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A History of Maynooth College Chapel: 1845 to 1905

by

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Dedication

To my late Auntie Maura, R.J.M.
(1936 - 1994)

Acknowledgements

- The help I have received from many individuals have made this thesis possible. I am happy to acknowledge my major debts to them.
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- I scarcely need to add that I am fully responsible for any misinterpretations which might arise in the text.
- Finally, I am indebted to Máire Keane, who, with the help of a few scribbles, typed my thesis.

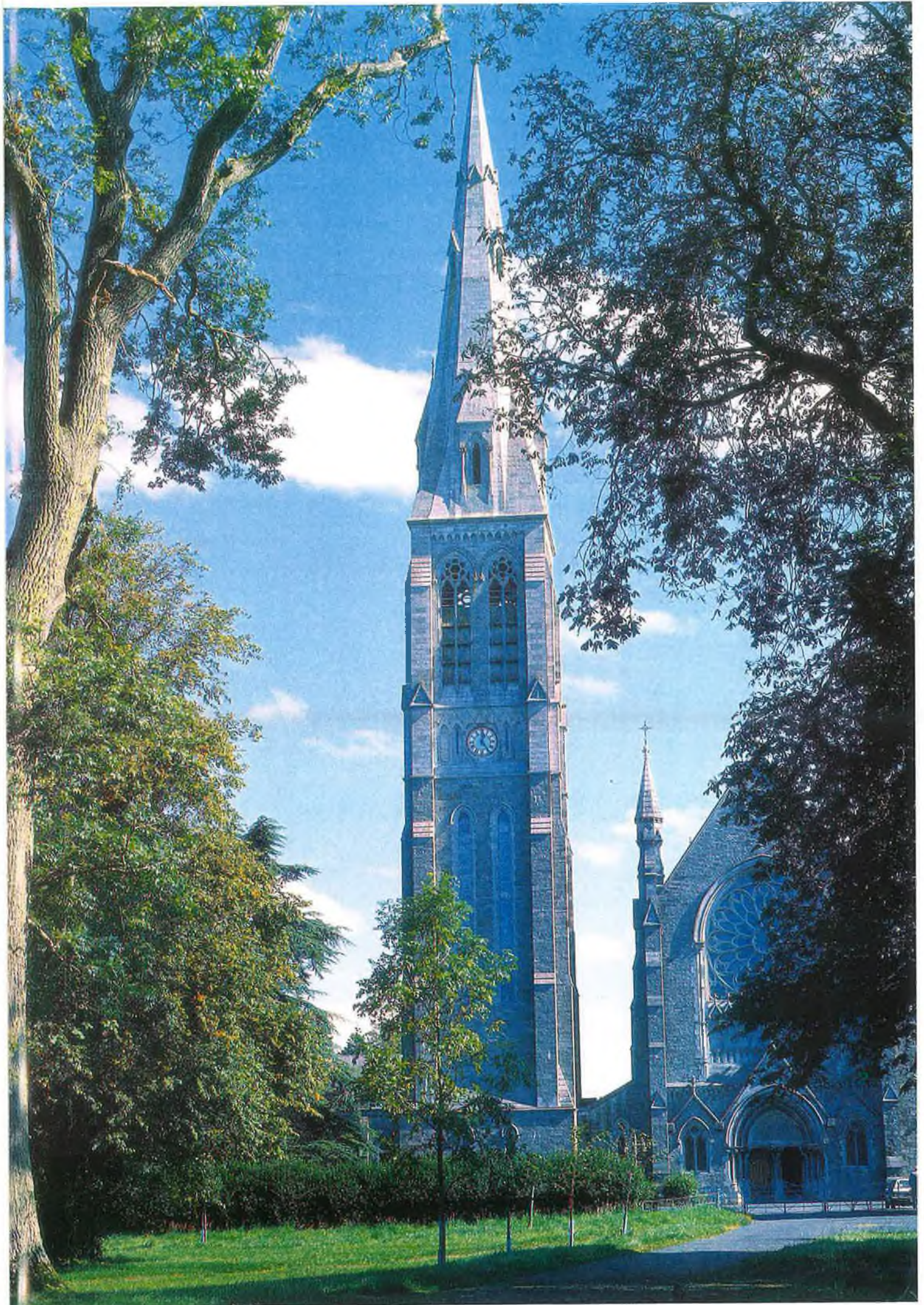


Plate 1

A HISTORY OF MAYNOOTH COLLEGE CHAPEL: 1845 TO 1905

by Helen Mc Dermott

SUMMARY

The principal aim of this administrative study is to contextualise the history of Maynooth College Chapel. The objective is to elucidate the facts and circumstances which form its history. As the present study had not been researched to any great degree the investigation is conducted through interpretation and observation of primary source material.

Three main perspectives are adopted in order to highlight the national character of the chapel. The first perspective is political in its nature. It is developed essentially throughout the first chapter. Early legislation for the college and its consequences for the chapel are assessed. The decisions taken to initiate and to proceed with the chapel project are reviewed. Effectively chapter one sets the scene for the following chapters.

The socio-economic perspective is the second perspective employed in the study. It sets up the background framework for the second chapter. This chapter deals primarily with the funding of the great edifice. The erection of a chapel worthy of the national college was a large undertaking. This chapel was the first

college building erected by means of public subscription. This chapter reviews the appeals and the collections made towards the chapel fund. The relationship between Catholic Ireland and the college is thereby appraised. The key personalities associated with the fund-raising drive are evaluated. Essentially, this chapter examines the interests and investments of all this involved in the chapel project.

The last perspective adopted is that of a physiographical kind. This is highlighted throughout chapter three. The chapter sets out to outline the distinctive features of the college chapel, which have set it apart from contemporary chapels. The architectural style of J.J. McCarthy (architect of the chapel) is appraised. Each stage of actual construction from the chapel's inception to its completion is assessed. This chapter also examines the arduous task of completing the tower and the spire. It concludes on a note of a satisfying accomplishment.

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Introduction

The present study presents the 'History of Maynooth College Chapel' in its early years. Although the study covers a sixty year period, (1845 to 1905), the principal theme is developed essentially within the period 1875 to 1902. It makes some observations and approaches a comprehensive examination of the chapel's inception to its completion. The primary concern is to establish an accountable and contextualised history on the origins of the chapel. An attempt to discover the facts and circumstances which constitute the history of the chapel is the objective of this study. By placing such information within a suitable framework, it is hoped that a light can be shed on the chapel's history.

Of course, discussion of the political life of the College cannot be avoided. It is evident that it was the politics of the day which determined the fate of Maynooth College chapel. In view of this, the first chapter is developed principally along political lines. It assesses the importance of parliamentary ties with the College and evaluates their consequences in regard to the chapel. The decisions taken and the driving forces behind the chapel founders is also reviewed. The role of Dr. C.W. Russell is briefly evaluated in this chapter. President Russell did much to initiate the project. The period covered is 1845 to 1875. It is necessary to refer to the humble beginnings of the College in 1795. This contextualises events in regard to their relationships and bearings upon the chapel. In effect, Chapter One sets up the background framework within which the history of the chapel may be reconstructed.

The principal theme is developed primarily in the central section of the study, in the second and third chapters. The second chapter is developed along the social and economic background of the country. It covers the period from 1869 to 1902. It investigates the funding of the chapel. The chapel was the first of the College buildings to be financed by

public contributions. This marked a new departure for the Trustees, who previously depended on parliamentary aid for the erection of such structures. This chapter examines in great detail the appeals and collections made for the fund. It offers suggestions as to why the chapel fund consistently displayed a debit balance. The general relationship between the College and Catholic Ireland is ascertained here. The work portfolios of the five presidents associated with the project are appraised. Much attention is paid to the main fund-raisers, Dr. Russell and Dr. Gargan. Essentially, this chapter elucidates the investments and involvements of all those associated with the erection of the chapel.

The third chapter concentrates mainly on the physiographical features of the College chapel. The period covered is 1874 to 1902. It contains the history of the chapel's construction, briefly examined in chapter one. It investigates each stage of the actual construction work. Such stages include the initial construction of the project, the completion of the exterior, the furnishing of the interior and the erection of the tower and the spire. The architectural style of J.J. McCarthy, utilised to a certain extent by W. Hague, is reviewed. Effectively, the chapter serves to highlight the distinctive features of the College chapel, for which Maynooth College has become unreservedly proud. It concludes on a note of accomplishment and achievement.

Note on Sources

Apparently, no precursor to this work exists. The College chapel of Maynooth has been mentioned in several works documented on the College. However, the topic has not been developed previously to any great extent. In this light, a great part of this study is based on contemporary documents.

The main sources of material for this study are to be found in Maynooth College Archives, located in the Russell Library of the College. There are two main sources - The Annual Reports of the Presidents, and the Journal of Trustees of Maynooth College. It is difficult to locate specific material on the history of the College Chapel. There is no definite set of topics to which one can refer, other than presidency periods or particular years. Nonetheless, the Presidents' Reports and the Journal of Trustees are informative. They appear to be the most authoritative records for the internal history of the College.

The President's Reports of 1874 -- (MCA, Box 132)

From 1874 onwards, the President of the College was required to submit an annual report to the College Trustees. Each report contains the main events and the key issues facing the College for the year involved. Most of these reports contain information relating to the College chapel. Effectively, they assess the importance of the chapel within the overall College structure.

The Journal of Trustees. 1795 to 1881 (MCA, B2/1/1) and **1881 to 1921** (MCA, B2/1/2).

These journals are manuscript folio volumes written by various secretaries to the College Trustees. Much of the history of the College Chapel is recorded in these volumes. The

resolutions and their amendments shed some light on the arduous planning involved in the initiation, actual construction and completion of the College Chapel.

The College Calendars (Cal. 1864 --)

These records furnish information on domestic issues. Primarily, they contain lists of ordinations and examinations of College students. However, their appendices contain valuable records of various events in the College. The earlier calendars were chiefly compiled by the most Rev. Dr. Walsh, then Vice-President of the College.

The Bursars Financial Statements, 1865 to 1870. (MCA, B3/1)

These statements estimate the existing state of the College finances. They provide material on the College's debts, income and expenditure.

The Annual Report of the Financial Council, 1870 --, (MCA, B3/11/1,2,3)

These reports were made to the Trustees every year since 1870. They contain similar information to that of the Bursar. As one might expect, the information recorded in such financial reports is clearly more commercially orientated, as compared to a stage by stage construction of the chapel.

