

# 1

## Introduction

Knowledge, they say, is power. One manifestation of the power of the Catholic Church within the independent Irish state in the middle decades of the twentieth century was the virtual monopoly its clergy and the educational institutions under their control possessed over the discipline of sociology. The first university posts in this discipline were filled in 1937, the year in which the voters of the twenty-six-county state ratified a new constitution that blended Anglo-American liberal democratic norms with distinctive new provisions reflecting Catholic teaching. Verbal genuflection before the social prescriptions of papal encyclicals was to found in this document although, as Joe Larragy (2014: 201) notes, ‘Catholic social *power* rather than Catholic social *teaching* was the prevalent factor in the Irish case and for a long time the formula suited an authoritarian church in a parsimonious state dominated by the rural petit bourgeoisie.’ But times, churches and states change. In 1973, when both parts of Ireland entered what was then the European Economic Community (EEC), a secular, professional association of Irish sociologists was also founded.

In this book the rebalancing of power between Church and state in the period between 1937 and 1973 is explored through a case study of the Irish knowledge institutions that engaged in social science teaching and research. Here the aspect of the Catholic Church of greatest relevance is what John Whyte (1980: 16–21) termed the ‘grip on education of unique strength’ it possessed within the southern Irish state. Securing this grip was a great reservoir of clerical person power and a laity hierarchically mobilised and disciplined by devotional innovation and institutional expansion (Mac Giolla Phadraig 1995; Inglis 1998). Leading a movement that constituted the most significant source of popular pressure on that educational system, Gaelic League President Douglas Hyde in 1906 wrote that ‘they [the priests and the church] are always on the spot, they have the women behind them, they can do almost what they like’.<sup>1</sup> The critically important feature of the southern Irish state is its developmental strategy shift from the late 1950s. At this time an uncoupling of public policy from the cultural, political and religious aspirations that fuelled the nationalist struggle for Irish self-government

and shaped government policies in the early decades of independence took place. Newly installed at the centre of the state's project were membership of the EEC, the attraction of export-orientated investment from transnational corporations and the gearing of education to create a labour force that met the requirements of such investors.

With the new state's activism in the education field mainly channelled into attempts to revive the Irish language (Akenson 1975), the southern Irish educational system that began to be transformed in the 1960s was up to that point very largely unchanged from the form in which it had been inherited from the now truncated United Kingdom. It is therefore with the United Kingdom of the 1801–1922 period and the manner in which its governments struggled with, and eventually settled, the Irish University Question that examination of Irish sociology's origins needs to begin.

## Churches and the British state in Irish higher education

According to Boylan (1999: 1) '[T]he two most significant developments in Irish education during the course of the 19th century were the creation of a national system of primary education in the early 1830s, and the establishment of the Queen's Colleges at Belfast, Cork and Galway in the mid 1840s.' Underlying government educational reform efforts were the principles of denominationally mixed education within a hierarchically integrated national structure. Opposed to them were the denominational agendas of the Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian Churches. In the university case, Ireland already had the University of Dublin with its single college (Trinity) and its alignment for more than two and a half centuries with the established Anglican Church. The Queen's Colleges were therefore intended to cater for Catholics and, in the Belfast case, for Presbyterians. Within both these churches opinion was divided as to the acceptability of the new creations. In the Catholic case concessions were sought from and refused by the government before Rome came down on the side of the scheme's opponents. With the Presbyterians, acceptance won the day, although a college (Magee) analogous to the Catholic national seminary, St. Patrick's College Maynooth, in the complete control that the General Assembly exercised over it, was also established in Derry. Having rejected the Queen's Colleges, the Catholic bishops founded a Catholic University in Dublin in 1854, appointing a high-profile English convert from Anglicanism, John Henry Newman, as its first Rector. Newman's *Idea of a University* lives on as a monument to his time in Dublin but, hamstrung by lack of endowments and an absence of recognition for its degrees, the university in the form in which it was founded could not flourish.

Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869 was followed by the passage in 1872 of Fawcett's Act, which removed all religious tests from Dublin University. The effect of this change was to make Trinity College even less acceptable to the Catholic hierarchy than it had previously been. In their eyes it now resembled the Queen's Colleges in its godlessness and the first version of the Irish Catholic Church's 'Trinity ban' dates from this time. As originally formulated in 1875, and reaffirmed by the Maynooth Synod in 1927, this prohibited Catholic clerics from advising or facilitating students in any way to go to Trinity College (Burke 1990).

## Religion versus scientific rationalism

During the 1860s a new factor further complicated the Irish University Question – the rise in Britain of scientific rationalism or Huxleyism. An intellectual movement that increasingly became a professional network as its leading adherents acquired a growing number of academic posts throughout the British Empire (Jones 2001:190–191; O'Leary 2012: 40–41), Huxleyism promoted a reform of scientific education 'which required that the older universities move away from their original character as religious foundations for the training of clergymen and that the curriculum in "sensitive subjects", in particular those which touched on Creation and on human origins, be rid of the influence of theology' (Jones 2001: 189). In August 1874 one of Huxley's closest associates, the Irish-born John Tyndall, delivered a Presidential address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Belfast in which 'he exhorted his fellow scientists to "wrest from theology the entire domain of cosmological theory"' and 'envisaged "the mild light of science" as a powerful liberating influence on the youth of Ireland, and as an effective bulwark against any future "intellectual or spiritual tyranny" which might threaten the welfare of Irish society' (O'Leary 2012: 30; Brown 2005). In October the Irish hierarchy issued a pastoral letter that responded to Tyndall and presented his views as a vindication of their demands for Catholic clerical control over the environment in which Catholics received their higher education that the government had rejected when the Queen's Colleges were established. Tyndall's speech was influenced by what he perceived to be the neglect of science at the Catholic University in Dublin (O'Leary 2012: 30). The failure of the Devonshire Commission to recommend funding for the Catholic University's science faculties had in the same year prompted a Catholic periodical, *The Tablet*, to comment that 'denied endowment and legal recognition, the Catholic University, should, in the opinion of the Royal Commission found and endow chairs open to Messrs. Carpenter, Tyndall, Huxley and Herbert Spencer and all the scientific rationalists of the day' (quoted in Jones 2001: 192).

To sociologists one name stands out here – that of Herbert Spencer, who normally commands a place in any wide-ranging treatment of the classical nineteenth- and early twentieth-century age of sociological theory (e.g. Coser 1977: 88–127; Ashley and Orenstein 1990: 141–171) and is usually the only English theorist to do so. Spencer (1820–1903) was a political Liberal – later a Liberal Unionist – with a strong leaning towards the minimal role of government favoured by *laissez-faire* economists. His social background was that of provincial English Dissenting Protestantism and in his working life he was at various times a railway engineer, an inventor and a journalist. His social circle included leading British natural scientists of his day and aspects of his evolutionary theory of social development are said to have anticipated the biological theory of the evolution of animal species put forward by Charles Darwin, whose work was publicly championed and popularised by T. H. Huxley. Like Huxley, Spencer embraced the agnosticism which, despite its limited appeal in Ireland, was a recurring preoccupation among and a regular target of attack for Irish Catholic writers (O’Leary 2012: 77–80). Spencer never held an academic post but *The Tablet’s* reference to the possibility that he might was, as we will see, not to be the last made to him in the course of Irish university controversies.

## The Royal University and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction

At the end of the 1870s new legislation ushered in a major reorganisation of Irish university education. The three Queen’s Colleges were under the direction of the Dublin-based Queen’s University, whose Senate ‘not only had complete control over examinations leading to degrees and diplomas but prescribed the courses that students must follow in the colleges before they might present themselves for these examinations’ (Moody and Beckett 1959: 225). This was now abolished and replaced in 1882 by the Royal University. Following the London model, this was an examining body whose examinations were taken by students of the Queen’s Colleges, of Magee and of the now renamed Catholic University – in all of which the Royal University funded fellowships – as well by students from a variety of other colleges and individuals pursuing private study. As Moody and Beckett (1959: 289) note, ‘the principle that public money must not be used to subsidise sectarian colleges was at last abandoned, though not openly or explicitly’. At the same time ‘the fellowship system rescued the catholic University College [Dublin] from a situation that had become desperate and started it on a

