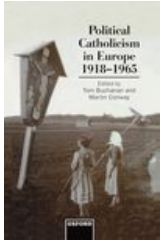

Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–1965

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CHAPTER

9 Ireland

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Abstract

This chapter discusses political Catholicism in Ireland. Topics covered include the formation of an Irish Catholic social movement, the kingship of Christ in the new Free State, vocationalism, Fianna Fáil and political Catholicism, political Catholicism and the 1937 Irish Constitution, and political Catholicism in post-war Ireland. The 1960s marked an important era of change for the Catholic Church. Integralism was not entirely dead. Small fringe parties continued to fulminate against the pluralist philosophy of figures such as the former Fine Gael Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald (1983–87) which was perceived to pose a challenge to traditional Catholic values. Such parties, however, could not hope to win mass support and most Irish Catholics continued to identify with the major political parties. Catholicism thus remained a central element in Irish politics; but movements of political Catholicism remained on the margins.

Keywords: political Catholicism, Ireland, Irish Catholics, Irish Catholicism, Catholic Church, Irish politics, vocationalism, Fianna Fáil

Subject: European History, History of Religion, Political History, Modern History (1700 to 1945), Social and Cultural History

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1. Historical Background

The role of the Catholic Church in Irish politics has often been misunderstood and misrepresented by novelists and by academics from different disciplines.[1] To many observers of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ireland, the bishops and the priest took centre stage in the development of Irish politics; the phrase 'Home Rule is Rome Rule' was used extensively in the 1880s to denote clerical power and it continues to be echoed in Northern Ireland today.[2] The fall of Charles Stewart Parnell in 1890 was popularly but mistakenly ascribed to the exclusive machinations of the hierarchy: 'the Bishops and the Party | That tragic story made,' wrote William Butler Yeats in his poem on the death of Parnell.[3] In 1903 Horace Plunkett wrote disparagingly about the state of the country and ascribed much of the blame to the backwardness of the Catholic Church.[4] This view was also echoed in a popular book entitled *The Pope's Green Isle*, published in 1912.[5]

The thesis of a clerically ridden political country was rejected by Mgr. Michael O'Riordan in his work *Catholicity and Progress in Ireland* (1906).[6] This was written in a polemical fashion and very much as a rejoinder to Plunkett. Writing almost half a century later, the novelist and republican activist Peadar O'Donnell argued 'that this is not a cleric-dominated country but suffers more from a yahoo-ridden church'.[7] Although in no sense a historian, this trade-unionist, revolutionary, and novelist may have been closer to a more enduring and more accurate interpretation than many of the more 'informed' scholars.

The historical experience of Irish and continental Catholics differed significantly in the nineteenth century. Unlike the process of Italian unification, Irish constitutionalist nationalists depended for their success partially on the active support of the Church. In the 1820s the Catholic Association demonstrated the
p. 276 capacity of Daniel ↳ O'Connell to mobilize the Irish populace. He could not have achieved as much as he did without the active support of a number of the bishops and the clergy. With the achievement of Catholic emancipation in 1829,O'Connell's subsequent failure with the Repeal Movement in the 1840s may be attributed partially to a lack of clerical enthusiasm and commitment.[8] Nevertheless, O'Connell succeeded in laying the foundations for a nationalist movement which wedded Catholicism and nationalism. While the relationship between the hierarchy and nationalist leaders in the latter part of the nineteenth century may have been strained and stormy, the fusion of the twin ideologies of Catholicism and nationalism became the motor force which ultimately led to independence. That was achieved with a predominantly lay leadership.

The first—and probably the only attempt—to create an autonomous, clerical-directed political movement came with the formation of the National Association in 1864. Under the direction of Cardinal Paul Cullen—a major reforming force in the nineteenth-century Irish Catholic Church—the National Association sought to act 'not as auxiliary to nationalists, nor as a guide to the people, but as a driver and commander'.[9] Its modest proposals for land reform, educational segregation, and the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, failed to attract widespread support among the laity. Paradoxically, the National Association failed within a year. The Irish felt much more at one with lay political leaders. The relationship between Catholicism and nationalism was restored in the 1880s under the leadership of the Protestant landlord Charles Stewart Parnell. In return for ensuring the careful resolution of the 'educational question' along denominational lines, the Irish Parliamentary Party was in the privileged position of enjoying for a time the active support of the Irish hierarchy.[10] However, the alliance between church and nation came under severe strain as a consequence of the Parnell divorce crisis. That episcopal-political alliance was never completely restored.

By 1918 a new political force, Sinn Féin, had appeared. The Easter Rising, two years before, had redirected the course of Irish politics and gave a prominence to the physical force nationalist philosophy. The writings of one of the executed leaders, Padraig Pearse, became far more important to that post-First World War generation than the speeches of the Irish Parliamentary Party leader John Redmond, who died in 1918. His

successor, John Dillon, witnessed the demise of the party in the general election of that year. The Anglo-Irish War (1919–21) brought to the fore a new generation of political leaders led by Michael Collins, Arthur
p. 277 Griffith, and Éamon de Valera. In that changed political climate, the Church hierarchy had the task of attempting to rebuild consensus with Sinn Féin.[11] Despite the Sinn Féin espousal of ↳ violence, that task was ultimately achieved. The new generation of Irish leaders were, in the main, strong Catholic nationalists, Éamon de Valera being to the fore.

2. The Formation of an Irish Catholic Social Movement

The rise of Irish nationalism in the latter part of the nineteenth century focused on the land question. Social agitation for tenant rights became a very strong feature of that struggle.[12] However, the role of the urban poor and the Irish working class failed to gain coequal status with the land agitation until the early twentieth century. Clerical involvement in land agitation was quite strong. Paradoxically, this was not the case in the struggle for trade union rights and the defence of the urban poor. When James Larkin and James Connolly, two of the most prominent Irish labour leaders, began to agitate for trade-unionism and labour politics they were met with stiff resistance from a number of prominent clergymen.[13] Connolly was a revolutionary Marxist and Larkin was a strong syndicalist. Neither men exhibited a doctrinaire hostility to Catholicism, but they clashed from time to time with clerical power. Ecclesiastical denunciations of socialism increased in Ireland shortly after the first wave of industrial unrest in Belfast and Dublin between 1906 and 1910. Atheistic socialism and its threat to Irish society were the subject of a series of Lenten Lectures by a Jesuit priest, Fr. Robert Kane, in 1910.[14] Connolly, in replying to Kane in his pamphlet *Labour, Nationality and Religion*, said that he reduced the preacher to 'mere sound and fury, signifying nothing'.[15] Kane represented an extreme strand of Irish social Catholicism. But there were other clerics who did not share his point of view; they supported a more radical approach to the resolution of industrial unrest in the cities. For example, Fr. John Kelleher, defended the labour movement against the employers during the 1913 lockout.[16] He was supported in his views by members of the Capuchin order in particular who worked with the inner-city poor. The Professor of Political Economy at UCD Fr. Tom Finlay SJ, who had already played an active role in the Irish Co-operative Movement, declared in 1913 that it was the duty of the State to provide the necessary means in order to solve the social problem. The Jesuit-run journal *Studies*, first published in 1912, contained numerous articles outlining the need to tackle the Irish social question in accordance with the principles of the social encyclicals. The Jesuit Order's small, but extremely prolific, publishing house—the Irish Messenger Office—published a 'Social Action Series'. By 1918 there were twenty-eight titles each costing one penny, some of which sold up to ten thousand copies. The most prolific writer in this series was a Fr. Lambert McKenna SJ. Born in 1870, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1886 and studied in Dublin,
p. 278 Jersey, and ↳ Louvain. His main area of interest was in the revival of the Irish language and he kept in close contact with the work of Padraig Pearse. After the publication of his work the *Social Teachings of James Connolly* (a work which won the praise of many in the Irish labour movement), McKenna was obliged by his order to concentrate more on his Irish language interests and on his teaching duties at Belvedere College. He published minor articles on socialism and communism in the 1920s, which often showed a detached and critical view which singled him out from many of his clerical peers.[17] McKenna's non-doctrinaire approach helped to build bridges between the Church and labour. He died in Dublin in 1956.