Report of the Maynooth Commission, 1853

This large printed volume is entitled, "Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners into the Management and Government of the College of Maynooth." The inquiry was conducted in 1853 when the College was financially dependant on parliament. The report was presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty in 1855. It presents an external view of the overall College structure.

Correspondence of College Officials, (MCA, Box 101 - 103)

This study derives much of its factual information from a vast amount of literature of the past Presidents of the College. Such literature offers an alternative to official records of the College. The literature includes correspondence with the bank, other Bishops, contractors, architects, contributors to the chapel and such persons.

Further Abbreviations

The abbreviations listed in 'Rules for contributors to Irish Historical Studies', supplement: (Jan. 1968) pp 81 - 124, are employed in this study. A few others may be noted:

Cal.	Calendarium Collegii sti Patricii apud Maynooth, A.D.
Kal.	Kalendarium Collegii sti Patricii apud Maynooth, A.D.
FJ	Freeman's Journal
MCA	Maynooth College Archives
Rep. 1853	Report of Her Majesty's Commission appointed to inquire into the Management and Government of the College.

The observative and interpretative perspective adopted in this administrative study should be viewed as an attempt to contextualise the history of Maynooth College.

Chapter One

Decisions and Designs

*'In the year of 1795, when the frost of the penal laws was thawing in the sun of the advancing civilisation, and the wars of the French Revolution had closed to the Irish clerical students the foreign universities in which their predecessors were educated, the Irish parliament passed an Act, in effect founding and endowing the Royal College of St. Patrick, at Maynooth, with an income of £8,000 from the public purse.'*¹ This Act was entitled 'An Act for establishing a College for the better education of persons professing the Popish or Roman Catholic Religion.'² Although it was not lawful to provide a seminary exclusively professing the Roman Catholic religion, it became a necessity. It was believed that continental seminaries were infected with disloyal principles in the aftermath of the French Revolution.³ Consequently, the government saw the advantage of preventing young intellectual minds from being exposed to such doctrines.

Incorporated into the act was a provision for a body of Trustees to be established. The role of such trustees, as named in the act, were sanctioned with the establishment, endowment and maintenance of the academy. Their functions did not involve the formation of a body politic. It involved rather, the administration of power and authority in stipulated matters. One such stipulation in which the Trustees exercised government, was in the erection and maintenance of any building deemed necessary for all those connected with the college.⁴ Henceforth, any additional repairs or erections of new buildings were to be determined by the Trustees of the College.

¹ Freeman's Journal, 2 November 1878

² John Healy, Maynooth College. Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895 (Dublin, 1895) p. 108

³ See Jeremiah Newman, Maynooth College (Dublin, 1984), p. 1

⁴ See John Healy, Maynooth College. Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895 (Dublin, 1895) p.108 - 110

*'In its early years of existence, Maynooth had to struggle with the grinding pressure of poverty. The state fund was entirely inadequate to maintain the number of students who thronged its halls'.⁵ From 1836 onwards, nothing was spent by way of new buildings. A frugal sum (£189 18s 10d) was spent on repairs. By 1838, the college was forced to borrow £1,000 to relieve the embarrassed state of the College.⁶ Appeals for an increase in the annual grant were made frequently, but to no avail. Maynooth College eventually got its break in 1845, with Robert Peel's Conservative government. Sir Robert Peel was the first Tory Prime Minister who attempted to solve Irish problems with conciliation. In 1845 the Maynooth Act sponsored by Peel's government was placed on the statute books. Under this act, the annual grant was increased from £8,000 to £26,000 per annum. A further £30,000 was granted in order to enlarge collegiate buildings and repair existing ones.⁷ The Board of Public Works was entrusted with administering the works on behalf of the Treasury. *'The first Maynooth Act of 1795 sprang from converging desires, though prompted by different motives. The major revision of that act in 1845 derived from a similar accord. The bishops needed a college capable of providing more and better educated priests to cater for an increasing population. The government wanted better educated priests in the hope that they would prove more attached to the British connection and that the munificence would wean some of them away from the Repeal movement.'*⁸*

A Roman Catholic was recommended for the position of architect. At this time, Augustus Welby Pugin was the leading Catholic architect in England. The Board of Works expressed satisfaction with the choice of Pugin as architect. Pugin was duly notified of his appointment. On 2 November 1845, the Board of Trustees of Maynooth College resolved

⁵ Freeman's Journal, 2 November 1878

⁶ See Donal Kerr, Peel, Priests and Politics: Sir Robert Peel's Administration and the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland (Oxford, 1982) pp 249 - 251

⁷ Ciaran O'Connor and John O'Regan, Public Works: The Architecture of the office of Public Works, 1831 - 1937 (Dublin, 1987) p. 14

⁸ Donal Kerr, Peel, Priests and Politics: Sir Robert Peel's Administration and the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland (Oxford, 1982) p. 289

that a building Committee was to be appointed. Their functions were to include conferring with the Board of Works and Pugin, and superintendence of the erection of any works at the college.⁹ They requested Pugin to submit plans for the buildings, as had been established by Parliament. It was made utterly clear that the grant of £30,000 was not just set aside for buildings exclusively. Repairs and furnishings to old and existing buildings were also to be included in the grant. Work had already begun on such buildings and it was proving itself costly indeed.

Pugin submitted his plans and estimates. He had provided in his designs for a new church of ample capacity. His estimates were found to total over £57,000, whereas the budget allowed for £25,000 exclusive of furniture.¹⁰ Mr. Ratcliffe (a Trustee to the college) remarked to the Board that '*£30,000 was inadequate for the proposed buildings complete.*'¹¹ Yet the Treasury refused to grant more finance, other than the initial £30,000. The obvious solution, as it revealed itself, was to omit the chapel and other elements such as the Infirmary and Aula Maxima. With such omissions a design could be produced within the budget. Pugin was apprehensive about continuing his work in the college. He thought that he might be blamed for flaws in his recently revised proposals, especially in the omission of a chapel. Eventually, he proceeded by modifications to his original plans of a quadrangle. '*The loss of a chapel was especially hard, for new catholic churches were beginning to be built all over the country while the national Seminary had to remain content with a chapel considered temporary even in 1795.*'¹²

The Trustees met on 15 October 1850. It was indicated that the grant of £30,000 and a further £3,700, which the Trustees themselves had funded, was exhausted. The financial

⁹ See MCA, B2/1/1, 262 - 8

¹⁰ See Ciaran O'Connor and John O'Regan, Public Works: The Architecture of the Office of Public Works, 1831 - 1937 (Dublin, 1987) p. 14

¹¹ MCA, B2/1/1, 265

¹² Patrick Corish, Maynooth College 1795 - 1995 (Dublin 1995) p. 129

position of the College became one of a struggling nature. Such financial pressures were not exclusive to the College at Maynooth. They were painfully felt throughout Catholic Ireland. The famine of 1845 to 1848 was followed by a period of economic depression. It brought dire distress and poverty. Catholics were forced to depend on voluntary contributions for their building work, but such aid gradually ceased. Such circumstances allowed little by way of private donations to the College. Those who could contribute, diverted their interests towards relief of the impoverished.¹³

However, the need for a new College chapel was continually stressed in the following years. A meeting of the Trustees on 26 October 1852 dictated that '*the President, the Bursar and Dean Gaffney to have a plan of the projected enlargements of the old chapel prepared and submitted for consideration to the next June Board*'¹⁴ This project seems to have been relinquished, as there is no evidence to suggest a follow up to the idea. '*The want of a church large enough to accommodate all the students at the solemn functions on Sunday and festivals and in which, sacred ceremonies could be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Rubrics, was long and painfully felt by all those who were connected in any way with the administration of the College.*'¹⁵

After ascending to the seat of President of Maynooth College, Charles W. Russell (1818 - 1880) approached the question of a new College chapel. In 1858, he spoke to a number of bishops in regard to the issue. While some expressed positive sentiments, some remained apprehensive and some expressed consternation. On 22 June 1859, the Trustees sent a memorial to the Lord Lieutenant outlining the financial needs of the College to be included in the annual estimate of the Board of Works. Russell then went to London to

¹³ See Brian de Breffny and George Mott, The Churches and Abbeys of Ireland (London, 1976) p. 160

¹⁴ MCA, B2/1/1, 325

¹⁵ Rep. 1853, P.72 - Appendix xviii

discuss the issue with Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Edward Cardwell, chief secretary to Ireland. His efforts seemed futile in the wake of 'papal aggression' which bombarded Britain at the time. Russell, on behalf of the Trustees, wrote to Cardwell with another memorial on 14 June 1860. In light of the proposals made in the Report of The Royal Commission of 1853 '*to divert part of the annual grant to finance repairs by the Board of Works*', Cardwell approved part of the memorial. Such legislation received the royal assent on 20 August 1860. This Act empowered the Board of Works, with the sanction of the Treasury, to make loans available to the Maynooth Trustees. On their behalf, the Trustees offered the security of the money provided annually for all free places within the College and the £20 stipend to senior students. Work on such buildings was to be executed by the Board of Works.¹⁶

When the money became available, it was clear that priority lay, not with a new College chapel, but with a new College Infirmary. The increase in the number of students since 1845 and the dilapidating condition of the Parker building made the need for an infirmary more practical and immediate.¹⁷ Thereby, placing aspirations for a new College chapel further out of reach. The Trustees borrowed £10,000 from the Board of Works under the new legislation to finance their project. Unfortunately, the financial position of the College began to deteriorate gradually. The burden of debt hung over the Trustees. It was apparent that from there on out, any further extensions would carry with them the cumbersome worry of a loan and its requirements.

Sir Robert Peel (son of the Prime Minister of the 1845 Act) visited the College in 1861. He remarked that the existing chapel was totally unworthy and expressed disappointment with the building. After the visitation in 1864, Peel fashioned the report to

¹⁶

See Patrick Corish, Maynooth College 1795 - 1995 (Dublin 1995) pp. 134 -5

¹⁷

See Denis Meehan, Window on Maynooth (Dublin, 1949) p. 120

parliament in such a way that the existing state of the College chapel appeared to be a fundamental issue in the report. Shortly after the report, the Trustees drafted a memorial to the Lord Lieutenant. They petitioned parliament for an additional grant on the grounds of the necessity of a College chapel. Peel's interest remained but for a short time, as he left office in 1865.

