Edmund Burke and Trinity College: lifetime ties and later commemoration

Edmund Burke's name looms large in the history of the College, and when in the nineteenth-century, it wished to give its ethos a public face, it chose Burke and Goldsmith, and not others, to stand at its portals on College Green. Strictly speaking Burke, rather like Lecky, another name in the College's panoply of genius, is a figure external to its ongoing life, inevitably so as he never taught there. His subsequent known visits were, very edifyingly mainly to the library, and to Thomas Leland, the senior fellow who most frequently assumed what was at this time the somewhat informal annual officership of librarian. Burke's standing of itself of course would make him a figure to which the College could safely resort, when it felt either vulnerable, or simply wanted to vaunt the greatness of its graduates. He would certainly have shown the College to his son in 1786, but that is a guess, not a documented fact of Burke's brief - and last - visit to Ireland, the sole one that was prompted by personal motives alone. Decided at short notice, it was cut short only because the parliamentary session in London resumed earlier than had been expected. In Irish terms Burke was far to the left of centre. His honorary doctorate at the end of 1790 owed more to the goodwill of its turbulent provost John Hely Hutchinson than to the appeal of Burke's *Reflections on the French revolution* popular with conservatives in both islands, and the carefully-chosen terms of the citation in the College registry are clearly from the pen of the wily Hely Hutchinson and from three decades' knowledge of Burke.

The College, more conservative in the nineteenth century than in the eighteenth, was more comfortable with Burke in the Hist than in the front square and equally outside its portals than inside its walls. In 1897 the centenary of his death seems to have gone officially unnoticed. It was the Hist not the college which commemorated him, and in December not in July, the month of his death. Burke has a small place in the histories of the college, in some of them a surprisingly small one. It was with some exaggeration the Hist, which rescued him for history. The remarkable ***early life of Burke*** **was** compiled by a young man, Arthur P.I. Samuels, auditor of the Hist in 1910. It was near complete by 1914. Tragically killed in the First World War, the work was brought to fruition piously by his father Arthur Warren Samuels, a former M.P. for the College, and in that way father and son brought the Hist and College together.

Burke's loyal provost friend, John Hely Hutchinson, has never been honoured by a Trinity Monday memorial discourse. When the discourses were launched in 1895, four addresses were very properly on the College's great scholarly divines, one on the obscure figure of Thomas Wilson, professor of experimental philosophy. Burke himself abruptly became the subject in 1900, followed surprisingly by Gratan in 1901. As a swelling tide of support for change in higher education was running, accompanied, indeed driven, by a nationalist perception of Trinity as an anti-national institution, the College, no longer comforted by the arguably ill-conceived and ill-

phrased euphoria of its tercentenary celebrations of 1892 fell back in 1900 and 1901 on two politicians with an acceptable face, and on Burke first rather than Grattan.

Becoming more confident that in the complexity of the issues its safety lay and hence finding itself able to live with the early challenges to its character and identity (a situation to which in a different context we are now well-accustomed), the college for its discourses after 1900-01 duly turned back to figures, in their day variously eminent or retiring, from outside politics. It finally plumbed the depths of institutional introspection and repetition in 1938-1944 when De Valera's constitution of 1937 and the neutrality of the war years, seemed to leave the college either as an isolated anachronism or the last crumbling remnant of a rejected Anglo-Ireland. For the years between 1902 and 1950, after which the vigorous brooms of those who with McConnell wrought a new Trinity began to sweep, the only departure from a closed world of discourse was the provostship of Edward Gwynn, 1927-1937, whose efforts to change the ethos of the college and create a rapprochement with the new Ireland merit more recognition than they have received. Burke's birth was commemorated by the college itself in 1928. In the spirit of Gwynn's diffident but committed regime, Burke was the subject of the memorial discourse in 1929, given by Stockley, professor of English; Thomas Davis proved the theme in 1930, Thomas Moore, a catholic student with United Irishman sympathies in 1934, and Henry Flood in 1935. The world that Gwynn had hoped for timidly was finally launched in 1952, and the Trinity Monday discourse in 1951 presciently heralded its onset, given on College's only United Irishman fellow, Whitely Stokes, deprived in the famous visitation in 1798 by Lord Clare of access to senior fellowship. Another United Irishman, Thomas Addis Emmet , was the subject in 1964, and Douglas Hyde in 1976. The College had in little more than two decades crossed several rubicons.

