



PIETY & PRIVILEGE

CATHOLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOLING IN
IRELAND AND THE
THEOCRATIC STATE,
1922-1967

TOM O'DONOGHUE
& JUDITH HARFORD



OXFORD

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1

Introduction

For centuries, the Catholic Church (the Church) wherever it was involved in education around the world, insisted it had a right to provide and organize its own schools, staff them as it wished and teach denominational doctrine within them. It was equally adamant in various decrees it issued that while nation-states could lay down standards for secular curricula, pedagogy, and accommodation in all schools within their geographical jurisdictions, Catholic parents should send their children to Catholic schools and should be able to do so without suffering undue financial disadvantage.¹ Thus, from the Pope down, the Church expressed deep opposition to increasing state intervention in schooling especially during the nineteenth century.² Associated action it took, however, was often to no avail. As a result, in Europe for example, by the end of the 1920s it was satisfied with the school system in only a small number of countries that included Scotland and the Netherlands.³ Ireland was another. Here the majority of both primary and secondary schools were Catholic schools whose management the State left in the hands of priests, religious teaching brothers, and female teaching religious, while simultaneously accepting financial responsibility for maintenance and the payment of teachers' salaries.⁴ The schools' authorities in return were obliged to teach a State-prescribed national curriculum and allow government officials to inspect teachers, buildings, and facilities.

Patterns in the nature and extent of the Church's control of secondary schooling in Ireland from the early 1920s until 1967 constitute the foundation of this book. Here 'Ireland' refers to the area of the twenty-six counties that has existed as a distinct political entity since 1922, following exit from the United Kingdom. Within this jurisdiction the Church exercised its power primarily through its

¹ W. J. Callahan and D. Higgs, eds. *Church and Society in Catholic Europe of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

² T. C. Hunt and R. J. Nuzzi, eds. *Catholic Schools in the United States: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2004); T. C. Hunt, E. A. Joseph and R. J. Nuzzi, eds., *Handbook of Research on Catholic Education* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2004).

³ J. Coolahan, *Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning: A History of Irish Education, 1800–2016* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2019). For North America Quebec has also been identified. See J. Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971).

⁴ J. Walsh, *The Politics of Expansion: The Transformation of Educational Policy in the Republic of Ireland, 1957–72* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); T. Walsh, *Primary Education in Ireland, 1897–1990* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012).

twenty-seven bishops who, from the middle of the nineteenth century, had shown themselves to be thoroughly loyal to the Pope in Rome⁵.

A core theme running through those patterns mentioned above is that over the period of consideration only a small number of males and females who left primary school in Ireland continued their schooling. For most of those that meant attendance at one of two types of schools, namely, vocational schools and secondary schools. The larger proportion attended the latter, the great majority of which were run by the Church, while the smaller proportion attended non-denominational vocational schools run by vocational education committees whose teachers taught a two-year course that was essentially practical and oriented towards the world of work.⁶ That pattern did not change until after 1967, the year in which the government of the day introduced free second-level education. Within a decade a great expansion in the provision of higher education, including in universities, had also taken place. Such was the change in the education landscape overall by the mid-1970s that schooling across the nation was beginning to appear radically different from what it had been for most of the previous half century.⁷

Our central argument illustrated throughout this book is that prior to the period of major change mentioned above, the Catholic Church in Ireland, and especially from the time of national independence in 1922 until 1967, resisted questioning by non-clerics of its overall approach to education. As a result, it opposed involving lay people, including parents, in the exercise of what it claimed was its right and responsibility to provide secondary schooling. The State acquiesced willingly, thus allowing priests who were teachers, religious teaching brothers, and female teaching religious to promote unhindered sets of pedagogical, administrative, and leadership practices aimed at the salvation of souls and the reproduction of fellow clerics and a loyal middle class.⁸ That situation, in turn, led to the promotion of piety and the upholding of class privilege as core characteristics of secondary schooling.

⁵ D. J. Keenan, *The Catholic Church in Nineteenth Century Ireland, A Sociological Study* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1983); D. W. Miller, *Church, State and Nation in Ireland 1898–1921* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973).

⁶ M. Clarke, 'Education for Girls in Ireland: Secondary and Vocational Curricular Provision 1930–1960', *History of Education*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2016, pp. 79–102; J. Logan, *Teachers' Union: The Teachers' Union of Ireland and Its Forerunners in Irish Education, 1899–1994* (Dublin: A. and A. Farmar, 1999).

⁷ J. Coolahan, *Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning*; Walsh, *Higher Education in Ireland, 1922–2016*; T. White, *Investing in People. Higher Education in Ireland from 1960 to 2000* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2001).