Russell frequently lamented the failure to execute Pugin's original plan of 1845 in which a full quadrangle could have been achieved. *'Maynooth possessed from its foundation a chapel inadequate in extent to the needs of the great community and unfit in construction to be associated with Pugin's imposing work. Russell resolved that another should be created, of which Ireland and the Alma Mater of her priesthood need not be ashamed'*¹⁸ He regretted that students could not see the perfect performance of ceremonies in a worthy and fitting church. Russell had hoped that the existing strong ties between the College and the State would ultimately culminate in the concession of a state grant for the erection of a College chapel. But, *'after more than a year of fierce discussion and bargaining and broken promises, The Bill for the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland was passed in July 1869.'*¹⁹ His optimistic hope disappeared with the passing of this Act. Such an important linkage between the College and State was severed forever. Effectively the Act stopped the annual grant to Maynooth College. By way of compensation, it granted the College a sum of £369,000.²⁰ Although such severed ties would be felt painfully in the financial arena of the College, there was a liberty of a greater kind granted in 1869. The bishops were finally emancipated from the control of civil law which had governed their College. Consequently the College chapel could now only be erected by means of public subscription. Henceforth,

¹⁸ Cal. 1880, 137

¹⁹ Brian de Breffny and George Mott, The Churches and Abbeys of Ireland (London, 1976) p.162

²⁰ See Freeman's Journal, 2 November 1878

this new legislation made the College Trustees accountable for any new undertakings, independent of any opposing external influences on such matters.

Russell wasted little time deliberating over the issue. He approached the Administrative Council in regard to the erection of a new chapel. The Trustees met on 14 October 1873. It was resolved that *'the bishops cordially accede to the desire expressed by the Administration Council for the erection of a College church and that the President be directed to make preparations for carrying out the proposed undertaking at the June Board'*.²¹ The most problematic feature of such an undertaking of course was its funding. Russell's solution was public subscription.

It might have been the bequest of the late Reverend Dean James O'Kane which provoked such an optimistic attitude. Dean O'Kane died on 17 February 1874. He bequeathed a substantial amount of the residue of his property to the Trustees, to be applied to the fund for building a College church.²² The Trustees met on 24 June 1874. They resolved that *'the sum liquidated by Rev. Dean O'Kane to the chapel building fund, shall be invested in their name to make an order on the Bursar for the payment quarterly of the annuity'*.²³ In his annual report to the Trustees of the College, Russell highlighted the importance of such a bequest. *'The bequest is valuable far beyond its amount in money, as leading the way in the pious undertaking on which the Trustees are about to enter - the erection of a chapel worthy of the National Seminary and an impulse to the zeal and charity of the Irish people and still more of the Irish clergy by whom Dean O'Kane was universally known and respected'*²⁴

During the month of October 1874, the Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. Leahy, wrote to Russell. He suggested J.J. McCarthy, R.H.A., a pupil of Pugin's, as a suitable architect for the

²¹ MCA, B2/1/1, 428

²² Cal. 1874, Appendix

²³ MCA, B2/1/1, 434

²⁴ MCA 132/1, Report of 1874

chapel.²⁵ The matter was taken into consideration. When Edward Pugin (son of A.W. Pugin) heard of this suggestion he stepped forward and claimed to have the right to submit plans. His argument was based on the theory that his father submitted plans for a church, for which he remained unpaid. However, the Trustees expressed favour towards McCarthy as architect of their chapel. The Trustees met on 14 October 1874 and appointed '*a Building Committee to make all the needful arrangements relative to the erection of a new Collegiate church*'.²⁶ The first meeting of this committee occurred on 20 January 1875. They appointed J.J. McCarthy as architect of the new church. After consultation with John O'Hagan, the College solicitor, Russell was advised to instruct McCarthy to ignore the previous plans of A.W. Pugin. McCarthy was to prepare completely new plans. Such action would serve to prevent Edward Pugin from further intrusion in the project.²⁷

Early in Lent 1875, McCarthy submitted plans to the building committee. The plans included a spire for the chapel and an Aula Maxima (see Plate 2). The plans were in turn submitted to the College Trustees. But, by estimating that the spire would prove too costly, it was removed from the plans. McCarthy's plans for the Aula Maxima were also disregarded. On receipt of approval from both committees, tenders were invited for the execution of the work.²⁸ The Trustees met on 1 July 1875. '*It was resolved; that the laying of the foundation stone of the new College church be fixed for 10 October 1875 - the feast of Dedication of churches in Ireland*'.²⁹

With the proposals and plans for the erection of a new chapel well under way Russell began his diligent campaign of fund raising through public appeal throughout Ireland. '*He earnestly desired that for the rude and gormless chapels which had been raised in their stead*

²⁵ See Jeremiah Newman, *Maynooth and Victorian Ireland* (Dublin, 1983) p. 225

²⁶ MCA, B2/1/1, 439

²⁷ See Ambrose Mulcahy, *Dr. Russell of Maynooth* (London, 1983) pp 297 - 8

²⁸ See MCA, 132/1, Report of 1875

²⁹ MCA, B2/1/1, 449

with difficult and painful effort when Catholic Ireland emerged from the gloom of the penal days, that they should be substituted more worthy of faith for which she had struggled with desperate fidelity, and of the happier fortunes which at last permitted its freedom and full development'.³⁰ In his President's Report on 22 June 1875, it appears that Russell was very much satisfied with the contributions to the College chapel funds. *'The appeal to the public for funds...has been received with a favour almost unexampled, without any solicitation, beyond the simple publication in the newspaper of the address of the Trustees ..and.. the great body of well wishers of the undertaking, both clerical and lay, are only waiting for the promised organisation of a plan to carry out a collection in each locality in order to contribute generously to the work, according to their own means.'*³¹

A national synod was held at Maynooth from 30 August to 20 September 1875. *'An extra-ordinary meeting of the Trustees was convoked on the requisition of the four Archbishops of Ireland and held in Maynooth on 15 September 1875'*.³² It was resolved at the meeting that the tender of Mr. Thomas Hammond and Son, for the erection of the chapel be accepted. It was resolved also that, *'the Bishops individually pledge themselves to assist the Trustees in providing necessary funds by forwarding in their dioceses, by all means in their power, the organisation of the collection for this purpose'*.³³ The date 17 March 1876 was decided upon as a suitable day for collections. An interesting article appeared in the Freeman's Journal in October 1875, which most likely served to encourage the public to contribute funds. It read *'The altered circumstances of the country, the Emancipation of Catholic faith and Catholic worship, the wondrous impulse given during the last five and twenty years to works of Catholic zeal and Catholic charity have outgrown the suitability of the College chapel and it has long since been felt that the time has come for parting with it*

³⁰

Ibid.

³¹

MCA, 132/1, Report of 1875

³²

MCA, B2/1/1, 449

³³

Ibid.

for another.... The College chapel is a work which will continue to evoke, as it has already evoked, a sympathy wider than any mere local undertaking. It is a work that concerns the country and the country will be sure to acquit itself in every other duty that creed or nationality imposed on it'.³⁴

The foundation stone of Maynooth College chapel was laid on 10 October 1875. A large and distinguished assemblage gathered to Maynooth to witness the solemn ceremonial of laying the foundations of the 'magnificent temple'. *'No more fitting day could be chosen for such an event, so national and so sacred - than that great Irish festival so fraught with thrilling memories of Irish Catholicity in the past'.³⁵* It was a joyous occasion for all those involved in the execution of the chapel. It was a day for which *'the esteemed and accomplished President of the College, the very Rev. Dr. Russell, who has laboured so lovingly and untiringly in good cause, may well feel proud and his learned and distinguished colleagues will rejoice none the less in the memorable incident of the occasion'.³⁶* It was indeed the last great ceremony in regard to the College chapel that Russell was destined to attend. *'The building went on successfully and approached completion, when the author ceased to have power to help it further, and left it with deep regret, to the care of others, who prosecuted it to the end....stimulated by his example'.³⁷*

After the many years of labouring pains over 'Decisions and Designs'; Maynooth College was now given a foretaste of the mighty and stately edifice which would soon be raised to the service of God.

³⁴ Freeman's Journal, 9 October 1875

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Cal. 1880, 137

Chapter Two

Investments and Involvements

'The last great public event in the history of Maynooth College was its 'disendowment' by the Church Act'.¹ Maynooth lost its annual grant in 1869. Consequently, the College chapel was erected by means of public subscription. The funding of such a structure involved a vast amount of capital. Maynooth had the advantage of being the National Catholic Institution, which served every parish with priests. Yet, the reciprocation of such a favour was immense, even for the better off areas. However, the great faith of the majority of the Irish people to their beloved Catholic institution, was clearly expressed by their generous contributions to the chapel. There existed some apprehension over the issue of funding, yet response to the fund-raising drive was relatively prompt in its initial stages.

In accordance with the arrangement sanctioned by the National Synod of 1875, the appeal for the College chapel was launched on 17 March 1876. Bishop McGettigan of Armagh suggested that *'the feeling is universal as to the necessity of making a great effort for the College'.²* However, owing to local reasons, collections took place in fifteen dioceses only. The remainder were postponed until the following year. In his annual report to the Trustees of Maynooth College, President C. W. Russell stated that *'A most anxious desire has been manifested by all, to promote in every possible way, the success of what clergy and people unite in recognising as a most fitting subject of national piety'.³* The amount subscribed in 1876 was £15,000 of which £13,000 was received. President Russell (the fund-raiser of this great appeal) was thrown from his horse in 1877. He received grave injuries from which he never fully recovered. The loss of Russell was detrimental to the

¹ Cal. 1878, Appendix

² Jeremiah Newman, *Maynooth and Victorian Ireland* (Dublin, 1983) p. 226

³ MCA 132/1, Report of 1876

appeal. It did not prevent progress in the construction of the chapel. Nevertheless, no further collections took place that year.⁴ At their meeting in October 1877, the Trustees authorised a new collection for the chapel as the existing fund was exhausted.

The Trustees became particularly anxious over the dioceses from which contributions had not been made. They urged collections to be made at the earliest convenience *'in order to provide payments to the builder, without drawing from the general funds of the College'*.⁵ It was suggested that the students of the College take an active part in the fund-raising for the College chapel - by soliciting small subscriptions to the fund and by means of collection cards.⁶ Concern was mounting as to how the chapel would be funded alternatively as diocesan collections gradually waned. The solution reached was that of a particularly perturbed group of men. The following is an entry of the minutes of the October board in 1878: *'resolved; that the Trustees authorise such overdraw of their account at the Bank of Ireland as may be required to meet the instalments that become due to the contractor for the College chapel in the interim between the present day (16 October 1878) and the next meeting in June 1879'*.⁷

But in the meantime, on 1 November 1878, a large section of St. Mary's building had been destroyed by fire. It had been well insured with the Sun Insurance Company. Compensation for its rebuilding amounted to £9,300. It was subsequently arranged that instead of overdrawing their account, the Trustees should rather borrow from the compensation fund. In his 1879 report to the College Trustees, Vice President William Walsh expressed solicitude over the increasing financial demands. He felt that financial pressures would likely be incurred as a result of diverted insurance capital.⁸ But, as the chapel building began to show its promised 'worthiness', the issue was shelved.