The most advanced discussion on political and social Catholicism took place, perhaps surprisingly for some critics of the Catholic Church, in the national seminary at Maynooth. From as early as 1907 a small group of professors and students produced treatises and papers on the social question. The controversial and independent-minded Dr Walter McDonald headed this small group and he was ably assisted by Dr Peter Coffey and Dr William Moran. Coffey, for example, developed a dialogue between Catholicism and socialism in his pamphlet *Between Capitalism and Socialism*. His ideas were more fully developed by Moran in his enquiry *Social Reconstruction in an Irish State*, which was published on the eve of independence. The latter

argued that the capitalist system was unworkable. He felt that the only means of achieving a just society was through the creation of a new political order:

> We believe that such would become, as a matter of fact, the tradition of a Distributive State once firmly established, especially among a people believing in the Catholic philosophy of life. It was the tradition throughout the greater part of Europe during the Middle Ages, and it is still a strong tradition among the peoples of Ireland.[18]

Moran further argued for the establishment of this new political order:

> It is hardly necessary to point out that reform, on such lines as are here suggested, can never be given a fair trial in Ireland until we get our own government…It follows that Irish social reformers, and the wage-earners of Ireland in particular, should so educate, organise and discipline their forces, as to be able to make social reconstruction on Catholic lines one of the chief planks in the platform of the first Irish Government.[19]

Such radical sentiments were not shared by the Irish bishops and nor were many Irish nationalist leaders particularly attracted to the task of immediately transforming social structures. The end of British dominance in the Irish Free State [Saorstát Éireann] did not result in a social revolution. It was a question of the social revolution that never was. As Professor Patrick Lynch commented: 'There was little use for idealism and less scope for utopianism in the Irish Free State of 1923.'[20]

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3. The Kingship of Christ in the New Free State

The 1921 Treaty with Britain secured the right to independent government or dominion status for the Irish Free State. Accepted by the Dáil (Parliament) on 25 October 1922, the Treaty was opposed by Éamon de Valera and a remnant of Sinn Féin. Civil war blighted the first two years of the new state's existence and its legacy had an even more corrosive effect on the Irish body politic. There was a deep division in Irish society and an enduring bitterness between the two sides. That bitterness was in inverse proportion to the small number of wartime casualties; only somewhat over 600 lives had been lost.[21] Éamon de Valera and many of his political associates had been arrested in 1923 and had remained in prison until 1924. The new government had the immense and unenviable task of attempting to administer a country bankrupt at birth. The social question took a secondary place to considerations of law and order in this climate. Reflecting on the post civil-war era in 1936, Professor George O'Brien wrote: 'The anti-treaty party has certainly made the Free State safe for the bourgeoisie.'[22]

The Irish hierarchy had taken the side of the government during the civil war. They had supported William T. Cosgrave in his fight against Éamon de Valera and the anti-Treatyites. The bishops found that that they came to enjoy a position of privilege and influence in post-independent Ireland despite the fact that the British-inspired 1922 constitution was not a particularly Catholic document. However, all the members of the government, with the exception of the Minister for Finance Ernest Blythe, were members of the Catholic Church and the ethos of the new state became distinctively Catholic under the leadership of the President of the Executive Council, William T. Cosgrave. This was reflected in many of the state's new laws and legal initiatives, governing, for instance, censorship, education, and divorce.[23]

The Catholic bishops, therefore, did not feel defensive about the role of religion in the new state. While there was no threat to the social order, the hierarchy sought to initiate a crusade of national moral renewal following the 'lax' ways of post-First World War Europe. Concern over the growth of materialism and the spread of alien influence in the countryside was also a major preoccupation of the clergy and of the hierarchy. Sermons and pastorals regularly returned to those themes and encouraged the shunning of

foreign dances and newspapers. For example, the hierarchy had encouraged the formation of the League of Saint Brigid in January 1920 which was organized to give 'Irishwomen an opportunity of unity against the inroad of foreign immodest fashions'.[24] Lenten Pastorals between 1922 and 1926 dealt specifically with the
p. 280 threat posed by the influx of foreign [evil] literature, immodest dress and ↳ deportment and the growth of sexual promiscuity caused chiefly by the ever-growing popularity of the Dance Hall. After a synod of Irish bishops, held in Maynooth in 1927, a joint pastoral outlined the social obligations of the laity:

> Between the State then or Society and its members there are reciprocal duties and obligations. Rulers and subjects are bound as parts to promote the good of the whole community—the former by securing preservation of peace, protection of rights and promotion of the general prosperity, the latter by obeying all just laws, by faithfully discharging the equitable duties and bearing the burthens allotted to them.[25]

With the development of a close working relationship between the new political élite and the Church, the hierarchy sought to depoliticize the Irish clergy. Similarly, there was no wish to allow members of the clergy to participate in radical social experimentation. There could, however, be cooperation between the Church and labour provided that it was not taken too far.[26] Therefore, Fr. Peter Coffey, one of the more original minds working on the social question in Ireland, found that his work was repeatedly censored during the 1920s. The Sinn Féin revolutionary, Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, who had been suspended from his ministry in 1918, remained ostracized in the 1920s and prevented from performing his priestly duties.[27] Severe ecclesiastical discipline dissuaded other clerics from encouraging innovation in the area of Church-labour cooperation.

The Irish hierarchy were also suspicious of innovations by lay people. Frank Duff, a member of the Department of Finance, founded the Legion of Mary in 1921. This organization was devoted to prayer and the performance of good works. Spreading rapidly, it recruited many lay members who met in discussion groups and recited the rosary. One of Duff's earliest activities was an attempt to rehabilitate Dublin prostitutes in one of the inner city's most notorious red light districts called Monto. He was assisted in his task by the *Garda Síochána* and the Special Branch (the division of plain clothes police). Despite the immediate popularity of the Legion, recognition from the Archbishop of Dublin, Edward Byrne, was very slow in coming. They had received a modified form of benediction from the Archbishop in 1926, but it was not until 1928 that he said that 'they were being sympathetically examined with a view to formal approval'. The Legion of Mary, a very subdued form of the Catholic Action movements elsewhere in Europe, continued to be treated with suspicion until 1933 when Frank Duff received a 'very special blessing' from Pius XL.[28] Even then episcopal and clerical suspicion was not fully removed.

However, the pre-independence debate on political Catholicism did not suddenly disappear after the civil war. Even the ever-cautious Catholic Truth Society published pamphlets entitled *Catholics and Citizenship* by Bishop Thomas Doherty of Galway. A former seminarian and the Minister for Home Affairs, Kevin
p. 281 O'Higgins, wrote an essay entitled *The Catholic Layman in Public Life*. But while there was a ↳ steady flow of such literature it was of a rather cautious kind. Irish bishops were not living in a situation where the state was an enemy. There was no necessity, therefore, to mobilize battalions of political Catholicism in a state where the overwhelming majority of leading politicians of the major parties were bishops *marqués*. Their main objective was to prevent members of the clergy from making ill-judged calls for social experimentation which would upset the equilibrium between the hierarchy and William T. Cosgrave's government.

However, Irish interest in political Catholicism received a significant boost with the publication by Pius XI in 1925 of the encyclical *Quas Primas*, which encouraged the faithful to overcome social and political divisions and unite under the leadership of the Kingship of Christ. The encyclical was published in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* in English and the central address in the Maynooth Union in 1926 was delivered by a

Jesuit, Fr. Edward Cahill, on the theme of the Kingship of Christ in Ireland.[29] Times had changed. Fifteen years before, the union had been debating the role of socialism in Irish society.[30] Cahill founded the League of the Kingship of Christ or, as it was better known in Irish, An Ríoghacht, on 31 October 1926. Its main objects were:

a) To propagate among Irish Catholics a better knowledge of Catholic social principles.

b) To strive for the effective recognition of these principles in Irish public life.

c) To promote Catholic social action.[31]

An Ríoghacht sought to transcend the political divisions of the country; it maintained that it was 'not associated with any political party, and takes no part in political controversy or activities, except where and in so far as the objects of the League (viz., Catholic social interests) are involved'.[32] An Ríoghacht grew swiftly at first but quickly slowed down after study branches had emerged mainly in Dublin and Belfast. It later spread to Kilkenny and to a number of smaller Irish towns. Initially An Ríoghacht had a very active *Ard-Comhairle* (National Executive), including George Gavan Duffy and Sir Joseph Glynn. An early document, *Notes on the Projected National Programme*, stated that 'A Catholic social programme, such as the League contemplates would be directed towards the gradual building up of a Christian state on the lines of the national tradition but suited to modern circumstances.'[33] The movement argued that a number of areas such as forestry, fishing, the manufacturing industry, and the control of credit and currency were in need of careful and detailed economic planning to bring about the resurrection of the Irish state and the resolution
p. 282 of the social problem. Education was singled out as an area in need of protection ↳ against statism.[34] This was difficult to justify, and may account for the group's lack of mass appeal. In a country where education was denominationally controlled there was not the remotest prospect of the State taking over control of anything. Cahill, the main ideologue of the group, belonged to a generation who were formed in the years after the fall of Parnell. He remained throughout his life a strong nationalist and Irish speaker.[35] Cahill was also heavily influenced by right-wing Catholic ideas prevalent in France after the First World War; he devoted himself to the exposure of alleged Jewish-Freemason-Communist conspiracies in Ireland. One of his first published works, *Freemasonry and the Anti-Chrhtian State*, appeared in 1929 and it quickly went into a second edition. The pamphlet was described by an enthusiast as being indispensable to every Catholic who wished to see Catholic principles in public life.[36]

Contrary to the view that An Ríoghacht was politically non-partisan, Cahill argued that the remedy for the social question lay in the reorganization of Irish political life.[37] He urged a strong united Catholic vanguard to counter 'the false principles or fatal exaggerations of Liberalism, Collectivism, Communism, and the ultra-nationalistic and secularist aspects of Fascism'.[38] He identified a combination of factors as causing the weakening of Irish society: emigration, the gradual decline of the *Gaeltacht* (the Irish-speaking region in Ireland), the 'un-Christian' press, and cinema and betting. He concluded:

> In Ireland we are confronted with the strange anomaly of a profoundly Catholic nation devoid of most of the features of a Catholic civilization, and suffering from all the material, and very many of the mental defects which usually result from an un-Christian social regime.[39]

Cahill's call to Irish Catholics to establish a new social order did not win mass support.[40] An Ríoghacht never became a national movement like Duff's Legion of Mary. It did, however, exert an influence on a number of Irish intellectuals.