⁸ D. H. Akenson, *A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922–1960* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975); B. Titley, *Church, State, and the Control of Schooling in Ireland 1900–1944* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983).

Successive governments were pleased with the circumstances, partly because the great majority of the nation's politicians and public servants were themselves loyal middle-class Catholics. Equally pleasing to them was the fact that the Church met much of the cost of funding secondary school education,⁹ and in so doing was prepared to meet the needs of the mercantile class, the public service, and the professions, for educated individuals in their late teenage years. In addition, the teaching religious played a crucial role in the State's project of harnessing schools as part of its Gaelic nation-building project. Because of those circumstances and of mutually reinforcing objectives, both institutions were able to pursue their interests in schooling largely untrammelled. At the same time, as detailed later, the Church was the dominant power at all times, and this dominance ensured the system was shaped to ensure Church interests were safeguarded.

In the chapters that follow, we elaborate on our position detailed so far. Here however, by way of further contextualization, we outline general patterns in the history of Catholicism and education in Ireland along with related developments internationally in order to provide temporal, spatial, and academic frames within which the overall exposition at the core of the book can be located. In addition, we provide a brief description of a number of theoretical positions that inform our analysis.

*

A variety of education traditions developed in Ireland throughout the course of history. In the sixteenth century, for example, when there was a significant Protestant minority in the country, schooling became an instrument of the Tudor conquest.¹⁰ Catholicism, nevertheless, continued to be the religion of the great majority and remained so throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when a series of 'Penal Laws' was passed aimed at depriving the 'native' Irish landholders of all rights to property, religion, and education.¹¹ The response of many among the Catholic gentry was to go into exile, while some who remained and were able to hold onto their properties, sent their children to Catholic schools in Europe. Within Ireland, itinerant teachers provided some elementary education throughout the country for poorer Catholics who could afford it. That often took place in 'hedge school' buildings that were usually private houses or barns.¹² A variety of voluntary groups also established schools to educate Protestant children.¹³

⁹ D. Tussing, *Irish Educational Expenditures: Past, Present and Future* (Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, 1978).

¹⁰ S. G. Ellis, *Ireland in the Age of the Tudors, 1447–1603: English Expansion and the End of Gaelic Rule* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1998); C. Magin and S. G. Ellis, *Ireland in the Age of the Tudors, 1447–1603: English Expansion and the End of Gaelic Rule* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015).

¹¹ S. Connolly, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dundalk: Dundalgan, 1985); R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Macmillan, 2007).

¹² A. McManus, *The Irish Hedge School and Its Books, 1695–1831* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004)

¹³ R. Steven, *An Inquiry Into the Abuses of the Chartered Schools in Ireland: With Remarks Upon the Education of the Lower Classes in That Country* (Newark, NY: Palala Press, 2015 edition.).

The pattern of formal education provision changed during the latter half of the eighteenth century, primarily due to the relaxation of the Penal Laws.¹⁴ Individual lay Catholics and members of religious orders now established schools, initially to expand the provision of primary school education, while certain proprietors also offered a secondary school education to a small number of the children of the Catholic middle classes.¹⁵ Concurrently, senior clerics worked rapidly to replace a chaotic ecclesiastical administration structure with one that was highly organized,¹⁶ while the Catholic bishops and clerics began to cooperate with successive British governments in efforts to realize a mutual aim of pacifying the majority of the population so that they would give allegiance to both Church and State.¹⁷

The nature of the conduct of education is a notable example of what eventuated. A watershed moment was in 1831 when the State established a primary (national) school system, sponsored it, and instituted a national board of commissioners to oversee it.¹⁸ Intended initially to be multi-denominational with strict delimitation between religious and non-religious education, it had developed into an almost totally religious-managed system by the late 1870s,¹⁹ due largely to the sustained agitation undertaken by the Catholic Church, the (Anglican) Church of Ireland, and the Presbyterian Church.²⁰ An outcome was that while the State paid the bulk of the capital costs of running primary schools, parish clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, administered the great majority of them. Furthermore, the buildings in most cases were the property of the Church bodies.

Protestant children in the main attended schools under the ownership and management of the various Protestant denominations. Because, however, the majority of the population was Catholic, the bulk of the primary schools throughout the country were under Catholic Church patronage and with lay Catholics as teachers were, de facto, Catholic schools. In addition, religious teaching orders managed and staffed a number of primary schools especially in the larger towns and the cities, while trustees, who included the local bishop in each Catholic diocese, had ownership in most cases vested in them.