new career in which it quickly became the rival of the Queen's Colleges for the rewards of the Royal University'. The Senate of the Royal University was, like the Boards which presided over primary and secondary schooling, 'balanced' with an equal number of Protestant and Catholic members. Unloved on either side of the divide, the Royal University nonetheless survived for nearly three decades as the period of Unionist 'killing Home Rule by kindness' passed without any new university education initiative.

That period did, however, witness important changes in the organisation of Irish science, within whose development three broad historical strands have been distinguished. The first has been variously termed the Anglo-Irish or Ascendancy strand. Its practitioners were drawn from the island's Protestant social elite and its practice had predominantly the character of a cultural accomplishment rather than that of a set of activities with practical, economically relevant applications (Yearley 1989: 319–320). Here Irish prominence within nineteenth-century astronomy is cited as a case in point. Trinity College, the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) and the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) were the institutional embodiments of this scientific strand. During the nineteenth century a second 'administration' strand emerged. Here a set of science and arts institutions were taken over (mainly from the RDS) or newly established by the state. Initially the institutions concerned came under the control of a London-based department but, from the creation in 1899 of a Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI) for Ireland, they were 'now being administered as a group by the new department as instruments for the general improvement of Irish science' (N. Whyte 1999: 13). Most of this group clustered around the Leinster House headquarters of the RDS, and to their activities the DATI during its lifetime added new agricultural and fisheries research facilities. The state employees staffing these bodies were mainly English. Other functions of the DATI were to fund scientific and technical instruction in secondary schools and, working with the local authorities created or democratised by the 1898 Local Government Act, to found technical schools supported by a combination of centrally provided funds and local rates. The Technical Instruction Committees which proliferated after 1900 were, as we will see, to survive the department that stimulated their formation. A third strand in Irish science was that of Nationalist scientists, mainly drawn from the Catholics who comprised a majority of the population but a small minority of its scientific community (Finnegan and Wright 2015). The creation of the National University of Ireland in 1908 provided this strand with its major institutional base and it is to this final chapter of the story of the Irish University Question within the politics of the United Kingdom that we now turn.

## The University Question settled?

After two Royal Commissions had investigated different aspects of Irish higher education in the 1900s, Liberal Chief Secretary James Bryce unveiled the government's reform proposals in January 1907. These envisaged the 'enlargement of the University of Dublin so as to include, as well as Trinity College, the Queen's Colleges of Belfast and Cork and University College, Dublin with Maynooth, Galway and Magee as "affiliated institutions"' (Moody and Beckett 1959: 381). Bryce, however, was on the point of leaving Ireland and the task of putting new legislation on the statute book fell to his successor, Augustine Birrell. The new Chief Secretary adopted a very different approach. Trinity, which had mounted a vigorous lobbying and pamphleteering campaign against the Bryce proposals, was left untouched. The Queen's Colleges in Cork and Galway were brought together with University College, Dublin (UCD) as constituent colleges of a formally non-denominational but *de facto* Catholic-orientated National University of Ireland (NUI) to which Maynooth was attached as a 'recognised college'. The Queen's College in Belfast became a third separate Irish university, again a formally non-denominational institution but generally regarded as coming under Presbyterian influence. Achieving a widely accepted settlement in an area of long-running contention, the Irish Universities Act, 1908 was a skilful exercise in the accommodation of conflicting interests but also a precursor of the island's partition.