The Holy Ghost priest, Fr. Denis Fahey, was a close confidant of Cahill's and he shared the Jesuit's more extreme ideas.[41] Fahey, however, had been more exposed to the extreme conservative elements within continental Catholicism while studying in France and in Rome. In France he digested the anti-Semitism
p. 283 prevalent in Catholic society at the time of the Dreyfus Affair. He admitted later that he was influenced by

↳ the Holy Ghost Father, Henri L'Floch and the Jesuit Louis Cardinal Billot. Both were leading advocates of the condemned *Action Française* movement.

Initially Fahey avoided any involvement in Catholic groups—though he did promote the work of An Ríoghacht on occasions—and it was not until 1945 that he established his own group, Maria Duce. Fahey's main academic concern was a desire to explain the reasons for the breakdown of moral and spiritual order in contemporary society. A neoscholastic, he argued that 'the Supreme Way' given by God was the 'true order'. Under constant threat from the forces of naturalism and evil, Fahey identified the enemies of this true order as Satan, the Jews, and others. All conspired to form the International Communist Movement of the twentieth century. This final enemy was a carefully orchestrated movement, directed by Jewish financiers and Freemasons. On the need for Catholic political action, Fahey stated:

> A truly Catholic social order would be opposed on the one hand to Protestant liberalism and on the other hand to Jewish Marxism…Political thought and political action, therefore, in an ordered state, will respect the jurisdiction and guidance of the Catholic Church, the divinely instituted guardian of the moral order, remembering that what is morally wrong cannot be really politically good. Thus the natural or temporal common good of the State will be always aimed at in the way best calculated to favour the true development of human persons, in and through the Mystical Body of Christ. The Civil Power will then have a purer and higher notion of its proper end, acquired in the full light of Catholic truth, and political action, both in rulers and ruled, will come fully under the influence of supernatural life.[42]

Fahey, who accepted the authenticity of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion long after they had been discounted as a forgery, was proposing the establishment of a confessional state in Ireland with the Catholic Church as the established Church.

The extremism and radical confessionalism of both Cahill and Fahey did not gain the approval of their respective religious superiors. The Irish bishops, moreover, were not remotely interested in seeking to give pastoral direction to such disruptive and divisive ideas. Alive to the danger of encouraging the development of a mass following for clerics of such extreme views, the hierarchy actively discouraged the development of any interest among the diocesan clergy of the country in the ideas of both men. No pastoral need would be served by endorsing the slavish importation of continental Catholic radicalism. Ireland was, *de facto*, a Catholic state where the Church had secured a privileged position during the first decade of its existence. The development of popular political Catholicism, at variance with the governing party, could only have undermined the power and the influence of the bishops.

4. Vocationalism

The publication of *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931 gave new impetus to the international Catholic social movement and that militancy spread to Ireland at a time when the political future of the Cumann na nGaedheal government seemed uncertain. The following decade witnessed a vigorous growth of clerical and
p. 284 lay interest in various ↳ Irish adaptations of Catholic Action. Journals such as *Catholic Bulletin, Catholic Mind*, and *Irish Monthly* redirected their editorial emphasis and disseminated the ideas of Catholic social teaching. The emergence of new magazines in the first half of the 1930s further reflected the growing importance of that movement; the magazine *Outlook* was founded in 1932, *Up and Doing* in 1934, and *Prosperity* in 1935. *Hibernia* was taken over by the Knights of Columbanus in 1936 with the assistance of Denis Fahey and converted into a mouthpiece for Catholic Action. Neo-corporatist ideas were accepted in Irish universities.

An Ríoghacht, which set about reorganizing its *Ard Comhairle*, saw a growth in the number of its study-circles after 1931. A weekly review of the activities of the organization was established which, it was felt, would 'gradually unfold a national programme of social reconstruction'.[43] The short-lived magazine, *Outlook*, stood above other popular Catholic Action journals of its day. Despite the fact that it lasted for less than a year, it included amongst its contributors a number of the better minds in Ireland at the time: Gabriel Fallon, Alfred O'Rahilly, Francis McManus, and the future president of Ireland Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh. The Professor of Commerce at University College Cork, John Busteed, in 1933 ascribed the origin of Irish economic problems to the failure of Irish statesmen and politicians to recognize the proper implications of papal social teaching.[44]

An Ríoghacht and the contributors to *Outlook* advocated with growing stridency the need for the establishment of 'Agricultural Colonies' in fulfilment of vocationalist ideals. One article in the journal stated: 'The rural surplus population hitherto absorbed by emigration has to be settled on the unoccupied or uncultivated land; and a new social and economic system under which the peasant can find economic independence, security and independence must be gradually built up.'[45] These colonies would be based on a small community principle where each proprietor would have a small farm sufficient to support a family; all other property would be in the control of the local bishop; all members of the colony would be trained in various skills to ensure the successful maintenance of the community; education would be provided by religious orders. The final objective was as follows: 'These co-operative colonies would probably form the nucleus and beginning of a great agricultural cooperative society, which would gradually spread over the country and inaugurate a new social system akin to the mediaeval Christian social organisation.'[46]

As An Ríoghacht worked on the national programme of Agricultural Rural Colonies, its founder and director, Fr. Edward Cahill devoted himself in 1932 to the completion of his major work, *The Framework of a Christian State*. Cahill devoted the first section of the book to an attack on the previous three-hundred years of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the 'Democratic Revolution' of the Enlightenment. His earlier ideas, which had appeared in pamphlet and article form, resurfaced in this text. Modern society was, in his view,
p. 285 very much a product of the machinations of a ↳ Jewish-Freemason-Communist conspiracy bent on the overthrow of the true Christian State found in the Middle Ages. The second section of his book developed the concept of the true Christian State and outlined its essential elements: the family; husband and wife; parents and children; master and servant; the social status of women; the State; justice; charity and patriotism. Cahill held very definite views on the new political order:

> That the people may retain the real control of the State, it is essential that the municipal, industrial and professional units be strongly organised, and that the deputies for the governing assembly should at least be the representatives of the organic units, of which the State is made up...It is essential, too, that these deputies be well instructed in Christian social principles, and that the people themselves be organised under such systems as now obtain in the countries in which Catholic Action is highly developed.[47]

5. Fianna Fáil and Political Catholicism

Éamon de Valera and his political party Fianna Fáil (founded in 1926) were not slow to harness Catholic social ideas in their political programme. During the 1932 election campaign, Sean T. O'Kelly, the Vice President of the party, stated that 'the Fianna Fáil policy was the policy of Pope Pius XI'.[48] This reflected the strong religious fervour in Ireland during this period. In 1929 the country had celebrated the centenary of Catholic Emancipation and to mark that occasion diplomatic relations were exchanged with the Holy See. The apostolic nuncio, Archbishop Paschal Robinson, arrived in Dublin in January 1930 amid scenes of great fervour. During the run-up to the 1932 election, the governing party Cumann na nGaedheal discovered a plot by a breakaway left-wing section of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to foment revolution. The President of the Executive Council, William T. Cosgrave, immediately circulated the Irish hierarchy with copies of confidential reports 'proving' the existence of a serious threat to the very survival of the liberal democratic state. The hierarchy responded with alacrity and issued a condemnation of the IRA and other front organizations.[49]

While it is customary for academics to view the division in the 1930s between the Irish Republican Army and the Catholic lobbies as a left–right cleavage, this is to ignore the weight of evidence which ought to place a significant section of the IRA in the camp which supported the reconstruction of Irish society along lines advocated by the papal encyclicals of Pius XI.[50] Sinn Féin leaders, such as Mary MacSwiney, were never converted to Marxism or to the ideas of the Irish left. As late as 1929, the Sinn Féin leadership had petitioned the Pope in loyal terms not to send a papal nuncio to Ireland. They did so as devout Catholics.[51] The shift to
p. 286 the left by certain ↳ IRA leaders in the early 1930s, split the 'republican' movement. The brand of republicanism espoused by Mary MacSwiney had little in common with the anticlerical philosophy of leaders of the Second Spanish Republic like Manuel Azaña.

A devout Catholic, de Valera was once held in suspicion by the Holy See who feared a repeat of Spanish anticlericalism in Ireland once de Valera took over. However, in reality, de Valera viewed with great suspicion the extremism of the left-wing faction of the IRA on the one hand and the different extremist Catholic leaders on the other. Éamon de Valera himself was no stranger to Catholic social study, keeping in touch with Cahill. He attended An Ríoghacht meetings on a number of occasions. He had been educated by the Christian Brothers and by the Holy Ghost Fathers. He had a very refined understanding of ecclesiastical politics and he knew how to weigh the importance of the thoughts of individual clerics.