¹⁴ English, *Irish Freedom*.

¹⁵ T. J. McElligott, *Secondary Education in Ireland, 1870–1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981); T. O'Donoghue and J. Harford, 'A Comparative History of Church–State Relations in Irish Education', *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 2011, pp. 315–41.

¹⁶ O'Donoghue and Harford, 'A Comparative History of Church–State Relations in Irish Education'.

¹⁷ T. Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2020).

¹⁸ D. H. Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970); Coolahan, *Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning*.

¹⁹ P. F. O'Donovan, *P. F. Stanley's Letter: The National School System and Inspectors in Ireland 1831–1922* (Galway: Galway Teachers' Centre, 2017).

²⁰ D. H. Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

Parish priests and religious orders controlled appointments to teaching positions and promotion to principal teacher in schools for Catholics. In addition, with the education of primary schoolteachers being almost entirely a Church-run affair and with intake to the primary school teacher training colleges being on a denominational basis,²¹ the clergy rarely had to worry about the religious convictions of employees. At the same time, the Church ensured that teachers followed the State-prescribed timetables and curricula for secular subjects. Equally, it succeeded in obtaining and maintaining a degree of control in secondary or intermediate schooling; from the passing of the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act of 1878²² through to Independence in 1922, an outcome of which was that direct government influence in the sector was at a minimum. In addition, receiving an education at that level for both Catholics and Protestants was almost totally a middle-class preserve.²³

After 1922, the new political administration did not interfere with the existing system of ownership and management of schools. Since the great majority of the Protestant population on the island was located in the new Northern Ireland State, most of the primary schools in the newly independent southern State were Catholic schools, as were most of the secondary schools.²⁴ While the latter remained firmly in private hands, they did receive government financial assistance. Diocesan priests and members of religious orders ran the great majority of them, while clergymen and devoted female members of their churches headed up the small number of Protestant schools. The State, for its part, made clear it wanted no controversy with any of the churches. To impress that, the national Department of Education stated in its first annual report that while it inspected secondary schools and exercised a certain degree of supervision, the State had assumed no responsibility for the appointment of school principals, teachers, and managers.²⁵

A consequence of the State's reluctance to take a leadership role in secondary schooling and its continuation of that policy up until the 1960s was that it was almost impossible for the national Department of Education to engage in far-reaching

²¹ T. O'Donoghue, J. Harford, and T. O'Doherty, *Teacher Preparation in Ireland: History, Policy and Future Directions* (Biggles, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2017).

²² See <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1878/act/66/enacted/en/print.html>

²³ McElligott, *Secondary Education in Ireland, 1870–1921*; C. O'Neill, *Catholics of Consequence: Transnational Education, Social Mobility, and the Irish Catholic Elite 1850–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). J. Harford, ed., *Education for All? The Legacy of Free Post-Primary Education in Ireland* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018). Here we use the term Protestant to include the (Anglican) Church of Ireland, while recognizing that for doctrinal reasons some of its adherents then as now were not comfortable with that classification (preferring to be called Catholics but not Roman Catholics) even though its use was common practice.

²⁴ D. H. Akenson, *A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland, 1922–1960*. (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975).

²⁵ Department of Education, *Report of the Department of Education for the 1925–26–27* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1927).

planning to address social and geographical disparities in provision.²⁶ In 1924, the pattern nationally was one of 493,382 students enrolled in primary schools, while secondary schools only included 22,897 enrolees.²⁷ The number of secondary school students did increase gradually over the next four decades, yet by 1955–1956, it had still reached only 59,306,²⁸ the majority of whom were from the financially better-off sectors of Irish Catholic society. Furthermore, the overall pattern whereby a small, privileged group had access to secondary schooling denied to the majority was of little concern to senior Catholic clerics who oversaw that hegemony.

How the dominant hegemony came to exist and how the Church was able to maintain it has been a neglected area of research in the historiography of education and schooling in Ireland. To make that point is not to ignore the corpus of work built up from the middle of the 1970s, in particular through the publication of several seminal books on education policy in the nation,²⁹ on the history and structure of the education system,³⁰ and on the history of the schools' inspectorate³¹ and the teachers' unions.³² Nevertheless, how the Church promoted piety and privilege through the nation's secondary schools has received minimal attention from scholars.