The Trinity opposition to the Bryce proposals had been partly based on a claim to superior status – 'one of the first-fruits of the scheme is that our degree would be immediately conferred by Act of Parliament on thousands of persons who have never received our teaching nor passed our examinations. This is analogous to a debasing of the currency ... the value of the degree would be at once depreciated.'<sup>2</sup> But it also extended the pattern whereby 'subsequent [to 1874] inquiries into the universities in Ireland were dogged by the question of whether the Catholic bishops would allow the teaching of Darwinism and the generally hostile or evasive answers they gave to this question' (Jones 2001: 193). One Trinity statement proclaimed that 'if the University teaching is to be shared by Colleges which hold conflicting views, there must be constant occasions of strife and bitterness ... it is contrary to our best traditions that the boundaries of science should be fixed, directly or indirectly, by ecclesiastical authority, or the impulse of speculation arrested by clerical intervention'.<sup>3</sup>

Bryce himself had drawn a distinction between 'advanced subjects which are non-controversial' (i.e. where no Catholic/non-Catholic distinction applied) and less advanced ones – a category he elided with that of 'all subjects into which theological controversy may enter'. Mathematics, physics, modern and

ancient languages he considered to be examples of the former. Into the latter category fell philosophy and history, where ‘alternative graduation courses ought to be provided ... I believe that exists already in the case of the Royal University’. In this context Bryce thought the new university ought to retain the legislative provision that already prevented Queen’s College teaching staff from misusing their positions.<sup>4</sup> Here Trinity critics charged that in Bryce’s formulation the provision was to be substantially extended rather than being merely retained, and raised the position of ‘a lecturer advising his class to read some passage in Herbert Spencer’s works’. Because these works were on the Vatican’s Index of Prohibited Books ‘such advice would, from a legal point of view, certainly be “reasonably offensive” to the faith of the Roman Catholic students attending him’.<sup>5</sup>

Despite being yoked together by Bryce, the positions of history and philosophy were quite different. In history, whereas the Catholic University had developed a distinctive approach to the subject, the new dispensation of the 1880s took the curriculum ‘out of the prelates’ hands’. But this was a matter of little practical consequence as ‘Catholic students simply did not attempt degrees in history from the Royal University of Ireland’ (Barr 2003: 73–75). Defining the situation of philosophy was the call made in 1879 by Pope Leo XIII in one of his first encyclicals, *Aeterni Patris*, ‘to reinstate, and to propagate far and wide, the golden wisdom of St. Thomas [Aquinas] – unto the greater glory of the Catholic faith, the advantage of society and the progress of all the sciences’ (quoted in Magrath 1885: 3). A few years later the first Royal University examination papers attracted strong Catholic criticism, although not all Catholic commentators were convinced that abandoning a common programme, a common paper and common prizes were the best means to attain the pope’s end. Fr. James B. Kavanagh, a Royal University Senator and former seminary professor of philosophy, argued that what was needed was the raising of the standard of philosophy in Irish Catholic colleges to the level attained in the Catholic countries of continental Europe. There ‘the philosophical literature of France and Belgium contains many very able works on the modern developments of Mental Philosophy, and in refutation of its many errors’, one example being how ‘the theories of Herbert Spencer are exhaustively discussed and ably refuted by Abbé Blanc’ (J. B. Kavanagh 1886: 29):

This great Pope yearns for a highly educated Priesthood, who are able to combat error effectively and to ‘give reason for the hope that is in them’ ... the system of alternate papers and means, if I rightly understand it, that papers in Philosophy for Catholic students should be set from Scholastic Philosophy and in Scholastic Terminology, and that the Catholic Student should not be required to understand modern

Philosophical systems, or to know the language in which modern Philosophical errors are promulgated ... How can a Catholic Priest give reason for the hope that is within him if a layman submit to him an article in the *Nineteenth Century* or the *Contemporary Review*, and ask him to explain and refute the Philosophical errors it advances, if the Priest has heard of the error for the first time, and is in utter ignorance of the whole subject or if, even though perfectly familiar with the true answer, he cannot apply his knowledge, because his training has been so limited that he knows nothing of the Philosophical language in which the article is written? (J. B. Kavanagh 1886: 19)