While the Vatican viewed with apprehension the arrival of de Valera in office in 1932, there were many Irish Catholic integralists who hoped for a quick conversion of official policy to one of confessionalism:

> The new government which has just come into power should, in the interests of public health and morals, enforce a variety of theatre censorship, and a more rigid film and literature censorship, than the one which exists at present. There can be no proper fostering of Irish culture—not to speak of Catholic culture—until this is done. This is the day of Catholic Action and it is up to the government of a Catholic country to be a Catholic Actionist Government in every sense of the word.[52]

But the enthusiasts were disappointed. Cahill was among their number. Presenting de Valera with a copy of his book in August 1932, the leader of Fianna Fáil replied in Irish: 'I am grateful for the copy of your book, *The Framework of a Christian State*, that you gave to me. It is worth reading and criticizing, and I am sure that often I will return to it for advice and direction in the years that are coming.'[53] That was a reply prompted by the friendship between the two men and by their shared interest in the Irish language rather than by any serious espousal by de Valera of the cocktail of prejudices which passed in Cahil's work for historical analysis. While de Valera was a devout Catholic who remained unattracted by vocationalist radicalism and

continental models of Catholic Action, he could not lightly ignore the ideas of Edward Coyne and others who were highly respected members of Irish society. Moreover, vocationalism could not be so lightly dismissed because of its espousal of radical nationalism. Part of the reason for the movement's longevity in Ireland, even after the excesses of fascism, was the manner in which it had identified the alien nature of Irish social structures. Ireland had gained political independence in 1922, but its social structures were rooted in the twin ideologies of liberalism and capitalism. Therefore, in order to bring about a catholic nationalist transformation of Irish society it was necessary to try to eliminate the influences of the Reformation and the Enlightenment so prolifically demonized by Cahill and by his circle.

p. 287 Éamon de Valera avoided any attempt to reconstruct alternative Irish institutions ↳ in accordance with the philosophy of political Catholicism and Catholic Action. While de Valera had a social philosophy which was heavily influenced by his Catholic upbringing, he was never a convert to the ideas of Cahill. To have sought to implement such a radical restructuring of Irish society would have been opposed root and branch by the civil service. It would also not have pleased Fianna Fáil who had won power in 1932 and had consolidated their hold on government by winning an overall majority in the January 1933 election. In power, de Valera was quickly coverted to the pragmatism of the art of the possible. Moreover, he had inherited a constitutional situation which he regarded as wholly unsatisfactory. It was substantially to that area, and to his portfolio of external affairs, that he turned his attention between 1932 and 1938. But his concern was much more preoccupied with attempting to break the link with Britain than with restructuring Irish society according to the thinking of Fr. Edward Cahill and those who thought like him. As will be seen later, the civil service were the strongest critics of vocationalism. Moreover, the majority of the new cabinet members were not even vaguely interested in the reconstruction of Irish society according to the social teaching of the papal encyclicals. Ultimately Keynes was to prove much more influential than the popes.

The Irish hierarchy felt that they could make their peace with the new government. The bishops, together with Fianna Fáil, continued to oppose any radical manifestations of social Catholicism which would bring Church and State into conflict on economic questions. The social and political profile of the State had been established in 1922 and the bishops had little wish to lend their names to a politically disruptive vocationalist movement. However de Valera, who needed to control the spread of the vocationalist movement, instructed a prominent civil servant, Thomas J. Kiernan, to furnish him with a study of how corporatism could be applied to Ireland. Kiernan worked hard and reported on 29 March 1933 to Sean Moynihan, Secretary to the Department of the President, that 'the scheme could be adopted in Ireland with advantage but the key to its success would be the personnel'. He supposed it was trite to 'say that no scheme can work well unless you have the men to work it but this applies especially to a nationwide organisation such as is involved in the corporative system'.[54] In the accompanying memorandum, Kiernan explained that such organization of the national economy was not fascist. It predated those movements. Kiernan argued that the entire aim of the corporatist system was 'to prevent exploitation, to give an incentive to initiative and to create an organism in which all working citizens find their place in the economic organisation of the nation'. Kiernan idealized the Italian Fascist system and he laid out a blueprint for Ireland. His presentation to de Valera was both radical and rightist. In view of the fact that Fianna Fáil had an absolute majority in the Dáil, even de Valera's intellectual curiosity about corporatism waned. The Kiernan model was never taken up. At no point did either de Valera or his Fianna Fáil government, according to available evidence, ever seriously contemplate changing the Irish political system in favour of either corporatism or Catholic
p. 288 vocationalism. Other domestic and international ↳ political events intervened to make such a model of society even less attractive to Fianna Fáil.

In 1933 a fascist movement, known popularly as the Blueshirts, appeared in the State. Lasting about two years, it was founded as an association of ex-Free State Army members. Similar in outlook to the Belgian Rexist movement, the Blueshirts perceived themselves as being a nationalist, Catholic, and corporatist organization. Only Christians of Irish parentage were permitted to join. The cross of Saint Patrick was

adopted as its insignia. The movement openly espoused a corporatist philosophy, drawing its inspiration from both Mussolini and also from *Quadragesimo Anno*. The first issue of the *Blueshirt*, which appeared on 5 August 1933, carried the following headline in large print: 'THE NATION'S CALL—AN IRISH PRIEST'S VIEWS'. This unidentified Irish priest fully endorsed the objectives of the Blueshirts. He wrote:

> I believe, however, that there is at least one group of selfless Irishmen now answering those pertinent questions along the sane, practical and constructive lines.... Young men of sterling worth have hearkened to the whispering spirit of a Nation straining to emancipate herself from the incubus of the internecine strife and party bitterness.[55]

The leader of the Blueshirts, General Eoin O'Duffy was an ex-Commissioner of the Garda Síochána (Police Force) who had been sacked by the new De Valera government in late 1932. Under the management of this self-styled Irish *duce*, Cumann na nGaedheal was to merge with the Army Comrades Association (ACA) and the small National Centre Party to form Fine Gael. No stranger to Irish political life, O'Duffy had commanded the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Monaghan during the War of Independence (1919–21). General Michael Collins, according to Tim Pat Coogan, regarded O'Duffy at one point as his political successor.[56] But O'Duffy had not pursued a political career in the 1920s. He was to serve as Chief of Staff of the army for a brief period. His most enduring contribution to the new state was the role that he played in the establishment of the Garda Síochána. However in August 1933 O'Duffy, who mistakenly felt that he had widespread support inside the Gardai and the army, found himself on the wrong side of the law. His tactic was to engage in an immediate trial of strength with de Valera. O'Duffy decided to hold a mass march of Blueshirts to the cenotaph outside Leinster House to commemorate the deaths of the former Vice President of the Executive Council and Minister for Home Affairs, Kevin O'Higgins (shot by the IRA in 1927) and Collins (killed in a civil war ambush in County Cork in August 1923). The similarity to Mussolini's March on Rome was not lost on the government and rumours circulated of an impending coup attempt. De Valera banned the proposed march and O'Duffy was forced to back down. By 1934 O'Duffy's erratic style of leadership was causing concern among his party colleagues. He had never been elected to the Dáil where a strong supporter of parliamentary democracy, William T. Cosgrave was leader of Fine Gael in Dáil Éireann. Failing to gain a substantial victory for Fine Gael in the local elections of 1934, O'Duffy was pushed to one side by his party on 21 September. The leadership returned to ↳ W. T. Cosgrave. Meanwhile, O'Duffy
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continued in politics. He established the National Corporate Party, but this had almost completely disappeared by 1936.

With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Irish public opinion rallied behind the cause of the Spanish Nationalist forces. This emotional reaction was fuelled by press reports of atrocities perpetrated by the Spanish Republican militias, and descriptions of the civil war as a 'battle between Christianity and communism in which there can be only one victor'.[57] Meanwhile, de Valera and the Fianna Fáil government steered a judicious diplomatic course by signing the Non-intervention Act and maintaining diplomatic relations with the Madrid government. Resentment against this policy soon manifested itself with the formation of the Irish Christian Front in August 1936. The movement was characterized by its ability to organize mass demonstrations in the main towns and cities around the country. It was led by Patrick Belton, TD (Member of the Irish Dáil), whose political allegiance changed from Fianna Fáil in 1927 to Independent, and to Fine Gael in 1933. He was a fierce critic of de Valera's foreign policy especially in regard to the latter's stance on the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935.[58] Many of the sentiments he raised in parliamentary debates during the Abyssinian crisis were repeated in the summer of 1936.

The primary aim of the Irish Christian Front was to provide medical supplies for the Nationalist forces.[59] The movement was vociferous in its condemnation of the de Valera government for refusing to recognize the Nationalist regime and maintaining diplomatic relations with Madrid. However, the movement's agenda also included the demand for the establishment of a Catholic political order in Ireland. In the

beginning this was set out in the vaguest terms. However, Belton subsequently elaborated his policy to cover the areas of political and social organization. In January 1937 Belton announced to the press that:

> We believe that the fundamental law or constitution of a Christian society should itself be openly, clearly and unequivocally Christian in letter and in spirit;...We hold that this Fundamental Law should enshrine the basic Christian principles pertaining to political, social and economic life.[60]

He continued to demand that the rights of the family, the origin and nature and limits of political authority, and the right to private property should all be enshrined in this proposed Fundamental Law.