⁴ See Patrick Corish, Maynooth College 1795 - 1995 (Dublin, 1995) pp. 192 -3

⁵ MCA, B2/1/1, 473

⁶ See *Ibid.*

⁷ MCA, B3/11/1

⁸ See MCA 132/1, Report of 1879

Henceforth, the Trustees concerned themselves with fitting out the interior of the chapel. In his President's report of 1880, William Walsh stated *'No doubt the experience of the past justifies us in looking forward with confidence to the expenditure eventually of large sums, the gifts of generous donors, for the completion of the church, including its decoration on a scale worthy of our National College...as regards the sum required for internal fittings....that £8,000 or at most £9,000 will be amply sufficient'*.⁹ The solution employed a reiteration of the resolution adopted by the Trustees in 1878 and reaffirmed in 1879. A temporary overdraft of the Trustees account at the Bank of Ireland *'until such time as the circumstances of the country are sufficiently improved to justify the holding of the collections in those dioceses in which they have not been held'*.¹⁰ The resolution was carried out and the overdraft was granted.

By 1882, diocesan collections and individual donations were dwindling. The financial disposition of the church was one of growing instability and indebtedness. *'The total amount for which the bank account has been overdrawn is £12,485 3s 10d'*¹¹ The anxiety expressed by the Trustees in 1882 is evident by the modes of collection which they proposed on 5 October 1882. It was resolved that *'two or more clergymen be selected by the Trustees and commissioned to collect funds in America and Australia for completion of the College chapel'*.¹² Outstanding diocesan collections were to be completed by the end of the year. But none of this bore fruit. The necessity to make some provision for payment of interest on the overdrawn account, known as the 'Trustees account No. 2', in the Bank of Ireland was met with much hesitation.¹³ However, President Walsh pushed the issue into the front line of affairs and effectively stated *'If some provision cannot be made the result cannot fail to*

⁹ MCA 132/2, Report of 1880

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² MCA, B2/1/2, 535

¹³ See MCA 132/2, Report of 1882

*be disastrous for the College*¹⁴ This seemingly great peril to the financial position of the College urged the Trustees to take immediate action on the issue. At their meeting on 2 July 1884, the Trustees resolved *'that the church debt to the Bank of Ireland with heavy interest accruing thereon should be got rid of ...and... that the new schemes proposed should be adopted'*.¹⁵ One of the proposed measures involved the selling out of as much stock standing as would meet the debt on the College chapel. Dr. Walsh was then charged with the *'organisation of collections for completion of the church and authorised to employ the services of students for such purposes'*.¹⁶ Another strict measure involved the assessment of each diocese in proportion to the number of free places it enjoyed in the College. Concern over free places assessment was heatedly debated throughout the following years.¹⁷

The allocation of the cost, by the 'free places assessment' of each diocese was based on the following principles. The base amount of the charge incurred by the College on the score of the College chapel was £30,575 14s 7d. The total amount of free places on the public foundation of the College was 250. By dividing the base amount by 250, each diocese was charged with £122 6s for each free place it possessed. Credit was given to each diocese who had contributed in any way to the Building Fund. Interest was to be charged at 4.7% on the balance of each diocese until the balance was paid off. A temporary withdrawal of free places or portions of free places was to be levied on the dioceses - pending the payment of the amount thus due. Temporary curtailment of free places was to take effect from the opening of the academic year of 1885. It was pointed out that the liability borne by each diocese could be discharged by any of the following modes;

- (a) by a reduction in the amount of diocesan free places. The value of such places were estimated at £30 per year,

¹⁴ MCA 132/2, Report of 1884

¹⁵ MCA, B2/1/2, 556

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See Patrick Corish, *Maynooth College 1795 - 1995* (Dublin 1995) pp 194 -5

- (b) by payment from the diocese of its remaining liability, or
- (c) by annual payment from the diocese of the amount of the annual charge.¹⁸

An amendment was proposed by the Bishop of Clonfert at the meeting of the Trustees on 2 July 1884, that *'the scheme be not accepted, but that all donations be applied to wiping out the debt of £13,000 and that to this effect, the President, as was the original intent of Russell, take means to meet the debt by applying in person to the Catholic people of Ireland'*.¹⁹ The amendment was lost and the original resolution was carried. The Trustees may have hoped that the third method of dioceses discharging their liability would be regarded preferable to even a temporary reduction in the number of free places in the College.²⁰

By 1885, little progress seems to have been made in the light of improving the financial position of the church fund. The President, William Walsh, was appointed Archbishop of Dublin in the summer of 1885. His period as organiser of diocesan collections since the previous summer had been limited indeed. At their June meeting in 1886, the Trustees resolved that *'an earnest effort be made to enable the supervisors of the College to open the new church with the least possible delay - that in those dioceses in which no collection has, as yet, been made, each Bishop undertakes to provide, by collections and donations, as far as possible before the next June Board, such portion of this sum as may fall to his share, taking the scale adopted for allotting free places in the College as the basis of calculation'*.²¹ A clause was added to this resolution which prevented the number of free places to be diminished, nor was there any diminution of the capital standing to the credit of each diocese in the College funds.²²

¹⁸ See MCA 132/2, Special letter of Walsh to Trustees, 16 December 1884

¹⁹ MCA, B2/1/2, 557

²⁰ See MCA, B2/1/2, 549

²¹ MCA, B2/1/2, 581

²² See MCA 132/3, Report of 1888

The interior of the College had yet to be funded. It had been established by the Building Committee that a sum of £6,000 was required for this purpose. September of 1886 saw the production of a circular to each bishop indicating the amount chargeable to each diocese. It was made clear by the Trustees that College funds would not be made available in any mode or fashion in order to bridge deficiencies in the College collections.²³ The response to the appeal of 1886 was satisfactory, but not all the money promised was subscribed. The Trustees decided thereupon, to overdraw 'Account No. 1' to a sum not exceeding £5,000.²⁴ The October meeting of 1887 resolved that '*the church committee enter contracts for the completion of the new church in accordance with the plans and specifications of Mr. Hague, the architect, and to make payments to contractors and architect from the church fund, within the limits of £6,000 sterling*'.²⁵ On 12 October 1887, the President, the Vice-President, Bursar and assistant Bursar reported to the Trustees on diocesan accounts. Their report expressed satisfaction with the church fund, '*During the year ended 30 June 1887, many Bishops paid back the entire amount from the College capital. Many others paid in part and promise to clear off the balance still due at the earliest opportunity*'.²⁶ Yet, at the end of 1887, the church fund had slipped into a debit balance.

New measures to obtain funds were once again adopted by the Trustees in 1888. The recently appointed President, Robert Browne, was authorised to ask students to collect small sums by way of collection cards, during the summer vacation. The President was also authorised to appoint and send out collectors for the new chapel fund. It was resolved by the Trustees on 9 October 1888 that '*the Bishops who have not yet paid in full the proportion of*

²³ See Patrick Corish, *Maynooth College 1795 - 1995* (Dublin, 1995) p. 195

²⁴ See MCA, B2/1/2, 559

²⁵ MCA, B2/1/2, 559

²⁶ B3/12/1

the £6,000 ... pay the balance due by them....before Christmas'.²⁷ Such a resolution highlights clearly the perplexed nature of the Trustees over the church fund.

In his report of 1888 to 1889, President Browne informed the Trustees of the College of the state of the church completion fund. *'Out of the £6,000 promised by the Bishops in June 1886, I have received £4,364 7s 5d which still leaves a great balance due. Of the amount received, I have paid out £4,179 7s 1d ...chiefly to the contractors*'.²⁸ President Browne discussed at length the distressed state of the church fund. He stated *'within the last three years or so, we have saved for the College £3,000.....Up to the present, the College has made no contribution to the building of the College church. It can do so now to the extent of £3,000, without diminishing or interfering with free places*'.²⁹ The Trustees approved Dr. Browne's solution and the £3,000 was granted to the fund.³⁰ But one year later, *'In view of worsening general finances, the Trustees declared that they had meant it only as a loan, to be repaid when diocesan arrears came in*'³¹, thereby throwing the fund into total disarray.

The dioceses in arrears continued to come under attack throughout the 1890's. The chapel was consecrated on 5 June 1891. In his speech on this occasion, Most Rev. Dr. Healy attributed the erection of the chapel to the people of Ireland; *'This is not the consecration of a mere parochial church or even a diocesan cathedral, it is the consecration of a national temple...This day will be a monument for ages....for it is significant of the deep faith and generous piety of the people*'.³² However, the account for the completion of the work was not yet closed. The Bishops who had not already paid up their assessments for the chapel fund were urged to do so, at their earliest possible convenience. The Trustees met on 24 June

²⁷ MCA, B2/1/2, 612

²⁸ MCA 132/3, Report of 1889

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ MCA, B2/1/2, 615

³¹ Patrick Corish, *Maynooth College 1795 - 1995* (Dublin, 1995) p. 196

³² Freeman's Journal, 25 June 1891

1891, and it was resolved *'that we again request the Bishops who have not as yet paid up their assessments for the completion of the College chapel, to do so, without further unnecessary delay, so that the account for completion works may be closed and that it may not become necessary to charge the defalcations to the free places of their diocese'*.³³ In June of 1893, as President Browne awaited still the defaulting dioceses to forward their contributions, he stated that the church fund, while exhausted, was not in deficit³⁴.