Edmund Burke, like his great friend and admirer, Adam Smith, has suffered the stigma of being paraded as the father of conservatism. Like Smith he is in the good sense of the word subversive, and an unsparing critic of entrenched position and vested interest. The Reflections *on the French revolution* shocked many of his admirers who saw it as out of character with his thought. Burke’s contacts in post-student days were with figures who were innovative, or at some stage of life, were so. Three of them stand out. The first was John Monck Mason; a student contemporary of Burke’s with whom he renewed acquaintance in the early 1760s when Mason was a Member of Parliament. The second was Thomas Leland, elected to fellowship in 1746, in other words during Burke's student days, and who was in the 1760s Burke's closest contact in the College and party to a grand design for the history of Ireland, whose purpose was political as much as scholarly. The third was Hely Hutchinson whom Burke first knew in Hely
Hutchinson's early political career at the outset of the 1760s. In his brief visit in 1786 the provost was one of the first figures that Burke hoped to meet; as it happened, Hely Hutchinson was out of town, the shortened visit made a meeting impracticable and the regrets remain enshrined in prose expressing real feeling and not just conventional loss.

Burke's youth is usually described as obscure in detail. Yet the fact is that we know much of him as an undergraduate, and of the six who joined him in 1747 in founding

the Club, the parent of the future Hist. However, interesting though they are, Burke and his fellow-members stand in total isolation from the student body at large. In a curious way, either the Club provided a training for several students who lacked the charmed backing or social assurance of broad acres, or more probably, as I suspect, the student body itself in its intimate as opposed to rumbustious moments, was chronically cliquish and there were simultaneously several of these societies. The record of this one survives by combination of chance, the genius of its founding figure, and above all Burke's fascination with politics and parliamentary procedure and dedication to writing things down. Sons of landed gentry were absent from this particular little club; we cannot trace at the time his early friendship with Monck Mason, or his acquaintance with Leland, beyond the fleeting observation in 1746 that Leland in the competition for election to fellowship "answered exceedingly well". In fact, as we know, Leland was unanimously elected.

The real contrast is between our often rather full knowledge of Burke up to the end of his undergraduate career, and the sheer scarcity of detail for the years from 1748 to 1759, when Burke's career becomes well-documented once more. *The Reformer*, the journal which he launched in January 1748 suspended publication in April of the same year. However, he expected to resume later in the year, as the last issue announced that "the thinness of the town for the ensuring summer, obliges us to discontinue this paper until next winter, during which time, subscriptions will be taken by the printer hereof". Something happened in the interval. As a letter in 1759 refers to eleven years absence from Ballyduff, Co. Cork, the inference is that he left Ireland before late 1748, as if he had remained he would certainly have continued his annual visitations to his mother's home there. It is these years, 1748 to 1759, that are puzzling; most obscure of all are the years from 1748 to 1755.

Journalism and politics, and in Burke's case the two go together, may well have been the attraction. The fact that late 1748, as the Irish parliament met only every second year, would not be a parliamentary season may have been an added incentive to leave. Did he leave in the casual way many other contemporaries did, or did he consciously leave for a London which had more politics and more journalism than Dublin? A hint in a letter in 1757 points to contact with Lord Egmont, a peer with north co. Cork lands, and he was writing pamphlets. Obscurity in these years is a reminder of the sheer difficulty of advancement for someone not conventionally a member of a social and political establishment, who for some reason abandoned the orthodox path of finishing a legal education as a basis for entry to political life. We must remember that times were changing, and that before Burke left, Charles Lucas showed how a career might be based on journalism, a pattern that Wilkes in London later emulated. Forty years previously Swift in London had hoped to pursue a career of ecclesiastical advancement through journalism in the Tory cause. Burke in some senses is the lay, and in material terms, more successful exponent of the same talent and path. His quarrel with his first -known, but almost certainly not his first political employer seems to have revolved in essence about the question of whether Burke's talents would be devoted exclusively to his patron's political interest, or to a concurrent pursuit of his own concerns. He was always to believe in ideas; he read and wrote to a degree which would have been impossible for major party political managers, given the crushing social and business demands on their time; and his advocacy in speeches, letters and writings is attractively but unrealistically the naive

one that argument and reason of themselves can change the world. In a peculiar sense, he had, and from a not dissimilar background, some of the make-up of the very revolutionaries whom he later criticised in his *Reflections.*

His success, already anticipated by the well-got social circle in London that he had acquired by the end of the 1750s, is measured in his position of private secretary to a chief secretary in two Irish parliamentary seasons in the early 1760s, and in the influence wielded in this ostensibly obscure role as secretary to the holder of an office which itself in the 1760s was only beginning to become one of serious parliamentary management. If there were limits to how far he could go, his career - and its Irish dimension was simply the accident of Irish office acquired by a capable and rising politician who had already retained Burke as a secretary - reflects how patronage was moving beyond the hiring of conventional legal abilities to recruitment of talent with the pen.

