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John Charles McQuaid, C.S.Sp. (28 July 1895 – 7 April 1973) was the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland between December 1940 and January 1971. Subsequently, allegations of child abuse were made against him. These allegations have been specifically rejected by several leading Irish historians.

John Charles McQuaid was born in Cootehill, Co. Cavan, on 28 July 1895, to Dr. Eugene McQuaid and Jennie Corry. His mother died a week later and his father, a doctor, signed her death certificate. A little over a year later he married a woman named Agnes, who raised John and his sister Helen as her own. In his teens John learned that Agnes was not his real mother. Further children were born to Eugene and Agnes McQuaid.

He attended the Cootehill National School, where the principal, James Fitzsimmons, wrote in 1910: "the most intelligent boy I ever taught. His ability to assimilate knowledge was a revelation. With such intellectual attainments this boy will have a brilliant scholastic career and will rise to great heights in whatever profession he adopts; an excellent type of student – well behaved, obedient, studious truthfulness was his outstanding characteristic." [1]

After primary school, John went to St. Patrick's College, Cavan, then to Blackrock College in Dublin, run by the Holy Ghost Fathers. He sat for the Junior Grade examination in 1911; placed eighth in the whole country in the Classics he took first place in Ireland in Latin with 98%, in Greek he registered 96% and in French 80%. An influence on him during his time in Blackrock College came from Brother, Gaspard O'Reilly, C.S.Sp. He believed he owed his vocation to the priesthood to the prayers of Brother Gaspard. Many years later, on the day he was consecrated Archbishop, he paid him a generous tribute. [2]

In 1911 he entered Clongowes Wood Jesuit College in Co. Kildare with his brother Eugene. Here he won a gold medal for Religious Knowledge in 1912 and another in 1913, a gold medal for English essay in 1913 and a prize for debating. In later years he used to say that he learned his devotion to the Blessed Virgin in the Sodality of Our Lady Immaculate in Clongowes. It was while he was at Clongowes that he learned from another pupil that Agnes was not his mother. The news seems to have affected him powerfully. When his father died John had him buried with his mother, not his stepmother. [3] However he remained devoted all through life to his stepmother and to her children.

On completion of his secondary studies, some people expected him to study medicine, following the family tradition. However, he entered the novitiate of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Kimmage, Dublin in

1913. His novice master was Father Daniel Walsh who was well respected in the Irish Province but died in the Great Flu of 1918.

He studied at University College, Dublin where he was awarded both a first class honours BA in 1917 and MA in Ancient Classics in 1918. His MA thesis was 'A Roman of the Early Empire: Lucius Annaeus Seneca' He was awarded an honours Higher Diploma in Education in 1919, while acting as prefect in Blackrock College, 1918â€“1921. The prefecting system was borrowed from the Jesuits. Future priests would interrupt their studies, usually before beginning theology, to serve as junior masters in the Colleges. This was seen as providing very good work experience. He then started theology studies in Kimmage, Dublin and was ordained on 29 June 1924.

McQuaid was immersed in the works of French theologians through his studies. He retained close intellectual links with academic developments in France throughout his life. McQuaid also trained at the Gregorian University in Rome where he completed a doctorate in theology. In November 1925 he was recalled to Ireland to serve on the staff of Blackrock College. As a result he was unable to complete his course in Biblical studies.

McQuaid acquired a distrust of the secularism ushered in by the French Revolution, a theme constantly found in his writings. His theological training was in the repressive intellectual atmosphere that followed the suppression of Modernism in the Catholic Church. Later he was not to be affected by the "new theology" that developed after the Second World War in France and Germany and which contained the seeds of the Second Vatican Council.

McQuaid's MA thesis on the life and philosophy of Seneca, the philosopher-statesman of first century Rome illustrates some important aspects of his own character and concerns. He characterised Seneca as a pre-Christian moralist living in an age of immorality, sinfulness and confusion. "It is a great sign of strong virtue to abstain from pleasure when the crowd is wallowing in filth, to be sane and temperate when it is vomiting and drunk," he wrote. "But it is a much greater sign not to withdraw from the crowd nor mingle with it in all things. We can be merry without debauch." In a licentious age, Seneca commended chastity and upheld by his own example the natural sanctity of marriage. In days of brutal selfishness and callous cruelty, Seneca revered the slave and the outcast.