In the years leading up to the centenary of the founding of Maynooth College, the Trustees considered a memorial to mark the occasion, *'It is but natural that such an event should have a memorial...The form of which is to assume that of a tower and spire in connection with the College church, already one of the glories of Ireland'*.³⁵ Not alone would it complete the College chapel in its entirety, it was to serve as a thank offering to God for his providential care of the College. As in the case of the chapel building, the tower and spire were to be erected by means of a public subscription. The appeal for the Centenary Memorial was conducted effectively. In a pastoral letter, signed by Bishops of Ireland, to the clergy, secular and regular, and to the faithful laity in October 1895, the memorial petition was launched. It was read out in all the churches of Ireland on Sunday, 27 October 1895, *'to induce the priests and people of Ireland to contribute liberally for so holy a purpose'*.³⁶ The letter was perfectly doctored to beseech every Christian heart to contribute to the fund. It contained the following extracts; *'Maynooth has never appealed to the public, except for the building and completion of its chapel. For this last appeal for a people's gift, a Catholic nation's offering, every effort should be made that it may be a success. As every parish in this country has been served by priests educated in Maynooth, the appeal for aid to complete*

³³ MCA, B2/1/2, 640

³⁴ See Patrick Corish, *Maynooth College 1795 - 1995* (Dublin, 1995) p. 193

³⁵ Freeman's Journal, 28 October 1895

³⁶ MCA 132/4, Report of 1896



the House of God in the educational centre of the priesthood, should find a generous response in each of the 27 dioceses of Ireland',

'Until the tower and spire have been erected, the beautiful College must in some respect compare unfavourably with many parochial churches in our towns and rural districts'

*'Hearts will begin to feel some glow of the ardent love of the royal psalmist when he cried out 'O, Lord, I have loved the beauty of thy house and the place where thy glory dwelleth' (ps. Xxvi. 6).'*³⁷

However, the fund did not accumulate as quickly as had been anticipated. The whole amount received in response to the appeal in 1896 did not exceed £2,400. In a finance report presented to the Trustees in 1896, the signatories stated *'little more can be expected by way of individual contributions...and if the project is not to be abandoned altogether, diocesan collections will have to be organised'*.³⁸ The recently appointed President, Denis Gargan, implored the Trustees to organise a collection in the 1,083 parishes around Ireland. The Trustees overlooked his petition.³⁹ President Gargan conveyed growing apprehension in his report of 1897. He was slightly pessimistic over the prospect of the addition of the spire to the College chapel. He sensed that the building of a tower and spire was being indefinitely postponed as chapel funds had not exceeded £100 in 1897.⁴⁰

Eventually, in October 1897, Gargan announced to the Trustees that he wished to take sole responsibility of the fund-raising. The Trustees granted their consent, under a number of conditions. They authorised Gargan to organise parish collections only with the permission of the parish priest. They introduced a contract bond. Effectively, the architect was to divide his plan into three sections, so that construction could be stopped after any section was

³⁷ Freeman's Journal, 28 October 1895

³⁸ MCA, 132/4, Report of 1897

³⁹ See Patrick Corish, *Maynooth College 1795 - 1995* (Dublin, 1995) p.271

⁴⁰ MCA, 132/4, Report of 1897

completed. The contract for execution of the work was commissioned on 12 October 1898. The tender of Mr. William Hague as supervising architect was accepted. The precautions aforementioned did not discourage Gargan. At the age of 80 years he forged ahead with his ardent desire of completing the College chapel.⁴¹ At a meeting of the Maynooth union, 22 June 1899, Very Rev. Canon Howley, P.P., stated that *'the completion of the College chapel has far reaching consequences in the country...and that...he who had taken up this important work, was safe in relying upon the help of the priests and people of Ireland in carrying it out'*⁴² On the same occasion, his Eminence, Cardinal Logue, admitted that he had been moved to double his subscription, owing to the merits of *'the venerable President of the College, throwing himself into the collection of funds for the tower outside a task which he might, without reproach, have left to younger men'*⁴³ He assuredly added *'If the priests and people took this important matter up, they could carry it to a speedy completion'*⁴⁴ But, such contributions were not entirely collected. In June 1901, it became necessary to borrow an additional £3,000 to complete the work. *'Dr. Gargan succeeded in securing the Trustees permission to borrow...in the face of very strong opposition - a qualified amendment to the resolution was defeated on a division'*⁴⁵ The loan eased, but did not erase, the crippling debit balance on the church completion account.

In June 1902, the financial position of the church fund was severely threatening. President Gargan reported that the amount collected and borrowed on Trustee security was £14,361 9s 5d. The sum paid out was £13,885 9s 10d. Further payments were due to the contractor and architect which amounted to £900. But only £476 remained in hand to meet such claims. Gargan also reported that the interest accruing on the £6,000 advance, by the

⁴¹ See Ibid.

⁴² Cal. 1899, Appendix

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Denis Meehan, Window on Maynooth (Dublin, 1949) p.122

Hibernian bank, on Trustee security at 3.5% was to be taken seriously into account. He stressed the urgency for a collection in each parish in order to meet the rising demands, but the Trustees refused the imposition of a collection. In view of the challenging debts which had previously faced the College chapel and the measures employed in their elimination, the Trustees resolved not to touch the free places in the College in order to finance the tower and spire.⁴⁶

The tower and spire were complete in 1902. *'Dr. Gargan was not destined to rejoice for very long in the contemplation of what he achieved'*.⁴⁷ Before his death on 26 August 1903, Dr. Gargan petitioned the Trustees once again for a small diocesan collection *'for payment of the inevitable debt that remains undischarged'*.⁴⁸ Permission was refused to carry out the petition. Although debts remained to be eliminated by his successor, President Gargan gave wondrous energy in his old age to complete the College chapel. He was not like *'the man in the gospel who undertook to build a tower without sitting down and calculating whether or not he had the means to venture on it. He made the calculation....He is part of the means himself'*.⁴⁹

After appointment to Presidency of the College in 1903, Daniel Mannix set about to eliminate such debts. In his first annual report of 1904, Mannix stated that the debt upon the College chapel, as it stood, was £5,820 8s 11d. The Trustees authorised Mannix to complete a report in which the debt (incurred in completing the church) was allotted to each diocese in proportion to the number of free places it possessed in the College. The contribution of each diocese to date was noted. The President then contacted Bishops individually. The Trustees ensured against the obligation of any Bishop to sacrifice his free places.⁵⁰ The President's

⁴⁶ See MCA, 132/4, Report of 1902

⁴⁷ Denis Meehan, Window on Maynooth (Dublin, 1949) p.122

⁴⁸ MCA, 132/4, Report of 1902

⁴⁹ Cal. 1899, 184

⁵⁰ See MCA, 132/5, Report of 1904

Report of 1905 carried good news. The response of the defaulting dioceses had been generally 'prompt and generous'. The debts incurred in the previous years were significantly reduced. *'Whatever was left of the debt in the end - a small amount- seems to have been absorbed into the general liabilities of the College'*⁵¹

The funding of the College chapel, as can be seen, was a long and anxious journey for the five Presidents. They were met with the investment portfolio and the burden of debts, upon their appointments to presidency. It is owing primarily to their involvements, their appeals and their great enthusiasm to which the College chapel can attribute its erection. Indeed, the Boards of Trustees contributed much to the investments and involvements of the College chapel. But it cannot go without mentioning the general public of Ireland. They were the College chapel's main contributors. It is to the aforementioned people (through their generous investments and involvements) that all those who attend Maynooth College chapel today are eternally indebted.

⁵¹

Patrick Corish, Maynooth College 1795 - 1995 (Dublin, 1995) p. 196

Chapter Three

Experimentation and Achievement

*'There, in the soft green plains stretching out in undulating beauty from the foot of the ancient castle of the Geraldines, has been raised a stately edifice to the service of God, for the training in the mystic ceremonies of the Catholic Church of the young aspirants to the ceremony'*¹ The construction of this stately edifice involved a period of twenty-eight years, 1874 to 1902. The project was launched in the spring of 1874 by President C.W. Russell. On 14 October 1874, a Building Committee was appointed to supervise the project. This committee superintended the entire construction from its beginning to its end.²

The building committee appointed J.J. McCarthy, R.H.A., Pugin's Irish architectural heir, as architect for the church on 20 January 1875. It is evident that *'Even as a young man, McCarthy's work was of high standard'*³ The Trustees knew that they had found a constructive genius in McCarthy. *'It is to the experience of J.J. McCarthy, to whom the architectural renaissance of the church is so largely indebted, for labours which have won him high distinction and a strong claim to public gratitude'*⁴ At the request of the building committee, McCarthy submitted plans for approval during Lent 1875. In his annual report to the Trustees of that same year, Dr. Russell described the main features of McCarthy's plan: *'The eastern end terminated in a pentagonal apse, in which the high altar stood under a canopy; from the side of the pentagon behind the altar projected the lady chapel and from the four sides radiated viz. of the Sacred Heart, of St. Joseph, of St. Bridget and of St.*

¹ Freeman's Journal, 25 June 1891

² See MCA, B2/1/1, 439

³ Brian de Breffny and George Mott, The Churches and Abbeys of Ireland (London, 1976) p. 158

⁴ Cal. 1880, 137

Columba'.⁵ McCarthy's designs were unanimously accepted by the committee. Before they were finally approved some modifications were made, such as the addition of a parapet. The tender of Thomas Hammond and Son was accepted for execution of the project. The foundation stone was laid on 10 October 1875.

The site chosen was on *'the northern side of the new square, at its eastern extremity, was that selected by Pugin with a view to orientation'*.⁶ The contractor arrived at the beginning of March 1876. No actual progress was made until the month of May owing to the wetness of the spring months and the consequent flooding of the quarry.⁷ A progress report by the late clerk of works, Charles McCormack, dated 10 October 1876 noted that *'the trenches for the church and church cloister foundations were opened to a depth of nine feet at the west end and to ten feet six inches at the apse - having found compact gravel at the following depths'*.⁸ McCormack reported also that the masonry of foundations was practically complete. The following materials were used in the building of 1876; 500 tons of rubble stone, 150 ton of caen stone, 50 tons of Portland stone and 1,000 feet cube cut limestone. The masonry was obtained from the College quarry and the limestone from a quarry owned by Hammond, near Athy. McCormack stated that *'the contracts have worked the College quarry to a depth of 37 feet'*.⁹ The masonry used in the walls corresponded in character with that of the rest of the College. *'The broken ashlar having finely tooled dressings of grey limestone ... contrast well with the blue tinted limestone facing walls'*.¹⁰ The interior was lined with caen stone.