The Irish Christian Front earned for itself the praise of *Ossevatore Romano* in 1937 and the hierarchy singled out the 'laudable zeal' of the Irish Christian Front for commendation at their annual meeting in Maynooth in October 1936. Cardinal Joseph MacRory admired their efforts and attempted to forge links for them with members of the Spanish hierarchy. However, as the initial reaction to the Spanish Civil War died down after the summer, a more sober tone began to be employed by the newspapers and commentators. With reports of the air raid on Guernica (26 April 1937) and the realization that this civil war was not a clean crusade against
p. 290 communism, ↳ public support for the Irish Christian Front waned. Besides, the public were wary of Belton's stated objectives. The hierarchy's support also began to wane after the summer, with unease being expressed by some members as to the real use of the funds. Furthermore, the hierarchy had never endorsed Belton's demands for a Fundamental Catholic Law. A Special Branch (Irish security police) report on the movement commented that many priests distrusted the main aim of the movement.[61] Meetings were often disrupted by hecklers claiming that the Irish Christian Front was a front organization for O'Duffy and the Blueshirts.[62] By mid-1937 the organization's activities were confined to Belton and his small coterie of followers and its projected aim of establishing a true Christian social order in Ireland had disappeared. It did however have success in sending medical supplies to the Nationalists. O'Duffy also reappeared in the Irish Christian Front. However, he translated his concerns for Spain into an ill-starred attempt to send a brigade to fight for Franco. He stated that this brigade would assist the Nationalists, 'convinced that the cause of Franco is the cause of Christian civilisation'.[63]

Despite O'Duffy's extremism and open association with fascism, a number of prominent clerical and lay academics continued after the departure of the 'green *due*' to advocate the establishment of a corporate order in Ireland. Fr. Edward Coyne, a confrère of Cahill's in the Jesuits, was among the most influential spokesmen for the ideas of vocationalism. The Professor of History at University College Cork, Dr James Hogan, and the Professor of Classics at University College Dublin also lent respectability to that ideology. Tierney's critique of the democratic system centred on his view of the unworkability of the capitalist system based as it was on the philosophy of liberalism. He saw the 'third way' proposed in Catholic social teaching as the path forward for Irish society.[64]

In an article in *Studies* entitled the 'Reform of Democracy', Tierney argued that the existing democratic system led to over-centralization of power and privilege and the dictatorship of the elected minority. Instead democracy had to return to its origins in the organic state through 'a Corporate Chamber representing not accidental *ad hoc* associations, but organic vocational groups which should have their own functions and duties in society'.[65] But this model of society, as has been seen earlier, had been rejected by de Valera. That did not mean, however, that he was not prepared to pick pieces of that philosophy and graft them on where appropriate to his policy.

Continental-style Catholic Action movements did not meet with much success in Ireland in the mid-1930s. Frank Duff's devotional Legion of Mary grew in strength and influence in the decade. It eschewed politics. But that did not prevent it from continuing to remain under suspicion by the Archbishop of Dublin, Edward Byrne, who continued to withhold recognition of its *Handbook* up to his death in 1940.[66] Even the most
p. 291 diluted form of organized lay Catholic Action was sufficient to put ↳ members of the Irish hierarchy on the

defensive. Where, however, there was a mention of communism it was customary for the hierarchy to be less discriminating. The Legion of Mary remained very vigilant on that question. Their branches served as a training ground in Catholic apologetics. The hierarchy were, however, very cautious of the activities of extremist bodies like the anti-communist League of St Patrick in 1934 and a range of other small ginger groups led by militant Catholics.[67]

De Valera, meanwhile, looked with some favour upon other rural-based neo-corporatist developments which in the 1930s did not threaten in any way Fianna Fáil's dominance of the Irish political system. Muintir na Tíre (People of the Land) was founded in 1931 by Fr. John Hayes, a curate at Castleliny in County Tipperary. Influenced by both the work of the Irish Land League in the 1880s and the Belgian *Boerenbond of* the 1890s, Muintir na Tíre focused on the need for self-help schemes in agricultural areas. It also sought to emphasize the need to disseminate Catholic social principles. Stephen Rynne describes how Muintir na Tíre was established in the countryside.[68] Writing in 1938, Fr. Hayes stated that for four years Muintir na Tíre had been:

> endeavouring to sow the seeds [of corporate organization] in rural Ireland. It has been endeavouring to prepare minds. Action in the realms of thought precedes action in the realms of fact. It is only by a change of mind we can hope to succeed in changing the realm outside. Rural weeks and Rural week-ends have been the method.[69]

6. Political Catholicism and the 1937 Irish Constitution

The ability of the Catholic social movement to influence the thinking of Éamon de Valera was tested and again found wanting in 1936 and 1937 when the drafting of the new constitution was taking place. The final document was characterized by the strong influence of Catholicism on its contents. This was very much evident in the framing of the preamble articles 40 to 44 on fundamental rights. The preamble read as follows:

> In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity, from Whom is all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions both of men and states must be referred,
>
> We, the people of Éire,
>
> Humbly acknowledging all our obligations to our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ, who sustained our fathers through centuries of trial,
>
> Gratefully remembering their heroic and unremitting struggle to regain the rightful independence of our Nation,
>
> And seeking to promote the common good, with due observance of Prudence, Justice and Charity, so that the dignity and freedom of the individual may be assured, true social order attained, the unity of our country restored, and concord established with other nations, Do hereby adopt, enact, and give to ourselves this Constitution.

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Article 41 drew heavily on Catholic social teaching for its concept of the family and the rights of women. Section 2, subsection 1 and 2 reads:

> In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

Section 3 of article 41 contained the provision that:

> The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack.
>
> No law shall be enacted providing for the grant of a dissolution of marriage.

Article 43 enshrined a contemporary Catholic social teaching view of the rights of private property. Article 44, while guaranteeing freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion, acknowledged 'the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of its citizens'. The article on religion went on 'to recognise' the other Churches in Ireland at the date of the coming-into-operation of the constitution. Article 45, concerning the directive principles of social policy, conveyed some of the radicalism of Catholic social thinking. There was very little in the articles cited which might be described as vocationalism or political Catholicism. However, the constitution did incorporate vocationalism in relation to the corporatist composition of the upper House of the Oireachtas (parliament), the Seanad (Senate). But that had much more to do with the consolidation of Fianna Fáil clientelism and the securing of a majority for the governing party in the upper House of the Oireachtas than it had to do with loyalty to the implementation of Catholic corporatist principles.[70]

Despite the international climate of the 1930s and the persistence of the vocationalist lobbies at home, the new Irish constitution remained quite selective in the manner in which it relied upon Catholic social teaching. Catholic rightist groups, in particular, were very disappointed with the final document. Activists like Alfred O'Rahilly, Edward Cahill, and Denis Fahey were radically opposed to the final wording of article 44 which failed—in their view—to establish the Catholic Church as the one, true church. The future archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, who had done so much to help de Valera draft the constitution, remained decidedly uneasy about article 44.[71] But he felt that he had to compromise and live with that compromise. However, his confrère in the Holy Ghost Order, Denis Fahey, was not quite so reconciled to that situation. He was to campaign until his death in 1954 for a constitutional amendment to remove the existing article 44 and to have it replaced with a more confessional formula. The section of the article, quoted above, was removed in a referendum in 1972. However, de Valera's constitution of 1937 was perceived to be a very Catholic document by Pius XII.[72]

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The constitution was passed by referendum on 1 July 1937. Fianna Fáil was returned to power by a very slender majority in a general election held on the same day. On 27 April 1938 the new Seanad met and on 4 May Douglas Hyde was elected, unopposed, first president of Ireland. He entered office on 25 June. That same year, de Valera signed an all-important Anglo-Irish agreement which brought the 'economic war' to an end and returned the ports which the Treaty of 1921 had left in British hands. In a snap election in June 1938 de Valera secured a greater majority on the strength of his having signed that agreement and upon procuring the return of the treaty ports. As world war approached, Fianna Fáil was safely and firmly in power. De Valera was to remain in office until 1948.

Political Catholicism in Ireland in the 1930s had not been very successful. In contrast, Frank Duff's Legion of Mary and Fr. Hayses's Muintir na Tíre exhibited healthy signs of attracting a greater following. As all the political parties in the Oireachtas were at least nominally Catholic, the challenge which faced social Christians in other European countries was not in evidence.