*

In considering the international context of our exposition overall, it is useful to note that prior to the 1960s, scholars globally engaged in research on various aspects of Christian-run schools, including Catholic schools. By the 1960s, however, the world was, to quote Bruce, in the grip of an irreversible process of secularization,³³ hence enthusiasm for that research waned, influenced in part by the suggestion that the state in many countries would soon have a monopoly of education institutions. Within another five decades though, religion was very

²⁶ T. O'Donoghue, *The Catholic Church and the Secondary School Curriculum in Ireland, 1922–62* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

²⁷ Department of Education, *Report of the Department of Education for the 1925–26–27*.

²⁸ Department of Education, *Report of the Department of Education for the 1955–56* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1956).

²⁹ Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment*; P. Duffy, *The Lay Teacher* (Dublin: Fallons, 1967); M. O'Connor, *The Development of Infant Education in Ireland, 1838–1948: Epochs and Eras* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010); V. Jones, *A Gaelic Experiment: The Preparatory System, 1926–1961, and Coláiste Móibhí* (Dublin: The Woodfield Press, 2006); McElligott, *Secondary Education in Ireland, 1870–1921*.

³⁰ J. Coolahan, *The ASTI and Post-Primary Education in Ireland, 1909–1984* (Dublin: The Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland, 1984); J. Harford, *The Opening of University Education to Women in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008); Walsh, *Primary Education in Ireland, 1897–1990*.

³¹ J. Coolahan and P. O'Donovan, *A History of Ireland's School Inspectorate, 1831–2008* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009).

³² J. Coolahan, *The ASTI and Post-Primary Education in Ireland, 1909–1984* (Dublin: The Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland, 1984); J. Logan, *Teachers' Union: The Teachers' Union of Ireland and Its Forerunners in Irish Education, 1899–1994* (Dublin: A. and A. Farman, 1999); T. J. O'Connell, *100 Years of Progress: The Story of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 1868–1968* (Dublin: The INTO, 1968).

³³ S. Bruce, *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

much back within the public sphere.³⁴ One related development that generated great interest was the expansion of fundamental Christian schools that had taken place in the interim. Concurrently, the growth of minority non-Christian religious schools and the resilience of those provided by the traditional Christian churches also began to receive renewed attention in certain constituencies, including Europe, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

Collectively, various developments including those noted, prompted social scientists to argue that the secularization various scholars assumed had changed modern society may have been less widespread than had originally been thought,³⁵ especially given the growth in 'faith-based schools'.³⁶ Those are education institutions that reflect 'a particular religious world view in the way they are organized, in what they teach, and in the integration of faith and learning'.³⁷ In addition, there were calls for research to be undertaken on a wide variety of related issues, including those of a curricular, pedagogical, management, and leadership nature, due at least partly, in the view of Jackson et al.,³⁸ to the global attention religion had been receiving since the events of 11 September 2001. A number of related scholarly works also appeared. Among those centred on Catholic schooling were studies by Bryk et al.³⁹ on the USA, Grace⁴⁰ on England and Wales, Sweetman⁴¹ on New Zealand, and O'Donoghue⁴² on Australia.

While the growing corpus of research was certainly extensive, elsewhere we have argued that historians need to extend it to illuminate the contexts out of which the situation internationally emerged.⁴³ One can, we propose, gain insights

³⁴ R. Jackson, S. Miedema, W. Weisse, and J. P. Willaime, eds. *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates* (Münster: Waxman, 2007).

³⁵ M. Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2001).

³⁶ S. Shah, 'Educational Leadership: An Islamic Perspective', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2006, pp. 363–85; T. Luckcock, 'Faith in School Leadership: Conceptualising the Distinctiveness and Inclusiveness of Church School Leadership', *Management in Education*, Vol. 21, No. 15, 2007, pp. 15–20.

³⁷ J. Sullivan, 'Faith Schools: A Culture within a Culture in a Changing World', in *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions of Education*, M. deSouza, G. Durka, K. Engerbretson, R. Jackson, and A. McGrady, eds. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), p. 937.

³⁸ D. Lawton and C. Cairns, 'Faith Schools: Some Political Issues and an Agenda for Research', in *Faith Schools: Consensus or Conflict?* R. Gardner, J. Cairns, and D. Lawton, eds. (London: Routledge Falmer, 2005), pp. 1–12.

³⁹ A. Bryk, V. Lee, and P. Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁴⁰ G. Grace, 'The State and Catholic Schooling in England and Wales: Politics, Ideology and Mission Integrity', *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 2001, pp. 489–500.

⁴¹ R. A. Sweetman, *A Fair and Just Solution? A History of the Integration of Private Schools in New Zealand* (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2002).