⁵ MCA, 132/1, Report of 1875

⁶ John Healy, Maynooth College. Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895 (Dublin, 1885) p. 637

⁷ See Patrick Corish, Maynooth College 1795 - 1995 (Dublin, 1995) p. 191

⁸ MCA, 102/18/1

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ John Healy, Maynooth College. Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895 (Dublin, 1885) p. 638

The dimensions alone make the College chapel an impressive work of architecture. The foundations average 10 feet deep by 7 feet wide. Invert arches were built under the cloister, chapel and church arches. The chapel dimensions are as follows;

length from west wall to east wall of lady chapel = 220 ft 0'

width of the church = 40 ft

all the walls of the church = 3 ft 6' thick from floors to roof

height of church interior from floor to ceiling = 70 ft

height of church exterior from level of ground to ridge of roof = 98 ft¹¹

The chapel is deceptive from a glance at its exterior. It does not have a nave, but rather a large choir, of 454 stalls. From the exterior the *'impression of a church having a nave and aisles with clerestory windows of great height and width, occupying the space usually allotted to the clerestory and triforium. But what of the aisles however are lateral cloisters formed in arched buttresses and are connected at their western extremities with a vestibule'*.¹²

The style of the architecture is known as 'Decorative Gothic' of the early fourteenth century, *'a little more ornate than that of the College but harmonising with it'*.¹³ The style employed by Pugin was 'Geometric Gothic' of the thirteenth century. The gothic style adopted by McCarthy was more elaborate than that of the adjoining buildings. In his book (1895), Healy points out the features of French Gothic architecture in the College chapel. The rose window in the western gable is a fine echo of the glory of French Cathedrals. Such windows in the English Gothic are generally found in the transepts. The apsidal eastern termination was common in Norman times, but since, was replaced by a square termination. The most striking feature is the fine rose window over the western portal, an exquisite

¹¹ MCA, 102/18/1

¹² John Healy, *Maynooth College. Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895* (Dublin, 1895) p. 638

¹³ MCA, 132/1, Report of 1875

specimen of geometrical tracery.¹⁴ It seems that McCarthy employed much of the same style in his designs of churches and cathedrals throughout Ireland. He was criticised for his use of French Gothic architecture. In 1858, Murphy & Son, Dublin, accused McCarthy of *'decorating the gable of St. Saviours Church, Dublin.....with a poor window from St. Clotildes at Paris'*. Yet McCarthy continued his work undisturbed. Many churches throughout Ireland bear striking resemblance in their features to that of Maynooth College chapel. St. Saviour's Catholic Church, Dublin, St. Macartan's Cathedral at Monaghan, Thurles Cathedral and Sts. Peter and Paul Parish Church, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick all have a rose window on their western extremities, designed by McCarthy. Their exteriors, which have rich carvings, just avoid being over ornate and their naves, if existing, are very high.¹⁵ The chapel differs considerably from the one projected by Pugin, but *'as a specimen of French Gothic architecture, nothing could be better and the pleasing effect has been gained without in the slightest degree taking away from the religious aspect of the sacred building which is well proportioned and elegant'*.¹⁶

President C.W. Russell, the man responsible for inaugurating the project, died in 1880. His death did not affect construction of the chapel. In fact, William Walsh stated *'to the many reasons which we deplore Dr. Russell's death, we shall not be obliged to add to the postponement of the completion of our College church'*.¹⁷ The building was in its final stages when the architect, J.J. McCarthy, was incapacitated by illness. His son, Charles, took charge of the project. He issued the final architects certificate.¹⁸ On 22 May 1882, construction of the chapel exterior was complete.

¹⁴ See John Healy, Maynooth College. Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895 (Dublin, 1895) pp 637 - 8

¹⁵ See Brian de Breffny and George Mott, The Churches and Abbeys of Ireland (London, 1976) pp 160 - 172

¹⁶ Freeman's Journal, 25 June 1891

¹⁷ MCA, 132/2 Report of 1880

¹⁸ See MCA, 101/9

Owing to a shortage of finance, furnishing of the interior did not begin for some time. In his President's Report of 1880, William Walsh suggested that a sum of about £8,000 to £9,000 would be necessary to provide the internal fittings of the chapel. He stated *'No doubt, the experience of the past justifies us in looking forward with confidence to the expenditure eventually of large sums, the gifts of generous donors for the final completion of the church, including its decoration on a scale worthy of the national College.'*¹⁹ It seems that the President's assertion of potential funds didn't not live long. The financial position of the College plummeted in the following years. However, the Trustees gained a new confidence with the free places assessment scheme proposed in 1884. Consequently, donations and contributions to the church fund improved. In July on 1884, *'Dr. Walsh was charged with organising collections for the completion of the church.'*²⁰ There exists little evidence to suggest that much progress was made before the summer of 1885, when William Walsh was appointed Archbishop of Dublin. Completion of the church interior was passed into the capable hands of the new College President, Robert Browne. Most of the interior decorating and furnishing was executed under his presidency, (1885 - 1894). *'The transformation achieved... is a tribute to his persistence and indeed to his taste.'*²¹

A general meeting of Bishops was held at Maynooth on 8 September 1886. It was resolved that *'a sum of £6,000 be collected...for providing at least what is absolutely necessary, such as flooring, halls, altars and such for the opening of the new church.'*²² Designs for completion of the church interior were invited and were to be selected by competition. The architect commissioned to finish the work was William Hague, Esq., (the architect responsible for rebuilding St. Mary's building after the fire of 1878).

¹⁹ MCA, 132/2, Report of 1880

²⁰ MCA, 132/2, Special letter of Walsh to the Trustees, 16 December 1884

²¹ Patrick Corish, Maynooth College 1795 - 1995 (Dublin, 1995) p.194

²² MCA, 132/3, Report of 1888

*The unity of style, so conspicuous in the exterior, has been religiously preserved, even in the minutest details: and the temptation to exuberant ornament, in which the nature of the material to be worked on sometimes induces artists to indulge, has been carefully avoided.*²³ The chapel interior is basically one large choir. It was designed, and has been used, for choral ceremonies only. The theme of its decoration is the praise of God.

The most striking feature of the College chapel is its carved oak stalls. They are arranged in four tiers on either side of the central passage. There are 454 choir stalls in all. It is little wonder that *Maynooth College Chapel is reputed to be the largest stilled chapel in the world.*²⁴ Ornamental carving covers the wall framing behind the stalls. The arms of the Irish dioceses are carved on shields, in alternate panels of wall framing. At intervals along the wall are carved oak figures, representing biblical characters. A carved pulpit occupies the most part of one such interval. It is entered by a separate doorway on the south cloister. It has been suggested that the woodwork in the chapel may have been carved by the Moonan family from Ardee, Co. Louth.²⁵

*An essential element in the internal decoration of a Gothic Church is stained glass in the windows - the crowning invention of Gothic artists.*²⁶ As the College chapel does not have a triforium, stained glass windows were essential to its decoration. The College launched a courageous appeal in 1888. Private donations were invited to provide the chapel with stained glass windows. Response to the appeal was good. Within three years, the donated windows were installed. The firms of Cox, Buckley and Sons, Westlake and Mayer and Co supplied the windows.²⁷ The choir windows are uniform in character. Their theme portrays scenes from the Life of Our Lord (in chronological order) in the main panels. These scenes

²³ John Healy, *Maynooth College, Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895* (Dublin, 1895), p. 640

²⁴ Jeremiah Newman, *Maynooth College* (Dublin, 1948), p.7

²⁵ See Patrick Corish, *Maynooth College 1795 - 1995* (Dublin, 1995) pp 200 - 01

²⁶ John Healy, *Maynooth College, Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895* (Dublin, 1895), p. 640

²⁷ See MCA, 101/3,11,13, correspondence of the College with the firms of Cox, Buckley and Sons, Westlake and Mayer and Co.

correspond to scenes from the Old Testament in the upper lights of the windows. Directly above the High Altar are three windows which depict the principal mysteries of the Life of Our Lord. As referred to previously, the rose window in the western gable is extremely fine. It is best studied in the evening as the '*coloured rays stream through its countless openings...It contains in the centre, Our Saviour crowned and seated on a throne, surrounded by cherubim. The right hand, on which is visible the mark of the nail, is uplifted, and in the left he carries a globe, surmounted by a cross - a symbol of the world which He has saved by it.*'²⁸ In the inner ring are Archangels, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist and the four evangelists. In the outer ring are the Apostles and the Prophets.

The ceiling is a network of panels in painted medallions on canvas. They are attached to a wooden ceiling. Each panel has its own singular detail. Together, they depict a heavenly procession towards the altar, led by Angels, the Queen of the Angels, St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist and Irish Saints. Over the main door to the chapel are the guardian angels of youth. The paintings on the ceiling were designed by Westlake. Their finishing ornamentation and their fitting was executed by an Irish artist called Robert Mannix.²⁹ The life size Stations of the Cross in the chapel are undeniably remarkable. They appear as frescoes, but in reality are oil paintings on canvasses attached to the wall. The Stations of the Cross are arranged in panels of great size, with ornamental borders. They also were designed and supplied by Westlake.³⁰ The detailed magnificence of the College chapel is greatly emphasised by its marble mosaic pavement. The patterned flooring extends throughout the whole chapel. The psalm *Laudate Peuri Dominium* is inscribed in circular patterns all along the central approach to the altar.³¹

²⁸ John Healy, *Maynooth College. Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895* (Dublin, 1895) p.642

²⁹ See MCA, 101/10,13, correspondence of the College with Mannix and Westlake

³⁰ See Ibid.

³¹ See Denis Meehan, *Window on Maynooth* (Dublin, 1949) p. 115

The five side chapels which radiate from the eastern end of the chapel, were constructed between the buttresses of the apse. They are richly ornamented, especially the central chapel, dedicated to Our Lady. Blue is the predominant colour in this chapel. There is uniformity of decoration in the other four chapels. Indeed, all of the chapels are *'simple and graceful in design and excellent in finish.'*⁶²

Over a period of six years, Robert Browne transformed the chapel into one worthy of exaltation, (see Plate 3). *'The interior, solemn and dignified, without being oppressive, is a fitting complement to McCarthy's superb building.'*⁶³ At their meeting on 5 June 1890, the Trustees of the College declared the chapel open for use.⁶⁴ On this special day, Dr. William Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, blessed the building. On 24 June 1890, the first ceremonies took place in the chapel with ordinations to the priesthood.