7. Vocationalism's Last Stand

It was precisely because de Valera was in such an unassailable political position in 1938 that he proved to be indulgent on the question of political Catholicism. The Irish vocationalist movement had refused to die. It had made something of a revival in the unpromising international climate of 1938–9. This was partially helped by the urgings of the hierarchy to introduce Catholic broadcasts from Radio Éireann. Originally, such a scheme had been proposed by Dr Frank O'Reilly of the Catholic Truth Society. Members of the hierarchy, accompanied by O'Reilly, had an informal meeting with the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) in 1937 following which an informal committee was set up. It consisted of Sean Moynihan, Thomas J. Kiernan, then Director of Broadcasting, and O'Reilly. A number of schemes were put forward but in October 1939 a meeting of the hierarchy decided to drop the proposal for Catholic broadcasts.[73]

In the mean time, de Valera had agreed on 10 January 1939 to the setting up of a Commission on Vocational Organisation. There had been a series of radio lectures in early 1938 on *Quadragesimo Anno*. This had revived interest in vocationalism. The broadcasts were also a response to the hierarchy's concern about the need for Catholic programmes on the national radio station. It would be a mistake to view this development as indicating a new-found interest by de Valera in the workings of vocationalism. The Taoiseach had a very precise understanding of what he understood vocationalism to mean. It did not reflect the integralist strategies of Cahill or Fahey. Writing to T. J. Kiernan in 1938 when the lecture series was being planned, the secretary of the Department of the Taoiseach, Maurice Moynihan, wrote:

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> From what I know generally, however, of the Taoiseach's mind in the matter, I think that he would like to have lectures of a rather practical nature included in the proposed series. He is particularly interested in the actual workings of Vocational Organisation where it has been tried. He has expressed interest from time to time in the Whitley system of Industrial Councils in Great Britain, feeling as he does, that in some respects conditions in that country are more nearly akin to our own than conditions in Continental countries.[74]

It is telling that de Valera felt that Irish social conditions had more in common with Britain than with the Catholic states of the continent.

Soon after the completion of this series of broadcasts a motion—sponsored by Michael Tierney and Frank MacDermot (an Independent)—was passed in the Seanad on 21 July 1938 favouring the setting-up of a Commission on Vocational Organisation. It was decided that the commission should be about twenty-five strong and de Valera sought suggestions for nominations from various sources. The newly appointed Bishop of Galway, Michael Browne, was encouraged to take the chair when both men met in August 1938. The government approved the terms of reference and appointed the members of the Commission at their meeting on 10 January 1939. Browne was in the chair. There were representatives from Labour, Employers, Agriculture, and Church and University groups. Browne proved to be an unfortunate choice as chairman. Highly intelligent and very hard-working, he had a very strong temper and was inclined to show his irritation on occasions.[75] The Commission held its first meeting on 2 March 1939. It worked swiftly and did not allow the outbreak of war in September to interfere in its schedule. Browne had overseen the study of a number of European countries where corporatism had been adopted.

The Commission laboured on through the war years. But as the war progressed, vocationalism diminished in importance and relevance. The horrors of Nazism and Fascism became more apparent. Even neutral Portugal, led by the Catholic dictator Salazar, lost its lustre as did the regime of General Franco. Ireland remained neutral during the war. Éamon de Valera's government found it very difficult to maintain that status and to provide for an island country on the periphery of a convulsed European continent.[76] Fianna Fáil fought a general election in 1943 which did not leave the party with a commanding majority in the Dáil.

Risking the strategy of 1933 and 1938 when Éamon de Valera had secured majorities in two snap elections, he went to the country in 1944 and repeated his earlier successes.

The Commission on Vocational Organisation's report was published in August 1944. Lemass, anticipating its publication, laid out his philosophy of economic development to an audience at the Trinity (College) Philosophical Society on 28 October 1943. It was completely at variance with the findings of the commission. Lemass was not alone in his feelings of antipathy towards the report. Senior civil servants were furious
p. 295 about the manner in which the bureaucracy had been treated in ↳ the document. The comments of individual departments were very critical. On 21 February 1945, Lemass told the Seanad:

> I have read the report of that commission on more than one occasion and I have been unable to come to any conclusion as to whether the querulous, nagging, propagandist tone of its observations is to be attributed to unfortunate drafting or to a desire to distort the picture. The commission spent a great deal of energy upon its researches, and a very long time in preparing its report, and I think it is unfortunate that the report, when published, should be such a slovenly document.[77]

Bishop Browne was incandescent with anger and he engaged in a testy debate with Lemass which did his cause no good even if he ultimately won the argument. The Jesuit Edward Coyne had been the bishop's main adviser throughout the controversy. He wrote on 11 April 1945 that there was a possibility that the government might be persuaded by Lemass to issue a white paper in an effort systematically to discredit the report.[78] But that did not happen. Some months later, the Minister for Agriculture, Dr Jim Ryan, was chosen to put an end to all controversy on the matter. A little less confrontational and less controversial in style than Lemass, he spoke on 20 November 1945 in the Mansion House, Dublin. In diplomatic language, he let it be known that vocationalism was no longer particularly relevant. There the matter rested. The Commission on Vocational Organisation was buried without trace. That particular manifestation of political Catholicism had run its course. In autumn 1945 there were few illusions left about the virtues of vocationalism, corporatism, or fascism. Italy and Germany were in ruins and Spain and Portugal were no longer role models for any significant Irish social movement.

8. Political Catholicism in Post-War Ireland

The perfunctory dismissal of vocationalism by Éamon de Valera and his cabinet left many of the committed members resentful towards the Fianna Fáil government. The movement which had shown so much promise in the 1930s drew in 1945 upon an ever-diminishing pool of interested followers. Bloodied but unbowed, a loyal group of Fr. Denis Fahey followers established Maria Duce (Under Mary's Leadership) in summer 1945. While this group caused some disruption, it never had more than about forty active members. It was, however, to attract a far larger group to its various study evenings. The inspiration for the establishment of that organization came also, according to its members, from the dissatisfaction of a group of laymen who had corresponded with the press on matters of Catholic interest. But 'repeated rebuffs' made them aware of the need to unite: 'Truth, it seems, is poor propaganda, and the vested interests who direct the policies of these papers are careful that its startling and naked reality should not obtrude itself on the public
p. 296 attention.'[79] There ↳ was little need for Maria Duce activists to identify those hidden forces; they were the Freemasons, the Jews, and the Communists. The war against the manifold enemies of Catholicism was declared yet again.

In the words of its founders this organization pledged 'to vindicate the Social Rights of Christ the King'. Its purpose was to foster among its members 'a knowledge of and a zeal for Christ's Kingly Rights in every sphere of human activity'. Membership was open to all Catholics of 17 years of age or over. After a three

months' probation if judged worthy they would be 'enrolled at one of the ceremonies of consecration that take place at regular intervals'. Maria Duce had an integralist programme for the establishment of social order which, in essence, favoured the establishment of a confessional state:

> The Catholic Church is the One True Church and ought to be acknowledged as such by States and nations. The non-Catholics ought always to be treated in accordance with the teaching of the Church and the principles of Christian Charity, so that the rights of all human persons be respected.
>
> The state must recognise the Catholic Church as Divinely appointed to teach man what favours or hinders his supernatural destiny.
>
> The Social Doctrine contained in the Papal Encyclicals ought to be reduced to practice in such wise as to promote the virtuous life of individual members of the mystical Body of Christ organised in families, Vocational Associations and States.

Maria Duce's charter went on to outline the need to organize society along vocational lines in order to 'avoid the pitfalls inherent both in the unbridled individualism favoured by Capitalism and in the excessive State-control sponsored by Communism'.[80]

Maria Duce, dissatisfied with the press, established its own newspaper *Fiat*. It was first produced on a hand duplicating machine and appeared to enjoy some success. Published every six weeks, the paper pursued many of the old themes familiar to readers of Fahey's work. There was an article in issue 10 entitled ' "Anti-Semitism" at Oberammergau'. It reproduced many of the arguments earlier advanced by Fahey:

> We may be able to do little to foil the Jewish attempt to use Russia as a means for Bolshevizing Europe, but we must resist all attempts to impose Jewish Naturalism here. We must particularly oppose the Jewish control of money and credit and the powerful Jewish campaign for Naturalism in the Press and the Cinema, all of which are weapons in the 'softening up' process for Bolshevism.... If we wish to survive as a Nation and preserve our Catholic civilization, we must, however, combat the undeniable Judeo-Masonic attempt to promote Naturalism in this country, whatever form it may assume.

Fiat also reproduced an article on the alleged Judeo-Masonic control of the United States, of the United Nations, and of other international organizations. An article in *Fiat* (no. 27) listed the 'Jewish Rulers of UNO', the 'Jews on the Atomic Energy Commission', and the 'big three' who comprised the 'secret
p. 297 government of the ↳ U.S.A.'. *Fiat* also wrote in defence of Senator Joseph McCarthy; 'no political figure in the United States to-day, or possibly even in the whole history of the great Republic, has become the target of so much organized slander and vilification as Senator McCarthy. No bounds are known to the venomous attacks made daily on his person by apologists of subversive and anti-Christian elements.' That 'campaign of hate' had even been in evidence in the editorial (31 March 1953) of Fianna Fáil's *Irish Press*. Closer to home, *Fiat* attacked the Irish Association for Civil Liberties (IACL). In issue 29, it sought to make a Masonic connection between the local association and sister organizations in Paris and in New York. Seán O'Faoláin, the Irish novelist, was the president of the IACL. Other members included Senator Owen Sheehy Skeffington, the painter Louis Le Brocquy, and other prominent Irish academics and public figures. A rival organization, the Irish Theatre and Cinema Patrons' Association, was supported by Maria Duce which expressed considerable concern over the negative impact on local society of such alien forms of mass culture.