⁴² T. O'Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith: The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia, 1922–65* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

⁴³ O'Donoghue and Harford, 'A Comparative History of Church–State Relations in Irish Education', *Comparative Education Review*.

on how to proceed from Monsma and Soper⁴⁴ and Madeley⁴⁵ who analysed broad trends in church–state relations in Western liberal democracies. We add to that a number of ‘types’ of such relations historically that can guide thinking on education and schooling. These include a type in which church and state formed a partnership to advance the causes of both institutions, another based on a clear separation between religion and politics, and another yet again in which the state sought equal justice for the plurality of religious and secular views, while neither advantaging nor disadvantaging any of them. Miedema⁴⁶ drawing on the work of Jackson et al.,⁴⁷ proposed a similar typology to classify church-state relations in education both historically and currently within a variety of states in Europe.

Those motivated to conduct related studies would do well to study the distinctive roles played by particular churches in education over the past 200 years and highlight relationships that existed between the state and each of them, including the Catholic Church. On seeking to understand Catholic education policy, for example, Williams⁴⁸ highlighted a need to consider contextual sensitivity both as a Church phenomenon internationally and as a local one with many variations. In similar vein, we hold that the specific case of Ireland indicates how the insights of historians on past social, economic, and cultural relations can illuminate the knowledge base on Catholic education around the world, it being the oldest tradition within Christian schooling, having withstood contestation during different historical periods, including that of the Protestant Reformation.

Notwithstanding its longevity, though, the influence of the Church progressively weakened up until the First Vatican Council in 1869. A ‘decline in vocations, tension between popular piety and the religion taught by the ecclesiastical elite, the dominance of a wealthy urban Church over an impoverished rural one, [and] the difficult relationship between Papal and national authority’ were major contributing factors.⁴⁹ Another was the aggressive manner adopted by the Church in expressing its opposition to an increasingly pluralistic and rationalistic society.

The loss of the Papal States in the nineteenth century further prompted the Church to assert its exclusive claims to truth and authority and to intensify its

⁴⁴ S. V. Monsma, and J. C. Soper, *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997).

⁴⁵ J. T. S. Madeley, ‘A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Church–State Relations in Europe’, in *Church and State in Contemporary Europe: The Chimera of Neutrality*, J. T. S. Madeley and Z. Enyedi, eds. (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 47–68.

⁴⁶ S. Miedema, ‘Contexts, Debates and Perspectives of Religion in Education in Europe: A Comparative Analysis’, in *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, R. Jackson, S. Miedema, W. Weisse, and J. P. Willaime, eds. (Münster: Waxman, 2007), pp. 267–83.

⁴⁷ Jackson, Miedema, Weisse, and Willaime, eds. *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*.

⁴⁸ K. Williams, ‘Faith and the Nation: Education and Religious Identity in the Republic of Ireland’, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 4, 1999, pp. 317–31.

⁴⁹ W. J. Callahan and D. Higgs, eds. *Church and Society in Catholic Europe of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 11–12.

opposition to national control by appealing to the principle of Ultramontanism that signifies 'the man beyond the mountain' (i.e., the Alps) living in Italy (i.e., the Pope).⁵⁰ The assertion by the authorities in the Vatican was that Papal authority is superior to the authority of local, temporal, and other Catholic spiritual hierarchies. Accordingly, a radical departure from the Gallicanism that had long held sway, including in Ireland, was what they promoted. In a strict sense, Gallicanism refers to the control the French monarchy had established over national Catholicism prior to the French Revolution. More generally, however, it signifies ways by which Church officials in various countries became supporters of their respective nation-states and insisted on managing their affairs with minimal interference from Rome.⁵¹

Ultramontanism certainly was the dominant force in the Irish Catholic Church that from the middle of the nineteenth century was politically conservative, exalted papal authority, and promoted a 'dogmatic, combative theology'.⁵² Those traits found expression in the promotion of a hierarchical, strongly centralized and highly organized system of ecclesiastical administration dominated by the clergy.⁵³ Specifically on schooling, the Irish bishops, as with the Church hierarchy internationally, justified their hegemony in the field by referring to proclamations in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Revolutionary Change)⁵⁴ and Pope Pius XI's⁵⁵ *Divini Illius Magistri* (The Christian Education of Youth) of 1929 and *Quadragesimo Anno*⁵⁶ (In the Fortieth Year) of 1931. Likewise, they regularly brought to the notice of their flock that Catholic schooling was expanding, and particularly for the poor, at the elementary school level in traditional Catholic countries as well as in Africa and Asia due to a great wave of missionary work. In this activity, members of religious orders from Ireland worked alongside those from France, Italy, Belgium, and Holland in particular.⁵⁷

On the home front as well, the new orders founded and run by pious and wealthy Irish men and women played their part from the late 1700s in a process of cultural change, class formation, and class consolidation. For that, they utilized schools as a major instrument for 'the imposition of bourgeois values and beliefs

⁵⁰ J. Hitchcock, *The History of the Catholic Church: From the Apostolic Age to the Third Millennium* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012).