The solemn consecration of the College chapel took place on 24 June 1891. It was termed *'The greatest day in the history of the College since its foundation stone was laid on 20 April 1796.'*⁶⁵ The Freeman's Journal reported the following *'There was nothing that could add impressiveness or solemnity to the occasion lacking, and the assemblage of the Archbishops, Bishops and Priests of Ireland gathered together in as beautiful a church as any that has been erected since the renaissance of our people made a fit subject for a historical painting....the new College chapel...is in every way a credit to the artistic skill and the ornate taste of the Irish people.'*⁶⁶ The Trustees met on 13 October 1892. It was resolved that *'care of the College chapel be henceforth undertaken by the College authorities as is done with all other Colleges.'*⁶⁷ There was no shortage of praise for the College chapel since its consecration. In April 1891, Cardinal Logue visited Maynooth College. He remarked that

⁶² John Healy, Maynooth College, Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895 (Dublin, 1895) p. 643

⁶³ Brian de Breffny and George Mott, The Churches and Abbeys of Ireland (London, 1976) p. 172

⁶⁴ See MCA, B2/1/2, 630

⁶⁵ Denis Meehan, Windows on Maynooth (Dublin, 1949) p. 121

⁶⁶ Freeman's Journal, 25 June 1891

⁶⁷ MCA, B2/1/2, 662

'Nowhere does the spirit of Maynooth find such eloquent and artistic expression as in its beautiful new chapel. Even in its unfinished condition, this truly noble edifice looks a perfect gem of Gothic Art.....One realised for the first time the grandeur of the Church's ritual and the sublime efficacy of art as the handmaid of religion'.³⁸

1895 marked the centenary year of Maynooth College chapel. *'Cardinal Logue suggested that the tower and spire should be built as a fitting monument to mark the first centenary of the College'.³⁹* It was reported in the Freeman's Journal on 22 October 1895; *'In the plains of our old Kildare, this new spire will arise, "crowned with the sign of our faith", an emblem of national piety to carry Heavenwards the devotion of those youthful hearts that are being purified and trained in the severe discipline of College life'.⁴⁰* This permanent memorial would complete the College chapel. President Gargan, in his report of 1901 to the Trustees remarked *'The erection of a tower and spire....is a solemn thanks offering to God for his providential care of the College'.⁴¹* Funds came in slowly, but nonetheless, the project went ahead.

The supervising architect commissioned on 12 October 1898 again was William Hague, Esq.. The Trustees accepted the offer of Gargan to undertake the collection of such additional funds as with those already in hand. It was hoped that the building would commence before the end of March 1899. Hague followed McCarthy's plan, but with slight variations. As the College were experiencing severe financial difficulties, certain conditions had to be adhered to in Hague's contract. The title for such conditions was a 'contract bond'.

The contractor or builder was bound to suspend, at any stage of the work, continuation of same, on being paid all expenses incurred by him. He was bound to continue the work to the

³⁸ Freeman's Journal, 20 April 1893

³⁹ Micheál Ledwith, *Maynooth College* (Maynooth, 1987) p.12

⁴⁰ Freeman's Journal, 28 October 1895

⁴¹ MCA 132/4, Report of 1901

end, if so required. The President was bound not to make any engagement exceeding the money in hand.⁴² Effectively, work could be stopped after completion of any one of the sections.

Tenders were sought for execution of the work. The firm of Connolly and Son were accepted. Work began on the tower and spire in 1899. *'It might never have been built were it not for the exertions of President Denis Gargan, who threw himself into the task with an energy and single-mindedness that he sustained until his death eight years later, aged eighty four'*⁴³ The anticipations of the pastoral letter of 1895 had been realised. *'From the north west corner of the gothic square, the massive tower almost dwarfs the chapel, and one has to remember that it is primarily a College tower meant to give unity and centralisation to the scattered buildings'*⁴⁴ In 1902, the tower and spire were built and the College chapel was finally complete. *'It is from the surrounding countryside that the full effect of the tapering spire can be appreciated. A refreshing contrast in a land of many squat towers, it stands as a landmark symbol of the cloistral life'*⁴⁵

The experimentation and achievements of the period 1874 to 1902 have manifested themselves in the worthy structure of Maynooth's College chapel. *'Viewed from its entirety, the College chapel must be regarded as a fine specimen of ecclesiastical art - an invaluable treasure in the great educational institution of which it forms so useful a part'*⁴⁶

⁴² MCA, 132/4, Report of 1897

⁴³ Patrick Corish, Maynooth College 1795 - 1995 (Dublin, 1995) p.271

⁴⁴ Denis Meehan, Window on Maynooth (Dublin, 1948) p. 112

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 119

⁴⁶ John Healy, Maynooth College. Its Centenary History 1795 - 1895 (Dublin, 1895) p. 643

Conclusion

The primary concern of this study has been to establish an accountable and contextualised history of Maynooth College chapel. As this subject has not been previously developed to any great degree, the findings of this study are more observative and interpretative than factual. The study has been approached from three main lines of observation; from a political perspective, a socio-economic perspective and from a physiographical perspective.

The first chapter refers to the origins of the College itself. Paying much attention to the years 1845 to 1875, the political relationship between the College and the State is reviewed. It becomes evident that it was the State who exercised full government over the College, since its foundation in 1795. The maintenance of the College and the erection of any additional buildings were the financial responsibility of Parliament. The period in question saw a gradual series of financial concessions to the College. The culmination of which, lay with the Disestablishment of the Church Act, 1869. Through this Act, the College received a lump sum of money in compensation for the cessation of annual grants. When the money became available it appears that a new College chapel was not a priority. However, the want of a chapel large enough to accommodate the growing student body was becoming a vital necessity to the College. The obvious solution, proposed by President C.W. Russell lay in public subscription to a chapel fund. The President threw himself wholeheartedly into the project. J.J. McCarthy was employed as architect for the chapel. The appeal was launched and the response was encouraging. The prospect of a new chapel was met with much enthusiasm on 10 October 1875, with the laying of the chapel's foundation stone.

The second chapter examines the funding of the chapel from 1869 to 1905. It is an attempted assessment of the appeals and indeed the contributions to the chapel fund. As Catholic Ireland had not yet fully recovered from its gruelling famine days, it was a period of economic depression. The collection of the capital required to erect a stately edifice at Maynooth College was a large undertaking. Subscription to the chapel fund was slow. The 1880s saw a lull in contributions. Consequently, serious measures were employed to encourage more contributions. One such measure included the Free Place Assessment of the dioceses of Ireland. Each diocese was expected to contribute to the fund, in proportion to the number of free places they enjoyed at the College. This assessment appears to have been easier to theorise than to enforce. It was met with consternation from several quarters. This chapter elucidates its usage from 1884 to 1905. The great respect paid by Catholic Ireland manifests itself in the many contributions and donations, made to the chapel fund. The roles played by the five Presidents, Russell, Walsh, Browne, Gargan and Mannix are assessed. It is evident that they did much to promote the collection of funds. The financing of a chapel worthy of the College was in experiment in itself. It is owing to the interests and investments of all those involved in the project, which has made the College what it is today - a model of professional excellence.

The third chapter investigates the actual construction of the chapel. It analyses each stage of the construction work from 1874 to 1902. The architectural style employed by J.J. McCarthy and his designs of similar structures is reviewed. A description of the chapel exterior and the chapel interior is presented. The chapter highlights the distinctive features of Maynooth College chapel. Such features included its vast choir stall arrangement, its fine rose window and its five apse chapels. The College held its first ceremonies in the chapel on 24 June 1890. The chapel was consecrated on 24 June 1891. This chapter examines the

construction of the tower and the spire. The tower and spire served as the memorial to mark the first centenary of the College, in 1895. Owing to financial problems, work on the tower and spire did not begin for some time. Its construction took a period of four years and was completed in 1902.

From the perspectives taken in this administrative study, the origins of the chapel have been established. However, there is room for further research on each of the key issues examined. Although the sources used were informative, they lacked coherency. A main part of this study was based on interpretation of source material. I trust that the light which has been shed, by way of this study, will encourage further research into the subject. In order to conclude the study, I offer the following remark; *'The showpiece of the College is, without doubt, the formal chapel, an ambitious building of much splendour, which is in its way symbolic of the final re-establishment of Catholics in Ireland. It is a structure which belongs in a particular manner to the Irish nation.'*

(Meehan, 1949)

Chronology

The reader unacquainted with the period discussed in this study may be assisted in his reading of the text by the following brief chronology of some of the more important events referred to in it;

1795:	Act which founded and endowed Maynooth College.
1845:	Maynooth Act, annual grant increased and £30,000 for repairs.
1860:	Act empowered the Board of Works to make loans available to the Trustees.
1869:	Disestablishment of the Church Act.
1874:	Building Committee appointed.
1875:	J.J. McCarthy appointed as architect of the chapel.
1875:	Foundation stone laid.
1878:	Fire in St. Mary's Building.
1880:	President Russell, R.I.P.
1881:	McCarthy, R.I.P.
1882:	Exterior complete.
1891:	Solemn Consecration
1893:	Work commissioned on tower and spire.
1895:	College centenary.
1902:	Spire completed.
1903:	President Gargan, R.I.P.

Presidencies

C.W. Russell	1857 - 1880
William Walsh	1880 - 1885
Robert Browne	1885 - 1894
Denis Gargan	1894 - 1903
Daniel Mannix	1903 - 1912

Appendix

List of Illustrations

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- Plate 2: McCarthy's earlier plans which include a spire for the chapel, and an Aula Maxima
- Plate 3: A view of the College Chapel interior.
- Plate 4: The full effect of the tapering spire within the surrounding countryside.
- Plate 5: A view of the chapel from its eastern extremity, exhibiting its five apse chapels.
- Plate 6: A view of the chapel from its western extremity, exhibiting its fine rose window, its tower and its spire.