If his college career unfolded in a Dublin already enlivened by the early turmoils of Lucas's new journalism, it was just as much or even more influenced by the fact that it coincided with the gestation of Jacobite invasion of Scotland, its course in 1745-6 and its aftermath. At its end in April 1746, the invasion was, in Burke's words, "the most material, or rather the only news here". The confident and detached policy of Chesterfield dispatched to Ireland as a lord lieutenant capable of handling a crisis, was vital to the calm public response. On a report of a rising in Connaught, looking at his watch, his response was that " its now 9 o'clock and time for them to rise, so I am inclined to believe your intelligence is true". The O'Flaherty, geographically the most remote chieftain of Gaelic lineage, from the suspect and lawless far side of the Corrib, was received at the vice regal court as a symbolic gesture of order in the remote west; and Chesterfield observed memorably that Miss Ambrose, a young lady with charming eyes, was the only dangerous papist he knew. However, this olympian approach, vindicated by the fact that a rising did not occur, did raise the question as to what policy should be not only for now but for the future The fact that for the first time in a crisis the chapels had not closed by order made the question central. There were those who wanted the laws enforced with vigour and those who like Chesterfield felt that these laws were already antiquated. In a subtle way, the background issue was the future of the Penal Laws. In April 1746, when the invasion had been thrown back and defeated, Burke wrote that " tis indeed melancholy to consider the state of those unhappy gentlemen who engag'd in this affair. who have thrown away their lives and fortunes and destroyed their families in what I believe they thought a just cause". These sentiments were preceded by the words "I am sure I share in the general compassion", which hints at the outlook in Dublin and above all in Trinity. By July, now reading in the summer vacation in the Library, he was writing, "I have read some history. I am endeavouring to get a little into the accounts of this our own poor country".

The student body in Burke's student days was remarkably varied. If it included two sons of the Maude family, who led the hard line Tipperary faction that both the lord lieutenant and Burke’s chief-secretary employer had to confront in 1761-2, it also included two sons of Anthony Malone, the parliament's most brilliant lawyer and the first member to question the purpose of the acts. Contemporaries also included two

men who in their later lives were magistrates of deepest reactionary hue, the clergyman Robert Owen, one of Wexford's first Orangemen, battered or tortured by the Wexford rebels in 1798, and the layman Ambrose Power, murdered by the Whiteboys in Tipperary in 1774. However, Burke's friends Monck Mason and Leland more accurately anticipated the immediate future. Over the 1750s there followed a series of remarkable undergraduates who in later life were to back changes in Irish society. In the 1760s Andrews, the M.P provost described by a political contemporary as "an excellent politician never out of his road" and Leland, already formed part of a circle which embraced Monck Mason, Sir Lucius O'Brien and Hely Hutchinson. It was the more effective, because it worked with government: its members tinged, not altogether unattractively with hues of ambition and openness, are a good mirror to the modernity of the age.

Burke's small circle of six fellow students in the Club which first met on 21 April 1747 were motivated more by the urge to learn to debate than by the external issues themselves. However, the political compassion of the decade informed the topics they chose; the Club debated the issue of leniency for the rebels twice in May 1747, and Burke lauded the role of Chesterfield in the following month. Two of the members were to take holy orders, a reminder that clergymen should not be seen as they have been simply as a bastion of the establishment. Clergymen, anglican, catholic or presbyterian, were the educated men of the age; married clergymen in their family circle created a milieu with a taste or respect for learning, and it was they and their offspring, female as well as male, rather than the gentry as such who provided the backing for learning. After the 1798 rebellion, it was not simply graduates of the college, but clerical graduates of the College who were the most outspoken supporters of the policy of reconciling rebels by Cornwallis, the Chesterfield of another troubled year in Irish history. They included bishop Joseph Stoke of Killala, a humane and gifted fellow whose portrait handsomely graces the smoking room, James Gordon, a learned and polished clergyman in Wexford, and James Little, the gentle and scholarly rector at Lackan, where the French landed in 1798 whose account of the rebellion, taking long to write because his house had been destroyed by the rebels, never got beyond manuscript.