Nonetheless from 1887 a system in which candidates were examined on either scholastic or non-scholastic philosophy papers was instituted (Moody and Beckett 1959: 299). Dual arrangements survived the 1908 settlement in the case of Queen's University Belfast (QUB), where uncertainty over its ability to attract students disposed the predominantly Protestant authorities to partially accommodate representations received from the Catholic community through the establishment of a lectureship in scholastic philosophy. This controversial move was subjected to but survived both legal challenge and a degree of persistent opposition from within the university. While relatively few studied scholastic philosophy, Catholic students attended Queen's University in considerable numbers from the outset. The subject's accommodation helped foster cordial relations between that university and the Catholic diocese in which it was situated, with students for the priesthood from Down and Connor regularly graduating in Arts there as well as studying in Maynooth (Moody and Beckett 1959: 406–411; C. Daly 2009: 7–9).

## The Catholic Church and an independent Irish state in Irish higher education

The institutional shape of science and higher education at the time the Irish Free State was created in 1922 is shown in Table 1.1

Alterations began when Leinster House was taken over from the RDS as the site of the new state's parliament. On security grounds, the adjacent Royal College of Science was also displaced from its premises in September 1922. In 1924 the Ministers and Secretaries Act overhauled the ramshackle Irish administrative system, replacing a large number of 'Castle Boards' with a much smaller number of government departments. In 1899 Horace Plunkett had been at pains to try to distinguish the DATI from the usual (and much reviled) Castle Board. His creation was now broken up, with most of the DATI's portfolio of cultural, educational and scientific institutions becoming the responsibility of the Department of Education. In 1926 the University Education (Agriculture



**Table 1.1** Science and higher education institutions in Ireland, 1922

Science and arts institutions	Universities
<i>Clustered around Leinster House, Dublin</i>	National University of Ireland with
National Gallery	constituent University Colleges in
National Library	Cork (UCC) Dublin (UCD)
National Museum	Galway (UCG) and, with the status
Natural History Museum	of Recognised College, St. Patrick's
Royal College of Science	College, Maynooth
Botanic Gardens (Glasnevin, Dublin)	Dublin University/Trinity College (TCD),
Geological Survey (Hume Street, Dublin)	to which Magee College, Derry is linked
Albert Agricultural College (Ballymun,	Queen's University Belfast (QUB)
Dublin) and other DATI-administered	
agricultural and fisheries educational	
and research facilities	

and Dairy Science) Act transferred to UCD the Royal College of Science and another institution formerly attached to the DATI, Albert Agricultural College. UCD had filled a Chair of Agriculture in 1919 with a professor who retained his existing Albert Agricultural College posts. Its undergraduates had attended the specialised agriculture courses offered by the Royal College of Science after completing two years of general science study in UCD and qualified for both an associateship of the College and a degree of the university on passing their final examinations. But, as the Royal College of Science had been in the process of aligning itself with Trinity College, its merger with UCD was a shotgun marriage with the weapon being held in the hands of Cumann na Gaedhael ministers who were also UCD staff members (McCartney 1999: 112–113; N. Whyte 1999: 136–146). UCD's Engineering School occupied the old Royal College of Science buildings while UCD's acquisition of Albert Agricultural College and its north Dublin farm left agriculture students in Trinity College, which had the longest-established degree in the field, completing their studies in UCD under an ad hoc arrangement. The 1926 Act also transferred the dairy farming side of the Royal College of Science's work to University College Cork (UCC), which thereby acquired a faculty of Dairy Science.

## A national framework created for adult education

It was also in 1926 that a Commission was established to review the other part of the DATI's legacy, the technical schools and the Technical Instruction