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Plate 2

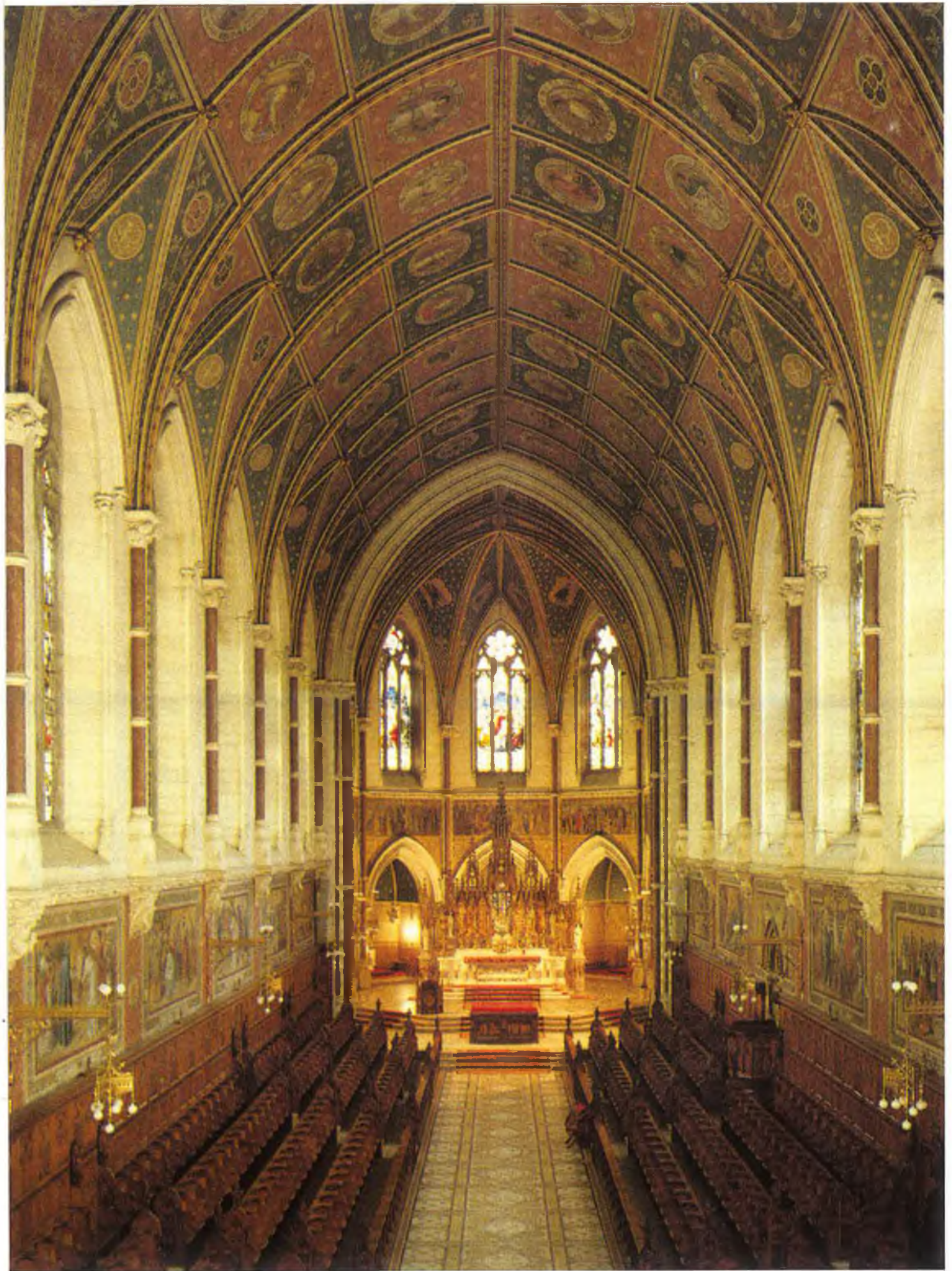


Plate 3

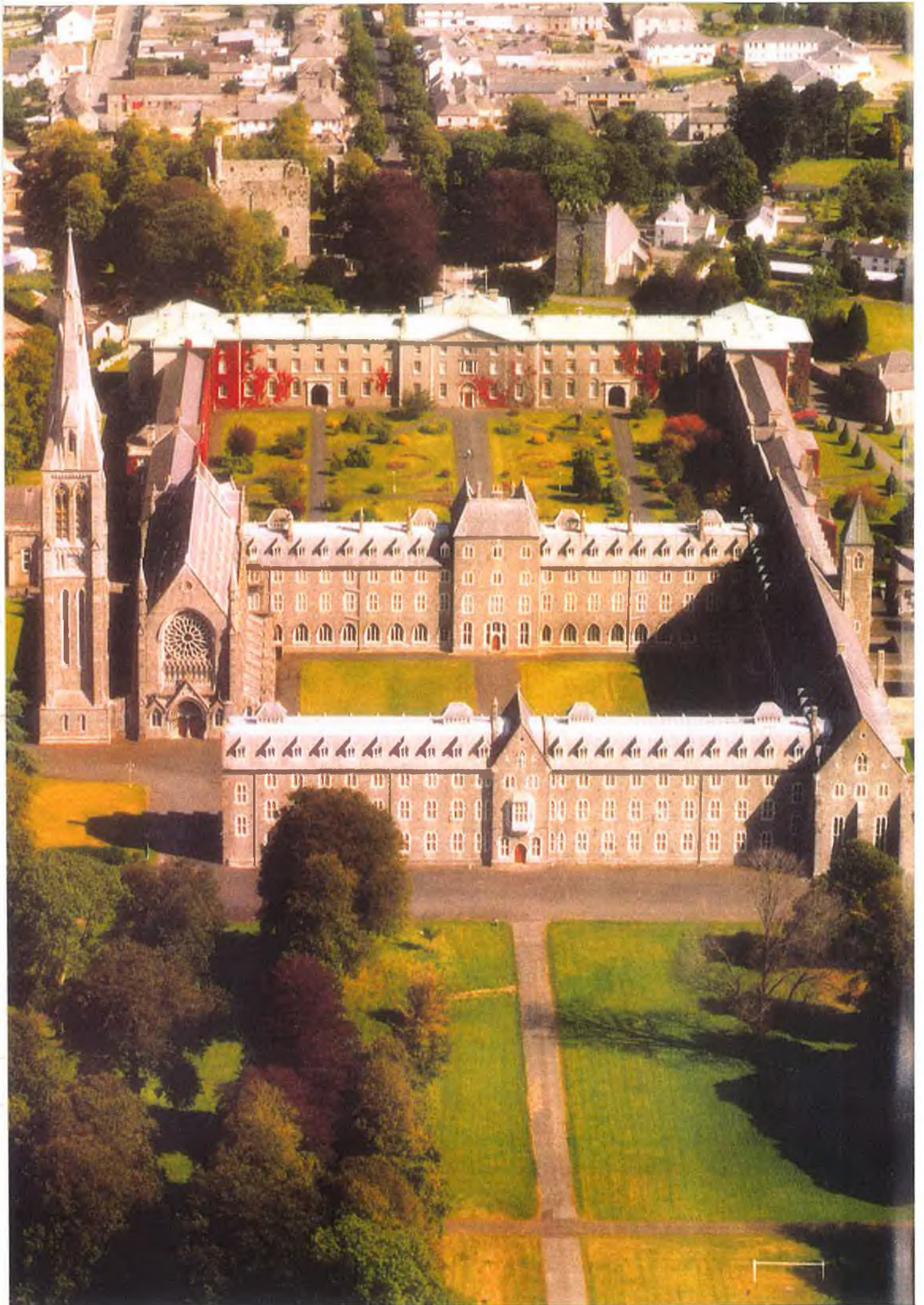


Plate 4





Plate 5

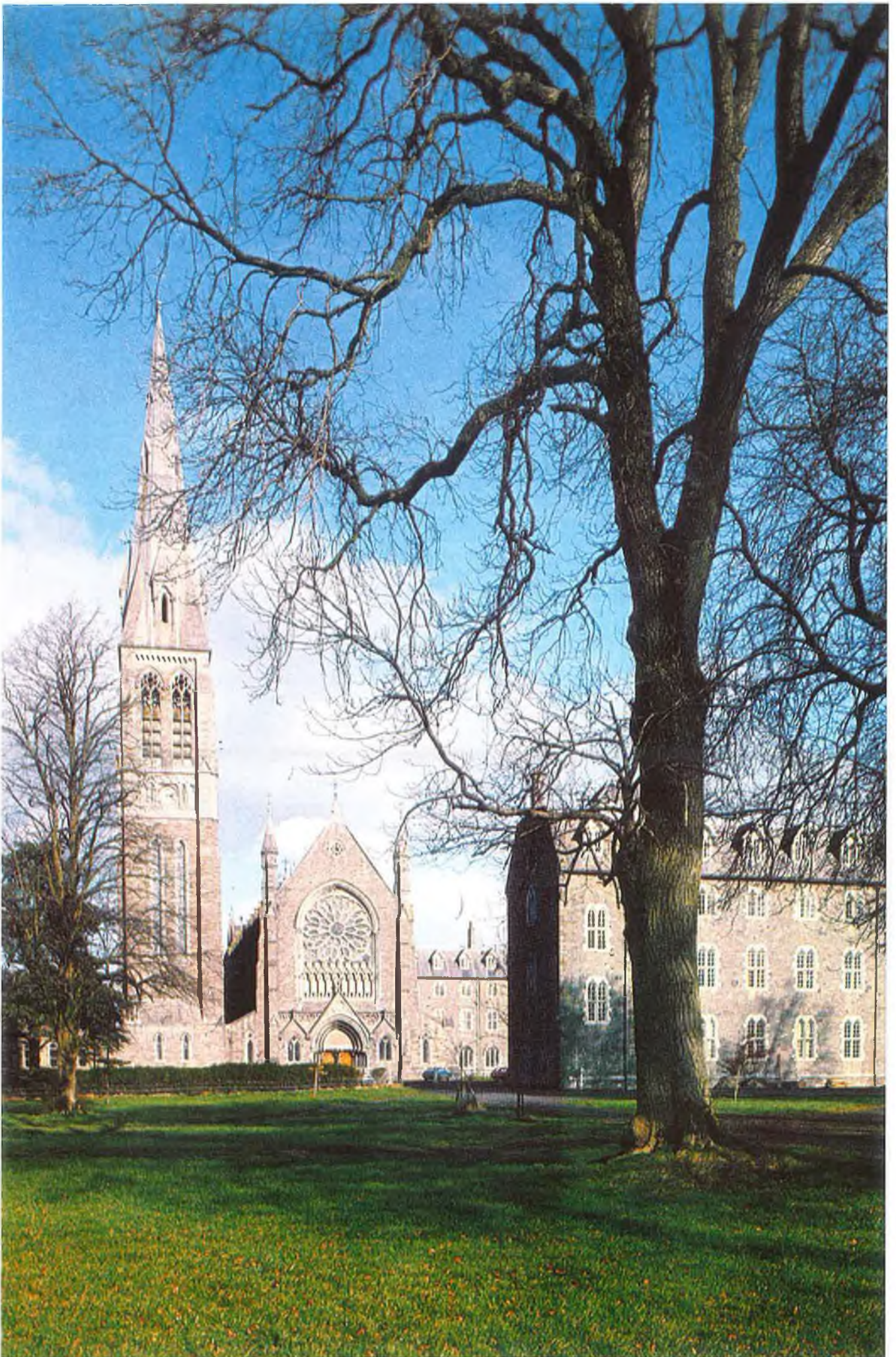


Plate 6

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