



Irish Catholic identities

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What does it mean to be Irish? Are the predicates Catholic and Irish so inextricably linked that it is impossible to have one and not the other? Does the process of secularization in modern times mean that Catholicism is no longer a touchstone of what it means to be Irish? Indeed was such a paradigm ever true? These are among the fundamental issues addressed in this work which examines whether distinct identity formation can be traced over time.

The book delineates the course of historical developments which complicated the process of identity formation in the Irish context, when by turns Irish Catholics saw themselves as battling against English hegemony or the Protestant Reformation. Was Irish Catholic identity in such circumstances simply a negative construct which severed to give some semblance of cultural coherence in an Ireland that was fundamentally changing? Without doubt the Reformation era cast a long shadow over how Irish Catholics would see themselves. But the process of identity formation was of much longer duration.

The twenty-two chapters of this work trace the elements which have shaped how the Catholic Irish identified themselves from the coming of Christianity to the contemporary era, and explore the political, religious, and cultural dimensions of the complex picture which is Irish Catholic identity. The individual essays, using traditional historical sources as well as contemporary literary works, together represent a systematic attempt, unique in the literature, to explore the fluidity of the components that make up Catholic identity in the Irish context. Aimed at scholars, students and general readers alike, Irish Catholic Identities brings together some of the foremost scholars in their respective fields including: Tom Bartlett, Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Owen Dudley Edwards, Raymond Gillespie, and Bernard O' Donoghue.

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