Who joined Maria Duce and what was its relationship to Church authorities? The second question is easier to answer than the first. It proved to be little more than a study group which met on a Sunday to listen to a

lecture by Fr. Fahey. Its president was Tom Agar and vice president Thomas Roseingrave. The latter was a major intellectual force inside the organization. Although he believed in the basic philosophical tenets of Maria Duce, he tended to exercise a moderating influence over the type of tactics which the movement sought to employ. Roseingrave, who was also involved in Muintir na Tíre, was very close to Fahey, who saw him as one of his brightest lay disciples. But if the contents of *Fiat* are used as an indication of the intellectual calibre and vision of the membership of Maria Duce then it was a movement sadly lacking in talent or charisma. It had a core membership in Dublin but did not, however, spread to the countryside in any numbers.

But Maria Duce did enjoy the recognition of John Charles McQuaid. A member of the Holy Ghost order before becoming archbishop in 1940, McQuaid had been a highly intelligent member of a much younger generation of seminarians. There was a mutual respect between Fahey and McQuaid. Moreover, McQuaid was not un-appreciative of the lifelong efforts and dedication of Fahey. Neither was he unsympathetic to Fahey's Mariology and theology of Christ the King. But he was cautious and the relationship in the post-war period was never particularly close. Nevertheless, McQuaid was prepared initially to give a qualified sanction to the work of Maria Duce. His initial response may have been partly conditioned by his deep concern about the onset of cold war, the growing power of communism, and the dangers of the outbreak of a third world war.

The Archbishop hardly regarded the replacement of Éamon de Valera's Fianna Fáil government in early 1948 with a five-party coalition led by John A. Costello as a disaster. Quite the reverse. He was a close friend of the new Taoiseach who would prove to be much more compliant in his handling of Church–State issues than his predecessor had been. The Inter-Party government of 1948–51 was quite integralist in its thinking.
p. 298 By March 1949 membership forms for Maria Duce also contained the ↳ line '*permissu Ordinarii Diocesis Dublinensis*'. But Maria Duce remained a movement obsessed with the ghosts of the inter-war years. It was involved in a number of very embarrassing episodes, such as the picketing of the Theatre Royal during a visit of Danny Kaye whom they alleged had communist connections. Earlier, Maria Duce had attacked Gregory Peck and Orson Wells. Maria Duce also directed much of its activities in 1950 towards the radical reform of the religious article in the constitution, article 44. This involved an organized letter-writing campaign to the Department of the Taoiseach. McQuaid acted on 14 February 1951 against Maria Duce. His secretary, Christopher Mangan, wrote to Tom Agar on 14 February 1951:

> I am asked by His Grace the Archbishop to inform you that he has decided to withdraw the *Permissu Ordinarii Diocesis Dublinensis*—from your six-point programme. The Archbishop bids me therefore to request you to refrain from printing this permission on any further literature, which you may have printed.
>
> His Grace would also appreciate it if you will kindly refrain from styling, in your literature, your organisation as a Catholic Action body, since an essential requirement of a body being Catholic Action is that it be approved by the Bishop of the Diocese; this approval has not been given by the Archbishop to your organisation.[81]

In the course of the next few months a clash between Church and State over the Mother and Child Bill (the provision of free post-natal care to mother and child up to the age of 16) brought the government crashing down. Éamon de Valera and Fianna Fáil returned to power with the help of a number of independents. Between 1951 and 1954 when de Valera again lost power to an Inter-Party government, Church and State were at loggerheads over changes in secondary education (1954) and the redrafting of the Mother and Child provisions. On both issues, de Valera and Fianna Fáil proved tough and ultimately defeated episcopal intransigence.

Meanwhile, the fortunes of Maria Duce continued to wane. Its cause temporarily received what they thought was a major advance when Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani delivered a speech at the Lateran university in Rome

on 2 March 1953. This was to mark the occasion of the 14th anniversary of Pius XII's election as pope. Its comments on the relationship between Church and State greatly pleased the leading members of Maria Duce. Fahey sought and obtained permission to translate it into English and publish it as a pamphlet. In a letter to Ottaviani on 6 September 1953, Fahey congratulated him on his 'luminous, timely and courageous lecture on the duties of a Catholic State in regard to religion', and asked for his approval for the translation. Fahey went on to explain that he had been lecturing about the Kingship of Christ for more than twenty years 'so your Eminence's splendid pamphlet is a source of precious encouragement for me and I thank our Blessed Mother for it'. Fahey was convinced that the lecture would 'certainly do an enormous amount of good in Ireland'. The real purpose of Fahey's enthusiasm for Ottavani's speech was that he saw it as a means
p. 299
of reopening the debate regarding the Constitution. The ↳ hierarchy, and the Archbishop of Dublin in particular, must have been concerned about the divisiveness of having the article 44 debate raised again. It had been resolved in 1937 not entirely to the satisfaction of McQuaid. But he was prepared to live with the compromise. Moreover, there was neither political support nor widespread enthusiasm among Irish Catholic intellectuals for any reversal to a confessional state model. This was quite evident in the contribution by prominent Irish laymen in the Catholic journals.

For example, a future president of Ireland, Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh (1974–77), lectured in the West of Ireland in March 1953. The content of his speech did not please Roseingrave who wrote to Fahey on 25 April:

> I was strongly tempted to tell him what I thought of his Galway speech. Even if we overlooked the defective Art 44, the government are proceeding just now (as they have already done) to introduce legislation in conflict with Catholic Social teaching and against the directive principles so excellently expressed in the constitution....So we must hit back hard. The march of events have each day convinced me more and more that unless the air is cleared, principles clearly defined, without ambiguity which is often today passed off for fact or diplomacy, and a firm stand made, it will be very difficult for us to avoid the experience of the Spain of 1936.[82]

So, if Fahey and his colleagues had hoped to use Ottaviani's speech as the basis for a new campaign, they were again disappointed by the Archbishop. The archdiocesan censor refused permission for the publication of the pamphlet.

There was, therefore, to be no integralist revival in Ireland in the 1950s. Fahey died the following year and Maria Duce quickly diminished in membership. In 1972, following the retirement of John Charles McQuaid, a group of Maria Duce Catholics met at Leopardstown to mourn the departure of the Archbishop. A cadre of the old guard had continued to meet through the 1960s.[83] The works of Fr. Fahey were kept in print by the devout. But Maria Duce remained very much a fringe group. The Legion of Mary and Muintir na Tíre, unlike Maria Duce, continued to play an important part in the Catholic life of the country. But neither could be categorized as fitting into the concept of political Catholicism. Irish Catholics continued—as they had done in previous decades—to find political expression through the major political parties—Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Labour—all of which belonged ideologically to the Christian Democratic bloc in Europe in the 1950s.

9. Conclusion

Éamon de Valera retired as Taoiseach in 1959. In becoming president later that year, he formally retired from political life. Although he was to serve as president for two terms, de Valera did not actively continue to influence the direction of Irish society. But the 1960s, for all the apparent radical change, remained very much part of the era of Éamon de Valera. His successor, Sean Lemass, had always displayed a much keener
p. 300 economic mind than that of his predecessor. Despite being hampered by the ↳ poor electoral performance of Fianna Fáil in the general election of 1961, his government proved to be the most innovative government since de Valera had taken office in 1932. Lemass quickly put an end to the quest for autarchy. He positioned Ireland in the early 1960s to become a member of the European Economic Community—but failed due to the veto of General Charles de Gaulle against the British in 1963. Nevertheless, Lemass sought to modernize Irish society. A national television service was established and that helped reinforce the impact of the Second Vatican Council which brought new ideas into the Irish Church. In this respect the 1960s certainly marked an important era of change for the Catholic Church. Integralism was not entirely dead. Small fringe parties continued to fulminate against the pluralist philosophy of figures such as the former Fine Gael Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald (1983–87) which was perceived to pose a challenge to traditional Catholic values. Such parties, however, could not hope to win mass support and most Irish Catholics continued to identify with the major political parties. Catholicism thus remained a central element in Irish politics; but movements of political Catholicism remained on the margins.