Committees under which they operated. Subsequently the Vocational Education Act, 1930 maintained and extended statewide the flexible system based on representative local government structures and supported by a mix of funding sources that had developed since 1899. A novel element was provided by the incorporation under the vocational umbrella of 'continuing' education alongside 'technical' education. The latter catered for those aged from sixteen upwards and was provided mainly on a part-time basis through night classes. The former was aimed at fourteen to sixteen year olds and consisted mainly of full-time day courses. Continuing education was thus potentially competitive with denominationally controlled primary and secondary schooling but 'having been given ministerial assurances on the limited role of the continuation education being provided under the 1930 Act, the Catholic hierarchy tolerated the system' (Coolahan 1981: 84). A strong clerical presence on local Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and departmental circulars which imparted a strong religious and cultural nationalist aura to vocational schools helped to sustain this tolerance or, at any rate, to inhibit public expressions of intolerance. During the 1940s the Department of Education itself seriously considered absorbing the continuing education side of vocational schooling into an expanded system of denominationally controlled primary education. Such an initiative did not materialise but 'pressure was maintained on the Minister and the Department during the 1950s so that the Minister was simultaneously attempting to satisfy the demands of the bishops and to reassure the threatened local authorities whose schools he was funding from public funds' (O'Buachalla 1985: 357).

The technical education provided for those aged sixteen and upwards was less contentious than continuing education but it did not escape criticism. The Technical Education Commission of the mid-1920s found it 'disquieting' that 'the large majority of the schools in the Saorstát are concerned with commerce and domestic economy and rarely with technology, art and craft work'. Two decades later the Commission on Vocational Organisation criticised the continuing preponderance of commerce and domestic economy and the absence of strong links to either the agricultural or the manufacturing sectors of the economy (Coolahan with O'Donovan 2009: 150 and 158–159). Higher technical education with a genuine technological content remained confined to Dublin and the other cities, where institutions like Dublin's Bolton Street and Kevin Street colleges 'served a national as well as a municipal role' (Coolahan 1981: 100). What VECs offered outside the cities was less strictly technical than adult education of a broadly popular type, which, around Cork and Galway but less so in the case of Dublin, was linked to NUI extra-mural initiatives from the mid-1940s. Central to the creation of such institutional linkage was the propagation of Catholic sociology.

## The Catholic Church, Trinity College and the NUI

The post-independence period witnessed an intensification of the Catholic hierarchy's ban on Catholics attending Trinity College. As noted above, this originally applied only to the actions of the clergy. In 1944 Lenten Regulations promulgated in the Dublin archdiocese by Archbishop McQuaid stipulated that 'no Catholic may enter the Protestant University of Trinity College without the previous permission of the Ordinary of the Diocese', adding that 'any Catholic who disobeys this law is guilty of Mortal Sin'.<sup>6</sup> The next Plenary Synod, held in Maynooth in 1956, adopted the ban in this extended form nationally, specifying that only the Archbishop of Dublin was competent to give permission for attendance. The government's establishment of a Commission on Higher Education in 1960 prompted an intense anti-Trinity barrage made up of memoranda to the Commission from UCD President Michael Tierney, a series of articles in *Studies* by retired UCC President Alfred O'Rahilly and a particularly stark pastoral letter from Archbishop McQuaid.

Over time Archbishop McQuaid had moved from regarding the formally non-denominational NUI constituent colleges as providing a 'sufficiently safe' environment for Catholic students to describing UCD as the 'lawful heir' to the Catholic University that had preceded it. Facilitating this development were, first, the 'very special relationship' (McCartney 1999: 201) of the archbishop to UCD's President from 1947 to 1964, Michael Tierney, and, second, the liaison committee comprising NUI college presidents and selected bishops set up in 1950. Here the initiative had been taken by the college presidents, who had 'agreed that it was desirable to ask the help of the Hierarchy in formulating a policy on the future of the University'. The letter requesting this help specifically identified three 'matters which have become quite urgent in recent times' – the relationship between the Medical Schools of the NUI colleges and Catholic hospitals, 'the making of arrangements for the better and more thorough teaching of Philosophy and Sociology, especially for lay-students' and 'Trinity College, in particular its endowment from public funds and the possibility of an increase in this endowment'.<sup>7</sup> In relation to state financing of the universities, Cumann na Gaedhael in the 1920s and Fine Gael ministers in the first inter-party government (1948–51) were unabashed partisans of the NUI. Eamonn de Valera, however, was more sympathetically disposed towards Trinity College and the governments he headed more generous in the share of the small amount of funds provided to universities that it was allocated in the period after 1945. Bipartisan political support for liberal treatment of Trinity was to grow during the 1950s as a countervailing influence to the bishops' backing of NUI interests became operative.