The College's open atmosphere almost certainly was the basis of Burke's abiding belief that political circumstances were ripe for change, and that only a small handful of figures in political society stood against it. In the 1790s, when the existing momentum for change had become politically sensitive in an age of revolution on both sides of the Atlantic, the college's student body espoused conflicting views in the debate on the great questions of the age, questions which indeed still trouble Irishmen. Students and scholars were identified with the radical public meetings of protest over the recall of the liberal or Whig lord lieutenant Fitzwilliam in 1795, and by 1798 there were four United Irishman societies in the College. On the opposing political side, the Orange Order was introduced to Dublin by undergraduates. In attributing this at a later date to Armagh undergraduates - who were not numerous - re-

turning to College after the summer vacation, William Blacker was modestly or discretely underplaying his own personal role in the phenomenon. Though catholics could not attend until 1793 because of an unacceptable oath, the fact is that catholics were there in some numbers in the 1780s and early 1790s, which suggests that the college under its maverick Provost had with calculation turned a blind eye.

If the College in Burke's student days was opening to the great issues of a new age, he was in the same years observing directly the fury of Munster politicians, to whom he later referred distastefully as mongril landlords amid, as he put it," the horrors of a Munster circuit" [meaning in effect the politically-motivated initiation by the grand jury of Co. Cork of legal actions in the assizes in 1760s in the later months of those years in which a parliamentary season was due in the autumn]. Spending his youth in his mother's Nagle family home of Ballyduff in Co. Cork, and visiting it every summer in the vacation from Trinity, he well knew the temper of the county and the lack of the "general compassion" he found in Trinity. His Nagle relatives were a small circle of propertied catholic families holding broad acres in the strongly protestant society of north Cork. Though discriminated against legally, their wealth and social position ensured that they participated fully in the social life of the season, which revolved around the summer assizes. As these coincided with the summer vacation, Burke as a politically awakening youth spent every one of the vacations certainly to 1747 in Cork. In the politically troubled summer of 1745 we find him writing "after I arrived the races of Mallow took up three days of my time. After this the assizes of Cork, during which I had scarce a moment's time on my hands". The following year from Caranatta in Cork we have an attractive little account of "murdered sleep with dancing these three nights past that I can hardly hold up my head, which you will doubtless say I never did". By the end of July he was at Ballyduff, and we can guess that "my mother's calling me to go away with her" was to yet another event in the social whirl. In 1747 four letters to him in Co. Cork from a friend went unanswered. We know there were tensions in north Cork, and the fear of papist conspiracy was part of the conversation in Cork somewhat in the way that the rhetoric of sermons in Dublin to commemorate the massacres that followed the outbreak of rebellion in Ulster of 23 October 1641 reached a high pitch in 1745 and 1746. As we know from other evidence it was the sermons of these years which convinced the fashionable catholic medical doctor John Curry of the necessity to tell what he saw as the real truth of 1641 if opinion were to be made ready to accept political change.

Coming back to Ireland as private secretary to the chief secretary Hamilton, in 1761-2 and 1763-4, Burke was intimately involved in the political issues, which, as they revolved around the catholic question, foundered on the bedrock of Cork and Tipperary opposition. The two surviving documents in relation to an alleged Catholic conspiracy and to the remarkable special commission to Munster in the spring of 1762 whose purpose was to take the administration of justice out of the hands of the local gentry who controlled the business of the assizes - Burke's "mongril" gentry - are not in the State Papers but in Burke's private papers. He seems to have written the famous four-hour parliamentary speech by Hamilton which was delivered in the spring of 1762, and in 1764 he had prepared a long draft paper on the penal laws which is probably a fuller working out of the ideas in the 1762 speech. Monck Mason, a friend of college days, with Sir Lucius O'Brien, introduced the decisive first

mortgage bill. Intended to allow Catholics to lend money on the security of land. Had it been passed into law, It would have made the repeal of the entire property code inevitable, as creditors all too often become the legal owners of property, and the measure was to be reintroduced in subsequent sessions.