⁵¹ E. O. Hanson, *The Catholic Church in World Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).

⁵² Connolly, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, p. 13.

⁵³ J. Newsinger, 'The Catholic Church in Nineteenth Century Ireland', *European History Quarterly*, Vol. 25, 1995, pp. 247–67.

⁵⁴ Leo XIII (Pope). *Rerum Novarum* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1891).

⁵⁵ Pius XI (Pope). *Divini Illius Magistri* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1929).

⁵⁶ Pius XI (Pope). *Quadragesimo Anno* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1931).

⁵⁷ S. Gilley, 'The Roman Catholic Church and the Nineteenth-Century Irish Diaspora', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 1984, pp. 188–207; E. M. Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement: A Historical Survey, 1830–1980* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992); D. Murphy, *Irish Emigrant and Mission Education* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).

on the lower classes'.⁵⁸ The teaching orders of the Church were among the main agents responsible for trying to bring about religious, linguistic, social, and cultural transformations, including in the traditional Gaelic spiritual culture of the poor.⁵⁹

The largest male Irish teaching order established was that of the Irish Christian Brothers, founded in 1802 by Edmund Rice, a Waterford city-based middle-class merchant who made his fortune on the Waterford–Newfoundland provisions' trade.⁶⁰ A complementary major female teaching order was the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, popularly known as the Presentation Sisters, established in 1775 by Nano Nagle, whose ancestors were members of 'the Cork sub-gentry, with landholdings in various parts of the country and commercial and professional interests in Cork city'.⁶¹ Others followed suit. They included Mary Aikenhead who established the Sisters of Charity in 1815; her father was a Protestant physician in Cork and her mother was 'a Catholic of Anglo-Norman descent and a member of the Stackpole family, prominent merchants in the city'.⁶² Later, in 1831, Catherine McAuley, baptized a Catholic and raised by a Protestant guardian from whom she inherited a large sum of money in 1824, established the Religious Sisters of Mercy, popularly known as the Sisters of Mercy. By the end of the twentieth century, this order had become the second-largest Catholic female religious order in the world.⁶³

The activity across much of the world of those orders mentioned above along with those whose origins were across Europe, gained the attention of various scholars from the mid-1960s. One outcome was the publication of such works as Lee's *Catholic Education in the Western World*,⁶⁴ Judge's *Faith-Based Schools and the State: Catholics in America, France and England*,⁶⁵ and Grace and O'Keefe's⁶⁶ survey of Catholic education internationally. Others⁶⁷ provided valuable comparative

⁵⁸ M. Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns: Women, Religion and Cultural Change in Ireland, 1750–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 34.

⁵⁹ That continued to be the case after national independence in 1922. While Catholic schools in the majority English-speaking districts certainly taught Irish to students, they failed to try to address the huge under-provision of secondary schooling for those living in Irish-speaking districts. This point is taken up in some detail in Chapter 2.

⁶⁰ D. Keogh, *Edmund Rice and the Irish Christian Brothers* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008); D. McLaughlin, *The Price of Freedom: Edmund Rice, Educational Leader* (Melbourne: David Lovell Publishing, 2007).

⁶¹ Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns: Women, Religion and Cultural Change in Ireland, 1750–1900*, 16.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶³ C. Clear, *Nuns in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), 50–1.

⁶⁴ J. Lee, ed. *Catholic Education in the Western World* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966).

⁶⁵ H. Judge, *H. Faith-based Schools and the State: Catholics in America, France and England* (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2002).

⁶⁶ G. Grace, G. and J. O'Keefe, eds. *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the Twenty-First Century* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007).

⁶⁷ T. C. Hunt, E. A. Joseph, and R. J. Nuzzi, eds. *Handbook of Research on Catholic Education* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2004).

perspectives. They include De Donini and Torrendell,⁶⁸ who outlined four periods in the development of Catholic education in Argentina over five centuries. The first of these periods is the sixteenth to nineteenth century, when there was no separation between Church and State and all education was Catholic education. The next period is the early post-Independence one (1816–80), when the rising nation-state began to exert more power in education yet schools maintained a strong Catholic ethos. The third period, from 1880 to 1950, was one during which State education expanded. Finally, the period from 1950 to the present witnessed an increase in Catholic education at all levels as the welfare State began to decay and non-State providers were able to avail of increased funding.