McQuaid compared the horrors Seneca experienced during Nero's reign with the growing troubles he saw in Ireland. Referring to "the stealthy fear that crept around Seneca", McQuaid argued that this was a feature of the Roman writer's life which "it seems only those can fully appreciate who have themselves undergone a period of unnerving terrorism".

McQuaid saw himself as living through "Senecan" times. In addition to the horrendous carnage of the First World War, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the slide towards guerrilla war in Ireland, there was an outbreak of Spanish flu in 1918 that killed an estimated 20 million people worldwide. Among them was Father Walsh, who had been McQuaid's novice master in Kimmage.[5]

While he was being trained as a religious and then as a priest, McQuaid's great ambition was to become a missionary to Africa. Noel Browne's biographer, John Horgan has written that: "For many years ...his ambition was not ecclesiastical preferment, but missionary service: at least four requests to be transferred to Africa were turned down by his superiors. He could have been one of the greatest missionary bishops of the century â€“ all that energy, and intellect, would have gone through the continent like a whirlwind. These talents were unleashed instead on Dublin and on Ireland." [6]

Although regarded as a strict taskmaster, Dr. McQuaid strove to improve the performance of average and poor students. Holy Ghost priest Michael O'Carroll was a student in Blackrock when McQuaid was appointed Dean of Studies. He recounts how, when McQuaid discovered that a class of sixth-year boys lacked even the rudiments of Latin late in term, he announced in his low steely voice: 'Gentlemen we shall begin with mensa'. By the end of that term, his systematic exposition of grammar and syntax enabled 17 of the 18 boys to pass the Leaving Certificate examination in Latin.

At Blackrock he soon made his name as an administrator and as a headmaster with detailed knowledge of educational developments in other countries and with wide cultural views. In 1929 he was appointed special delegate on the Department of Education's Commission of Enquiry into the teaching of English; in 1930 he was the official delegate of the Catholic Headmasters' Association at the first International Congress of Free Secondary Education held in Brussels; he was present in the same capacity at later Congresses in The Hague, Luxembourg and Fribourg. Elected chairman of the Catholic Headmasters' Association in 1931, he remained in the chair until 1940, being specially co-opted to it in the autumn of 1939 on his ceasing to be President of Blackrock. In an appreciation of Dr McQuaid on the 25th anniversary of his consecration as Archbishop, Father Roland Burke Savage S.J. wrote: "Though a classical scholar by training and a life-long lover of Virgil, as a teacher Dr McQuaid found that he could best form his boys through teaching them an appreciation and a mastery of English prose. In teaching the theory of dramatic structure to his honours leaving class, he frequently drew his illustrations from a study of the composition of famous paintings." [7]

Father Burke Savage also wrote that Blackrock had a noted rugby record and that Dr McQuaid "realized fully the value of games in strengthening both body and character; he knew that on the rugby pitch as or the cricket crease boys learned to be unselfish, to take hard knocks well, to co-operate with each other and to work as a team In forming the character of his boys Dr McQuaid imbued them with a virile Catholicism and a strong sense of their social responsibilities."

In a 1998 article in *Studies* magazine, McQuaid's Holy Ghost confrere Father Michael O'Carroll wrote that Eamon de Valera entered McQuaid's life at about the time the latter became President of Blackrock College in 1931. "De Valera was a past pupil with an amazing attachment to the college. His sons were educated there and he lived nearby. He and his wife Sinead got to know Dr. McQuaid and friendship between them blossomed. The college president was a regular guest in the house and eventually his advice was sought in a very important de Valera achievement, the drafting of a new constitution for the country. Years later when de Valera was president and host to a number of bishops who had come to Blackrock College for its centenary celebrations [1960] he stated that the articles in the constitution most admired had been influenced by Dr. McQuaid who was now Archbishop of Dublin." [8]