Opposition to change and the continued emphasis by opponents on conspiracy and on the danger of massacre made it necessary to look into the massacres of 1641. He claimed as early as 1771 that it was he who prevailed on Thomas Leland to write a history of Ireland: "I realy thought our History of Ireland so terribly defective that I did, and with success, urge a very learned and ingenious friend of yours and mine in the University of Dublin to undertake it". He repeated to his close friend Bishop Markham his mistake in thinking that his views were simply a repetition of those of Burke's friends: "They know little or nothing of the Irish history. They have never thought on it at all; I have studied it with more care than is common, and I have spoken to you on the subject, I dare say 20 times.... Indeed *I have* my opinion on that part of history, which I have often delivered to you; to every one I conversed with on the subject, and which I mean still, to deliver whenever the occasion calls for it. Which is 'that the Irish rebellion of 1641 was not only (as our silly things called Historys call it), not utterly *unprovoked but* that no History, I have ever read furnishes an instance of any that was so *provoked'.* And that 'in almost all parts of it, it has been extremely and most absurdly misrepresented' ". Leland and Burke went over the depositions in person in the College library, and 28 years later Burke was still able to go into detail about the individual documents relating to Armagh events of 1641. He could also recall purchases made of documents of the period from a dealer in old furniture. He may have been the central figure in the purchases because he could repeat the conversation with the old man " who was very curious and intelligent". In his almost conspiratorial Irish visit from August to October 1766 (to recruit the remarkable legal team of young men who successfully defended Irish catholics charged with treason), he gave Leland's college address to his English acquaintances as the means of contacting him. In the following years he continued to meet Leland in London, probably also was the person who introduced him to Johnson, and gave him Irish manuscripts. Leland (a senior fellow at 39 years of age in 1761) was for Burke, we must remember, a congenial friend. He was on contemporary evidence the reputed author of a historical romance published in 1762, and was said "in agreeableness of familiar letter writing" to have few equals.

Burke's role as prime mover in regard to study of the massacres drew him into study of the wider historiographical issues. These interests, still very much alive in the early 1770s, were to recur in letters to General Vallencey in 1786: he still shared the interest in publishing the "ancient Irish Historical Monuments": unless "something of this is done, criticism can have no secure anchorage". It was he who had introduced Leland in the 1760s to the two most scholarly members of the catholic committee, Curry and O'Conor. By 1766 Charles O'Conor had dined with Dr Leland and as he told George Faulkner, editor of the *Dublin Journal*, "viewed with pleasure in his dining room as fine a portrait of you as hands could draw. He is a very learned and what is infinitely better, a very worthy man... To unite all parties in these kingdoms in one creed of civil faith is possible, nay very practicable, and it were to be wished that those who oppose such an union in civil orthodoxy assigned any one instance wherein it could be hurtful to Britain or Ireland". By 1767 O'Conor was using the li-

brary, and in his visits remarkably had experienced also the civility of the provost. He was in subsequent years entertained by Leland in his scholarly retreat at Rathmichael where he was prebendary.

In a way of which we are not fully clear, Townshend's long viceroyalty from 1767 t o 1772like Halifax's short one in 1761-2 was among other things intended to advance the case of the catholics. Within days of coming to Ireland in the autumn of 1767, the rough soldier Townshend had visited the bookshop of the publisher George Faulkner who stood at the centre of Dublin intellectual life; Leland almost immediately entered his retinue as chaplain. Both Burke and O'Conor spoke with warmth of the lord lieutenant, in his stormy years in Dublin. The liberal wind of change in the corridors of the draughty Castle was quickly detected by the finely attuned antennae of conservatives. Significantly too Burke, with his geiga counter for measuring intolerance, sensed from London a gradual hardening of feeling in conservative circles against catholics. He was writing in defence of catholics again in 1776, and in that year he had briefed Arthur Young who was launching on his Irish tour, and whose later book not only paraphrased Burke's words, but also seemed at one point to repeat a remarkable paragraph from *The Reformer* of 1748.

However, whatever about advances in the corridors of power, the return on historical study of the massacres was poor. Burke and the catholics were disappointed with Leland's History, of which they had such high hopes, when it appeared in 1773. Burke noted later that the "the mode of doing it varied from his first conceptions". Yet there was also a real intellectual point in Leland's favour. If some of the old works republished in the 1760s maintained that more protestants had been massacred in1641 than actually lived on the island, the view of O'Conor, Curry and Burke was that there had been no massacre at all, and in the good Irish partisan fashion of seeing one side but not both as capable of mayhem, they devoted much energy to documenting a massacre of catholics in Islandmagee in Co. Antrim and of seeing it as the catalysing force of the general savagery of the war. O'Conor and Curry, themselves turned into hardened and ungenerous figures by the zealots they opposed, never forgave Leland. They had quite unscrupulously obtained unauthorised access to the proofs of his book at the printers, and when it appeared they had ready from Leland's own London publisher a condemnation of it. Leland' s scholarly reputation was to suffer even contemporaneously, though to modern eyes Leland's sin is more that of opting for scholarly than political purpose. His book was however at one point rather disastrously innocent or gauche as the emphasis belied his underlying purpose or could even be used to undermine it, a flaw which sprung from a weakness summarised in 1774 by Burke as "his great distance from affairs, which makes him ignorant of the true situation of men". Curry also criticised Leland for giving the customary sermon on the anniversary of the rebellion in the parliamentary session of 1771. Yet for a ticklish commemorative occasion for a variegated and volcanic political audience, Leland's language was skillfully crafted, and behind the formality of a sermon, the address was a consummate liberal political discourse.