Carmody⁶⁹ adopted a similar approach in considering Catholic schools in Zambia, opening with a description of the situation in colonial days when they received State subsidies and detailing the early independence years when the new government centralized and tightened control over a wide range of education activities. Within a short space of time, the Catholic Church became so dissatisfied with arrangements that it handed over its primary schools to the State in 1973. Since then, it has adopted a pragmatic response to the government's priorities of both creating an educated labour force and unifying the country's population in a new nation-state. This includes maintaining partnerships with government, particularly in the provision of secondary school education and teacher preparation.

Griera took a different approach in examining Church–State relations in education in Spain. Presenting her account chronologically, she foregrounded a central theme, namely, that 'historically there has been a wide division on education issues between conservative sections of society (that included the Catholic Church) and progressive sectors'.⁷⁰ That division led to education controversies in Spain being more about ideological questions concerning the role of Catholic schools in the public network than about pedagogy, innovation, and quality. A major consequence, Griera contended, is that most of the education actors' interventions in the education policy process have been reactive rather than active.

Mok⁷¹ in her exposition on Hong Kong concentrated primarily on historical antecedents to the situation there in 2007, highlighting the strained relationship between the Church and the government. She emphasized the Church's fear that religious influence in schools had become diluted following the demise of the British colonial government. In doing so, she provided yet again another

⁶⁸ A. M. De Donini and C. H. Torrendell, 'Catholic Education, State and Civil Society in Argentina', in *International Handbook of Catholic Education*, pp. 211–28.

⁶⁹ B. Carmody, 'The Catholic Church and State Relations in Zambian Education', in *International Handbook of Catholic Education*, pp. 543–62.

⁷⁰ M. del Mar Griera, 'The Education Battle: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Spanish Education System', in *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the Twenty-first Century*, p. 294.

⁷¹ M. M. C. Mok, 'Challenges for Catholic Schooling in Hong Kong', in *International Handbook of Catholic Education*, pp. 751–69.

system-wide case indicating that while the Catholic Church has had concerns about providing and controlling schooling for Catholic students across various parts of the world, the nature of those concerns and how it went about addressing them varied according to context. The same is true of the situation in Ireland.

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While writing this work we were conscious of belonging to an academic community whose members study society from the position of the ideographic discipline of history rather than that of the nomothetic social sciences.⁷² In other words, we are interested more in the descriptive and the particular than in the theoretical and the general. At the same time, we recognize that more than description is required of the historian. Accordingly, we decided to locate our exposition within various contexts, ranging from the local to the international, in order to assist the reader to appreciate what living in the period may have been like and why matters developed in particular ways. The view of narrative historians that one should conduct research only when one has a solid understanding of one's time-period also influenced us. Further, we wish to state that our inability to gain access to the archives of many religious orders had an impact on our efforts to engage in research on this topic in a comprehensive manner. That situation is attributable to the defensiveness of particular archivists arising out of revelations of sex scandals in the recent past relating to minors in Catholic schools.⁷³

Overall, we took a lead in our writing from Clear's⁷⁴ contention that foundational works like this book should concern themselves with the 'whats', the 'wheres', the 'whos', and the 'whys' of one's topic. Accordingly, we felt an approach guided by a set of general questions rather than specific hypotheses would be of most help in seeking to produce the account we envisaged. Equally, we sought to address these key questions in relation to what various social historians have for some time considered to be the most important category types, namely, class, regionality/locality, ethnicity, gender, and religion.⁷⁵ We realized also that as the work would unfold we would be likely to uncover various unanticipated issues worthy of further research and would need to draw the attention of the reader to them. A belief too that our first task should be to provide a general outline of the history of the system of schooling in Ireland, especially since national independence in 1922, and particularly in terms of the role of the Catholic Church in conceptualizing, constructing, and regulating it, also guided us.

⁷² M. Fairburn, *Social History. Problems, Strategies and Methods* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd, 1999); G. McCulloch, *The Struggle for the History of Education* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁷³ B. Titley, *Into Silence and Servitude: How American Girls Became Nuns 1945–1965* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).

⁷⁴ Clear, *Nuns in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*.

⁷⁵ Fairburn, *Social History: Problems, Strategies and Methods*.

While we consulted a range of secondary sources on the history of the period and of the Catholic Church in addressing our tasks, we followed up by interrogating documentary evidence on the vision or moral purpose of the religious teaching orders. In particular, we attended to those aspects of their 'constitutions' that elaborate on how their shared vision was to be realized and to their 'books of customs' that describe desired adaptations to local circumstances.⁷⁶ Equally, we found sources on the memories of teaching religious, lay teachers, students, parents, and other interested parties illuminative, while recognizing that what is available constitutes a slim corpus of testimony.