This is a somewhat romanticised account that fails to mention the tensions that arose between the two men in the 1940s and 50s when McQuaid was Archbishop of Dublin and de Valera was frequently head of Government. In 1952 McQuaid writing to the Apostolic Nuncio, complained "From Mr de Valera's re-assumption of political leadership, the chief element of note, as far as the church is concerned, is a policy of distance. That policy is seen in the failure to consult any Bishop ..." [9]

From early 1937 Eamon de Valera was bombarded with letters daily "sometimes twice a day" from Fr. John McQuaid C.S.Sp. They were crammed with suggestions, viewpoints, documents and learned references on nearly every aspect on what was to become *Bunreacht na hEireann* "the Constitution of Ireland. McQuaid was the persistent adviser, 'one of the great architects of the Constitution, albeit in the shadows'. However, McQuaid's efforts to enshrine the absolute claims of the Catholic Church as the Church of Christ were frustrated by de Valera.

The chapter entitled "Co-maker of the Constitution", is an example of this overstatement. The author does not appear to understand the complexity involved in handling the McQuaid papers relating to the drafting process. Many documents are undated and it is quite difficult to determine their respective influence on those who drafted the final document. The term 'co-maker' implies that the archbishop enjoyed an equal share with de Valera. However, this is to further compound a fundamental misunderstanding of the drafting process: de Valera was not the "other" author of the 1937 constitution.

To over-personalise in this way the functioning of government under Fianna Fáil is to distort a complex reality. If there was a single author of the 1937 constitution then that author must have been John Hearne, the legal officer in the Department of External Affairs. Maurice Moynihan was also a significant force. McQuaid played an important role in the whole process. That is not in

dispute. But to suggest that he was the "co-maker" of the constitution is simply not defensible.

McQuaid's appointment in 1940 to the archdiocese of Dublin, the most important and populous in the country, came at a more stable point in Irish politics – following the violence involving the IRA and the Blueshirts and the tensions caused by the Economic War with the UK in the 1930s. The beginning of "the Emergency" (Ireland's term for the Second World War), had produced a new mode of national consensus. Also McQuaid's relations with the Taoiseach, Éamon de Valera, were excellent in contrast to most of the hierarchy who were distinctly cool towards him. From the evidence of Irish Government archives made available in the 1990s it is clear that de Valera had pressed McQuaid's candidacy on the Vatican. However, it is doubtful if the Vatican needed much urging. McQuaid had an outstanding reputation as a Catholic educationalist and had been close to Archbishop Edward Byrne of Dublin, his immediate predecessor. His name had already been mentioned in connection with his native diocese of Kilmore.

However de Valera was later to state that he had also been impressed by McQuaid's social concerns at a time when the hardships of the war were particularly affecting the poor. The hierarchy and clergy of the Irish Church reflected the views of the strong and middling farmer class from which they were mostly drawn and were uncomprehending of urban life and poverty. McQuaid, as de Valera knew was different and this was reflected in his first Lenten pastoral in 1941. "The very widespread yearning for social peace is itself proof of the grave need of social reform", McQuaid wrote. But he emphasised that "whatever shape the detailed reform of the social structure ultimately may take, the only lasting basis of reconstruction can be the true faith that we profess." [13]

David C. Sheehy, Dublin diocesan archivist wrote in 2003 that "McQuaid saw the achievement of high office as the natural and appropriate outcome for someone of his background, education and talents. Like Bernard Law Montgomery taking over command of the British Eighth Army before El Alamein, in the late summer of 1942, McQuaid's accession to the See of Dublin, less than two years before, unleashed a man of ability combined with prodigious energy and in his prime. For Monty and McQuaid, prima donnas both, everything that had gone before in their very different lives had been but a preparation for the assumption of senior command and for the challenge of a lifetime. Like warriors of old, they gratefully responded to the bugle call and strode forward to claim their place in history." [14]