The College was never far from Burke's thoughts. Decades later, he hoped that some of the manuscripts he had collected had been deposited in the Library. He knew all its provosts. As an incoming undergraduate, he met Provost Baldwin: to a young man in 1744, the provost inevitably appeared an" old sickly-looking man". He

knew Provost Andrews, a very active M.P. who in 1766 mentioned Burke in a letter to Hely Hutchinson "in the highest terms". Hely Hutchinson, Burke knew well from 1761 onwards. Indeed in the summer assizes of 1762 Hely Hutchinson, a barrister as well as M.P. went on the Munster summer assizes in the knowledge of the cases pending there and with the approval of Hamilton, Burke and Mason . Andrews and Hely Hutchinson were both in some way, like Leland and Faulkner, party to the great enterprise in the catholic cause in which Burke was variously a cog and a prime mover.

In 1774 Burke was a backer of Leland for provost. The ailing provost Andrews died at last at Shrewsbury on 12 June. Two days later Leland wrote to Burke, and three other letters followed. He asked Burke to enlist the support of bishop Markham in England (whose acquaintance Leland had probably made though Burke in London). Burke, describing him as "my old friend... a very learned and in all other respects a very well informed man", saw the approach as ill considered as Markham had no real political say. The Board's meeting on 23 June was a purely formal one to arrange the funeral, and it could not at that meeting address the question of a successor. It was however left no time to consider the matter, as Hely Hutchinson was parachuted by the government into the office. Some months later in a sharp observation to Hely Hutchinson, in saying with candour that " I had always thought that this office is best suited to a man of the ecclesiastical gown, and a mere academic", Burke was in effect making clear that his support had lain with Leland. This view of the office was to be repeated in 1794 at a time when he had no personal loyalty to a candidate for office. The conservative or loyalist Westmorland administration had in mind a political nomination in 1793, and the new London coalition in 1794, though intended to be a reforming one for Ireland, was no better because of its dilemma in having two men to reward and a desperate need to find a job for the second of them. To Earl Fitzwilliam, who was about to replace the outgoing lord lieutenant and who of course was Burke’s political patron, he observed that the post should not be filled "jobbishly and improperly" as was proposed, by a man who was an outsider both to Ireland and to the College, and he pointed out that Hely Hutchinson at least had been a graduate of the College. He added "this intrusion of an absolute stranger, by dispensation, can be justified only by some unfitness of the statutable members of the body for that Office". He was adamant about the standards of the College: "Fellowships are not obtained by favour in Dublin; nor by a blind and partial election. That place is obtained by a very rigid course of study, under which more than one has died, and after a publick examination of the strictest kind, made in the Theatre, and in the face of a numerous, attentive, and often very critical audience". He went on to defend the College: "Dublin never did, at any time, possess so many fellows, not only unexceptionable for morals and learning, but of very high and just reputation for both". These statements were made more in remembrance of his undergraduate days and the early 1760s, and of poor Leland who had died in 1785, than of the college in the 1790s of which he had no personal knowledge.

Made by a man who from those days wanted change and a place in Ireland for catholics, they are a reminder that Trinity always remained in his eyes a living and tolerant institution. Almost a century later, the undergraduate careers of both Douglas Hyde and John Millington Synge remind us that, far from being a rigid institution, it still exercised a very positive role in the formation of young, critical and ultimately

revolutionary minds. Even at the very end of the nineteenth century, there were eddies and currents beyond the circle of those seven deadly sins, the Senior Fellows, and in the twentieth century, the aspirations associated with Edward Gwynn, provost from 1927 to 1937, and the achievements brought to fruition, a generation later, by Provost McConnell and his backers, came from within the College, not from outside. That would indeed have been in Burke's view the college that he knew and respected.

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