To assist us in arriving at our interpretations we drew on particular human-science concepts. They include those that guided revisionist historians of education in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s,⁷⁷ inspired to highlight inequality and discrimination in schooling historically. In addition, Bowles and Gintis'⁷⁸ *Education in Capitalist America* provided us with a number of concepts for considering, albeit with caution, whose interests were served by the nature of the relations that existed in schooling in Ireland between the Catholic Church and the State. Equally, we drew upon both 'insider' and 'outsider' accounts. That is to say, we took account of participants' 'definitions of situations', their perspectives, and their ways of thinking, while drawing at the same time on certain fundamental 'objective' sociological concepts.

Our exposition, we add, does not contain copious detail. Instead, influenced by Weber's⁷⁹ notion of 'ideal types', we set out to produce an account that would be helpful for comparative study by virtue of being a 'synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena which are arranged . . . into a unified analytical construct'.⁸⁰ In saying this, we recognize that there were teachers, students, and others who engaged in actions that departed from those we foreground. Accordingly, we invite readers to

⁷⁶ Because of the reluctance of religious orders in Ireland to give researchers access to their archives—a matter mentioned already—we have had to use constitutions and books of customs made available to us by their counterparts in England, Australia, and New Zealand. As they are the same religious orders, we have no reason to believe that the versions used in Ireland differed substantially in any way.

⁷⁷ P. Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (New York: Cornell University Press); W. Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society and Opportunities for Study* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960); P. Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992);

L. Cremin, *The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cuberly: An Essay on Historiography of American Education* (New York: Teachers College Columbia, 1965); M. B. Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy and Schools* (New York: Praeger, 1975); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963); D. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

⁷⁸ S. Bowles, and H. Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 1976).

⁷⁹ M. Weber, *The Theory of Economic and Social Organization* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1947).

⁸⁰ E. A. Shils, and H. A. Finch, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1949), 90.

be open to the possibility that the efficacy of our interpretations lies not only in their capacity to describe what were regular patterns of actions and interactions, but also in their potential to prompt one to ask questions regarding what may have been unusual, exceptional, and even deviant. Furthermore, while we do offer some suggestions on those matters towards the end of the book, we hope that researchers will in the future seek to cast further light on them and on others that may be revealed.

Given the extent to which we draw upon ‘insider’ accounts to illuminate our general area of focus it is apposite we also say a little on the associated research approach we used to generate oral testimony. In investigating what it was like to be a school student, for example, we set out to ensure we had a gender balance among participants and to have the memories of those who were boarding school students recorded alongside memories of those who were day students. Moreover, in conducting interviews with former students, with teachers both religious and lay, and with others, we were not engaged in oral history research in the ‘traditional’ sense where the aim is to gain information about the past. Rather, we produced a ‘topical life story’ for each participant, that being the history of an individual’s life in relation to one phase, aspect, or issue (in this case schooling) given by the person who lived it and solicited by us.⁸¹ Thus, the testimony is about individuals’ memories of how they experienced schooling rather than accounts collected from them when they were at school.

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The various substantive bodies of knowledge and methodological positions that informed our research likewise influenced us in structuring our exposition. We open the next chapter with an account of the political and administrative arrangements of the Irish education system historically. Akenson’s stance that there is a need to portray ‘the outlines of the bureaucracy of the [Irish] education system’ and ‘the political influences upon that outline’⁸² before advancing to consider more specific matters, guided us in constructing it. Our focus is on the assertiveness of the Church in schooling from the time of the establishment of the Irish National School System in 1831 to the introduction of free second-level education in 1967.

We go on to describe the structure of the system of schooling for the period 1922–67, outlining the types of schools that existed at the primary, secondary, and

⁸¹ For detailed accounts on this see G. W. Allport, *The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Research* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1942); N. K. Denzin, *The Research Act* (Chicago, IL: Aldine, 1989); I. F. Goodson, ed. *Studying Teachers’ Lives* (London: Routledge, 1992); V. Minichiello, R. Arone, B. Timewell, and L. Alexander, *In-Depth Interviewing: Researching People* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1991); T. A. O’Donoghue, *Planning Your Qualitative Research Thesis and Project: An Introduction to Interpretivist Research in Education and the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2018).

⁸² D. H. Akenson, *The Irish Education Experiment: The National System of Education in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), vi.