Notes

1 See e.g. P. Blanshard, *The Irish and Catholic Power* (London, 1954); F S. L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890–1939* (Oxford, 1979).
2 K. Heskin, *Northern Ireland: A Psychological Analysis* (Dublin, 1980).
3 C. C. O'Brien, *Parnell and his Party, 1880–1890* (Oxford, 1957), 297; also id., with M. McEntee, *A Concise History of Ireland* (New York, 1972), 123–4.
4 H. Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century* (London, 1904).
5 W. P. Ryan, *The Pope's Green Isle* (London, 1912).
6 M. O'Riordan, *Catholicity and Progress in Ireland* (London, 1906).
7 P. O'Donnell, 'The Clergy and Me', *Doctrine and Life*, 24 (Oct. 1974), 539–44.
8 See, notably, V. Conzemius, 'The Place of Daniel O'Connell in the Liberal Catholic Movement of the Nineteenth Century', in D. McCartney (ed.), *The World of Daniel O'Connell* (Dublin, 1980); H. Rollet, 'The Influence of O'Connell on French Liberal Catholicism', ibid.
9 E. R. Norman, *The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion, 1859–1873* (London, 1965), 135–90.
10 See, notably, E. Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Home Rule Movement in Ireland, 1870–1874* (Dubiin, 1990).
11 See, notably, D. Miller, *Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898–1921* (Dublin, 1973); E. Larkin, 'Church, State and Nation in Modern Ireland', in id. (ed.), *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (New York, 1976).
12 J. J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society, 1848–1918* (Dublin, 1973); T. W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846–82* (Oxford, 1982).
13 Miller, *Church, State and Nation*, 269–7**3**.
14 Quoted from J. Connolly, *Labour, Nationality and Religion* (Dublin, 1910), 16; no exact transcript of Kane's Lenten Lectures exists but Connolly's quotations from it are allegedly very accurate.
15 Ibid.
16 J. Kelleher, 'On Strikes', *Catholic Bulletin*, 1/1 (Dec. 1911), 590.
17 See esp. L. McKenna, 'Character and Development of Post-War Socialism', *Studies*, 8 (Sept. 1920) and id., 'The Bolshevik Revolution in Hungary', *Studies*, 10 (Sept. 1922).
18 W. Moran, 'Social Reconstruction in an Irish State', *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 15 (Apr. 1920), 109.
19 Ibid. 260.
20 See P. Lynch, 'The Social Revolution that Never Was', in T. D. Williams (ed.), *The Irish Struggle 1916–1926* (London, 1966), 53.

21 See, notably, C. Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland* (Oxford, 1983); J. J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912–1985* (Cambridge, 1989), 56–9. In regard to the reaction of the bishops to the Civil War see D. Keogh, *The Vatican, the Bishops and Irish Politics, 1919–1939* (Cambridge, 1986).
22 G.O' Brien, *The Four Green Fields* (Dublin, 1936), 100–1. A neglected work that contains many interesting observations on Irish politics and nationalism.
23 D. Keogh, *The Vatican, the Bishops and Irish Politics*, 123–57, and J. H. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1980), 24 ff.
24 *The Irish Catholic Directory* (1921).
25 *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 30 (Nov. 1927), 532.
26 Ibid. 535.
27 D. Carroll, *They have Fooled You Again: Michael O'Flanagan (1876–1942), Priest, Republican and Social Critic* (Dublin, 1993).
28 L. Ó. Broin, *Frank Duff* (Dublin, 1982), 32–40.
29 Fr. Edward Cahill, the most important and prolific member of An Ríoghacht, was born in Callow, Co. Limerick, in 1868; he received his secondary education at Mungret College, Co. Limerick and three years of theological training at Maynooth. He entered the Society of Jesus on 8 June 1891 and was ordained six years later. His career in teaching took him first back to his Alma Mater at Mungret but he moved to Milltown Park in Dublin in 1924 as Professor of Church History, Lecturer in Sociology, and later as spiritual director.
30 E. Cahill, 'Ireland and the Kingship of Christ', *Record of the Maynooth Union* (1925–6).
31 *An Ríoghacht Constitution*, Cahill Papers, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.
32 Ibid.
33 *Notes on the Projected National Programme*, Cahill Papers, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.
34 Ibid.
35 For a more detailed discussion of this period in Irish intellectual history, see esp. T. Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858–1928* (Oxford, 1987).
36 *Irish Catholic* (Feb. 1929).
37 E. Cahill, *Ireland's Peril* (Dublin, 1930), 28–9; see also id., *The Irish Catholic Social Movement* (Dublin, 1932); id., *An Alternative to Capitalism* (Dublin, 1936). The full text of this pamphlet later appeared as a series of articles in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 34/9 (Sept. 1929), 34/10 (Oct. 1929), 36/12 (Dec. 1930), 37/2 (Feb. 1931).
38 Id., 'The Catholic Social Movement', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 36/12 (Dec. 1930), 576.
39 Id., 'The Social Question in Ireland', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 34/9 (Sept. 1929), 223.
40 Id.,'The Catholic Social Movement', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 37/2 (Feb. 1931), 123.
41 Born in 1883 in Kilmore, County Tipperary, he attended the Holy Ghost run Rockwell College between 1895 and 1900. At the turn of the century, Fahey entered the noviciate of the Holy Ghost Congregation in France, Returning to Ireland for study, he made his final vows in 1907. Later, he travelled to Rome to study in the Gregorian and the Angelicum, taking doctorates in theology from both institutions. Ordained in Rome in 1911, Fahey returned to Ireland in 1912 and took up a teaching post at the Holy Ghost-run school Blackrock College as Professor of Moral Theology.
42 Fahey, *Social Rights of Christ*, 112–36.
43 Cahill Papers, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.
44 J. Busteed,'The World Economic Crisis and "Rerum Novarum" ', *Studies*, 20/7 (July 1931), 23.
45 *Outlook*, 1/5–8 (30 Jan.–20 Feb. 1932).
46 Ibid.
47 E. Cahill, *The Framework of a Christian State* (Dublin, 1932), 626.
48 *Irish Independent*, 11 Feb. 1932.
49 D. Keogh, 'De Valera, the Catholic Church and the *Red Scare*, 1931–1932', in J. P. O'Carroll and J. A. Murphy (eds.), *De Valera and his Times* (Cork, 1983).
50 See id., *Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1994), ch. 2.
51 See id., *Ireland and the Vatican: The Politics and Diplomacy of Church-State Relations 1922–1960* (Cork, 1995), ch. 2.
52 *Assist Irish Franciscan Monthly* (May, 1932).
53 Cahill Papers, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.
54 Dept. of the Taoiseach, S10183, National Archives, Dublin.
55 *Blueshirt, 5 Aug*. 1933.
56 T. P. Coogan, *Michael Collins: A Biography* (London, 1990), 339.
57 *Irish Independent*, 16 Aug. 1936.
58 See D. Keogh, *Ireland and Europe, 1919–1989* (Cork, 1990), 63–97.
59 Ibid.
60 *Irish Independent,25* Jan. 1937.

61 There is a detailed special Branch file on the activities of the Irish Christian Front. See Dept. of Justice, D/34/36, National Archives, Dublin.
62 Ibid.
63 E. O'Duffy, *Crusade in Spain* (Dublin, 1938), 11.
64 *United Irishman*, 6 Jan. 1934.
65 M. Tierney, 'Ireland and the Reform of Democracy', *Studies*, 23/91 (Sept. 1934), 381.
66 L. O. Broin, *Frank Duff; A Biography* (Dublin, 1982), 43–58.
67 In 1934 a group of prominent lay and clerical figures formed the League for Social Justice and Charity. This was a discussion group whose aim was influence Irish governments to adopt papal principles of social reconstruction. There were a number of such groups spread throughout the country.
68 S. Rynne, *Father John Hayes* (Dublin, 1960), 157.
69 J. Hayes, 'Vocational Organisation for Farmers and Farm Labourers', *Irish Monthly* (Sept. 1938), 596–611.
70 Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland*, ch. 2.
71 Id., 'The Constitutional Revolution: An Analysis of the Making of the Constitution', *Administration* [Dublin], 35/4 (1988), 4–85.
72 Id., *The Vatican, the Bishops and Irish Politics 1919–1939* (Cambridge, 1986).
73 Sean Lemass, Memorandum to Cardinal William Conway, 19 May 1965, Dept. of Foreign Affairs, Irish Embassy to the Holy See, 14/121, National Archives, Dublin.
74 See S10812, Dept. of the Taoiseach, National Archives, Dublin.
75 There is ample evidence of this in the personal papers of Bishop Michael Browne, Galway diocesan archives.
76 See Keogh, *Ireland and Europe 1919–1989*, ch. 3.
77 *Seanad Debates*, 29. 1323–4,21 Feb. 1945.
78 Edward Coyne to Browne, 11 Apr. 1945, B/8–44, Browne papers, Galway Diocesan Archives, Galway.
79 Leaflet 'Fiat: Its History and Aims', in Maria Duce (1), Edward Fahey papers, Archives of the Holy Ghost Fathers, Dublin.
80 Maria Duce leaflet, Maria Duce (2), Edward Fahey papers, Archives of the Holy Ghost Fathers, Dublin.
81 Fr Christopher Mangan to Tom Agar, President of Maria Duce, 14 Feb. 1951, Denis Fahey papers, Archives of the Holy Ghost Fathers, Dublin.
82 See correspondence files, Denis Fahey Papers, Holy Ghost Archives, Dublin.
83 S. O'Keefe, 'Maria Duce is Alive and Well and Living in Dublin', *Hibernia*, 9 Aug. 1974.