He was appointed Archbishop of Dublin on 6 November 1940 at the age of 45. His motto was "Testimonium Perhibere Veritati" – "to bear witness to the truth". McQuaid oversaw a massive expansion of the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Dublin during his term. He also established a wide range of social services for the poor of the city. He is especially remembered for his work in the area of charity. In the first year of his episcopate he oversaw the establishment of the Catholic Social Welfare Conference which co-ordinated the work of the great number of charitable organisations existing in the city. The following year (1942) he set up the Catholic Social Welfare Bureau which helped emigrants and their families. He had a personal interest in providing for people who suffered physically, mentally and spiritually. During his episcopate the number of clergy increased from 370 to 600, the number of religious from 500 to 700 and the number of parishes from 71 to 131. [15] In addition some 80 new churches were built, 250 primary schools and 100 secondary schools. [16]

In a 1998 article in *Studies*, historian Dermot Keogh wrote about the effect of the Archbishop's work on his own life as a schoolboy: "Between 1940 and 1972, the year of his resignation as archbishop [sic.], Dr McQuaid had helped provide 47 new parishes in the archdiocese, together with the necessary primary and secondary educational infrastructure in each of those areas. My generation had been a beneficiary of that policy. In the early 1950s, I had moved from the small two-roomed school beside the old church in Raheny to new premises carved out of the nearby St Anne's woods. There the classes grew exponentially – to 56 in my case. Here was a measure for social change and for the new pastoral challenge facing the Catholic Church in the 1950s – a decade of high emigration, high unemployment and the expansion of the working class into the Dublin suburbs." [17]

This record of phenomenal expansion had one curious side effect. Dublin has two Protestant

Cathedrals built in the Middle Ages but no Catholic Cathedral. The centre of the Catholic Archdiocese is the 19th century St Mary's Pro-Cathedral in a side street near the city centre. The Pro-Cathedral was never intended to be other than a temporary acting cathedral, pending the availability of funds to build a full cathedral. (In the aftermath of the 1921 Treaty the Church of Ireland offered to return either St.Patrick's Cathedral or Christ Church to the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland: they refused the offer)Archbishop McQuaid bought the gardens in the centre of Merrion Square and announced plans to erect a cathedral there. However, he felt obliged to use the funds originally designated for the new cathedral to build the new churches and schools instead. His successor eventually handed over the gardens to Dublin Corporation and they are now a public park.[18] As a result of the Archbishop's sense of priorities, Dublin still has no Catholic Cathedral.

McQuaid also controversially extended the ban on Catholics attending Trinity College, Dublin. Originally Catholics had objected to being excluded from the university from 1695 until the Irish 1793 Roman Catholic Relief Act was passed. In the ensuing century Trinity came to be seen as a dangerous bastion of Protestant influence in Ireland. Exemptions were granted to businessmen such as Al Byrne (in 1948), provided that they did not join any college societies.[20] The policy gave rise to a doggerel verse: "Young men may loot, perjure and shoot / And even have carnal knowledge / But however depraved, their souls will be saved / If they don't go to Trinity College".[21] The general prohibition was lifted by bishops meeting at Maynooth in June 1970, towards the end of McQuaid's episcopacy.

There was the impression of friendship between McQuaid and Ámón de Valera, founder of Fianna Fáil and frequent head of government from the 1930s to the late 1950s. Historian Dermot Keogh believes that there has been a tendency to view the relationship between the two men as being static and not subject to change or development. Dr Keogh thinks it was quite the reverse. The men were friends and the relationship was less complicated in the 1930s when McQuaid was not archbishop. But after his consecration, McQuaid represented in a formal fashion the interests of the Church and he defended those interests even when it brought him into conflict with the leader of the state who also happened to be his friend. That friendship never clouded both men's concepts of their duties on behalf of church and state. It is all too facile to hold, a priori, that de Valera and McQuaid sang consistently from the same hymn sheet.[22]

There was continuing conflict between McQuaid and de Valera. In 1946 McQuaid's support of the national teachers' strike, greatly annoyed de Valera. In 1951 the Fianna Fáil government (which replaced the First Inter-Party Government) introduced a revised version of Noel Browne's original Mother and Child Scheme to which the hierarchy, led by Dr. McQuaid had successfully objected. Although the Archbishop still objected to the modified version, he was out-manoeuvred by de Valera.