.E. Vaughan (Oxford, 1989), 472–73; Donal A. Kerr, *Peel, Priests and Politics: Sir Robert Peel's Administration and the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1841–1846* (Oxford, 1982), 110–51. The controversy was generated within Catholicism and among the hierarchy as much as against Catholicism. Colin Barr, *Paul Cullen, John Henry Newman and the Catholic University of Ireland, 1845–65* (Leominster, MA, 2003), 23–25.
57. James C. Brady, "Some Problems Touching the Nature of Bequests for Masses in Northern Ireland," *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1968): 357–76; V. T. H. Delany, *Christopher Palles: Lord Chief Baron of Her Majesty's Court of Exchequer in Ireland, 1874–1916* (Dublin, 1960), 92–93, 170–72.
58. Oliver P. Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster, 1603–1983: An Interpretive History* (London, 1994), 176–77.
59. Rev. W. J. Walsh, "On the Law of Charitable Bequests in Ireland," parts i–iii, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, ser. 3, vi (1885), 10–14; 277–86; 378–88.
60. Ciara Breathnach, "An Exploration of Testamentary Behaviour in Twentieth-century Ireland," *The History of the Family* 14, no. 3 (2009): 317–18.
61. Frans Ciappa, "'Una Messa in Perpetuum': Perpetual Mass Bequests in Traditional Malta, 1750–1797," *Catholic Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (2005): 282.
62. Disputes over the beneficiary of some Mass bequests attest to the personal connection as a factor. John O'Connell, Tralee to Fr. Casey, Port of Spain, March 8, 1906, September 19, 1906, January 30, 1907. Kerry Local History Archive, John O'Connell (Solicitor) Papers, Out Letter Books, 13, 14, and 15.
63. Account Sheet for Milltown Park, 1883, Irish Jesuit Archives (IJA), Milltown Park Papers, FM/MILL/18 (1).
64. Rev. Nicholas Walsh, Kingstown, to Archbishop Walsh, December 28, 1892, DDA, Walsh Papers, box 252/December/73.
65. Rev. William Keane, St. Colman's College, Fermoy to Archbishop Leahy, November 10, 1868, Leahy Papers, Cashel Archdiocese, 1868/73.
66. Bouscaren, *Canon Law*, 819.
67. Will of Anne Caraher, signed November 17, 1881, Copy Will Book of Charles MacMahon, Jr., Solicitor, Dundalk, National Archives of Ireland, BR/LOU/7/6.
68. Hynes, *Knock*, 114.
69. Will of William Coogan, signed October 20, 1863, Cardinal Ó Fiaich Library, Armagh, Archbishop Dixon Papers, E/30/6.
70. Will of Anthony Cassidy, November 14, 1910, Maynooth Archives, Wills and Bequests, 126/1/3b.

71. Kildare and Leighlin Register, Kildare and Leighlin Diocesan Archive (KLDA), DAS/902.
72. Memorandum of Agreements, undated, Inchicore House of Retreat, Documents of the Holy See and Archdiocese of Dublin (1852–1946), OMI/PA/HLC/Inchicore/7.1.1.2.
73. Fr. Nicholas Walsh, SJ to the Rector of Milltown Park, September 7, 1902, IJA, Milltown Park Papers, FM/MILL/450.
74. Mass Intentions Book, Kilkenny, 1866–1869, Capuchin Archives, KK/100/OS.
75. Hallinan Diary, June 29, 1883, Hallinan Papers, Limerick Diocesan Archive (LDA).
76. Will of William Delany, November 1, 1915, KLDA, KL/WD/4.
77. Fr. M O'Donnell, St Mary's Presbytery, Rathkeale, to O'Dwyer, July 17, 1917, Letters from Priests LDA BLET/E.
78. To add to this administrative burden, Breathnach suggests that Mass bequests in twentieth-century wills increasingly came with caveats that they be celebrated in Ireland, thus preventing priests offloading them to missionary clerics abroad. Breathnach, "Exploration of Testamentary Behaviour," 318.
79. Viviana Zelizer, "The Social Meaning of Money: 'Special Monies,'" *American Journal of Sociology* 95, no. 2 (1989): 342–77.
80. Delay, "The Gates Were Shut," 31–32.
81. James O'Shea, *Priests, Politics and Society in Post-famine Ireland, A Study of County Tipperary, 1850–1891* (Dublin, 1983), 27–28.
82. Lisa Godson, "Charting the Material Culture of the 'Devotional Revolution': The Advertising Registry of the *Irish Catholic Directory*, 1837–96," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 116C (2015): 1–30; Cara Delay, "Holy Water and a Twig: Catholic Households and Women's Religious Authority in Modern Ireland," *Journal of Family History* 43, no. 3 (2018): 302–19. See also Colleen MacDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT, 1995).
83. Hynes, *Knock*, 48.