## Irish sociology has scholastic philosophy not Spencer for its founding father

In the late 1930s a chair in St. Patrick's College Maynooth and a lectureship in UCC inserted sociology into the complex of institutions and political forces just described. This insertion occurred solely on the Catholic side of a denominationally divided system. Spencer's name might be invoked in Trinity's Edwardian pamphleteering but that college did not make its first appointments in sociology until 1971. Outside economics its social science strengths lay in the fields of politics and public administration and Basil Chubb's representation of Trinity on the first Council of the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in 1966 reflected this. Representation on this Council for QUB was discounted as 'they teach only social Administration in Queen's'.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, that university's small Scholastic Philosophy Department supplied the Christus Rex Society of priest-sociologists with a long-serving first chairman (Cahal Daly) and two NUI social science professors elected to the ESRI Council in 1966 had either briefly taught scholastic philosophy in QUB (Jeremiah Newman of Maynooth) or would have done so if prior commitment to a Dublin VEC adult education social science initiative had not supervened (James Kavanagh of UCD).<sup>9</sup>

## Papal strategy and Catholic sociology

With his first encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, Pope Leo XIII in 1879 had begun 'the radical restructuring of Catholic thought by the imposition of the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas as the sole system of ideas mandatory on all seminaries and colleges for the training of the clergy' (McSweeney 1980: 61). His successor, Pope Pius X, reinforced this orthodoxy with his early twentieth-century onslaught on Modernism. Moreover 'the revival of Thomism by Pope Leo XIII was not a matter of peripheral interest in Church history affecting only clerics and their training ... It was the centre of a political strategy intended to bring about a restoration of a Christian social order, an organic hierarchic society united by common values and common faith under the temporal kingship of secular rulers and under the ultimate authority of the Pope' (McSweeney 1980: 68). Pursuit of this strategy accounts for 'the remarkable energy which the popes devoted to declarations not only on matters of doctrine but on a wide range of social, political and cultural issues'. Here 'no fewer than 185 papal encyclicals were issued between 1878 and 1958 as well as innumerable, messages radio broadcasts and speeches to a vast array of different audiences' (M. Conway 1996: 13). The different dimensions of a Leonine strategy that in its

**Table 1.2** Elements of the Leonine papal strategy

Primary enemy	Socialism (and Communism)
Primary ally	Moderate bourgeoisie (reformist wing)
Cultural program	Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas
Political program	Christian democracy (or Catholic Action)
Economic program	Social Catholicism
Ecclesial program	Parallel structures (plus centralised ideological controls)

Source: Holland 2003: chart 2, 115

essentials remained operative into the late 1950s are encapsulated in Holland's (2003) chart (see Table 1.2).

Modifications applied to these elements within the specific Irish context, with its defining fusion of religion with ethnicity and its relegation of class to a secondary role. Irish socialism was weak and its leaders in the main proceeded not from an atheistic and/or anti-clerical hostility to the Catholic Church but rather sought (albeit in vain) to identify their project with Catholic values – socialism as ‘applied Christianity’ – and to stress the compatibility of their programme with the legitimate social reforms endorsed by Leo XIII in his landmark 1891 encyclical on economic and social issues, *Rerum Novarum*. On the other hand, the Free State government sought and secured the hierarchy's backing in 1931 for a ‘red scare’ based on a leftward shift in the stance of the clandestine Irish Republican Army (IRA). Later in the 1930s first Cumann na Gaedhael and then Fine Gael rhetoric would tar all anti-treaty republicans – Fianna Fail as well as IRA – with this brush. Violence against Catholic clerics during the Spanish Civil War, the imprisonment of central and eastern European prelates after the Second World War and the mistreatment of Irish missionaries in Communist China also became focal points for protest movements that helped to give the red menace a profile in Ireland out of all proportion to the strength of its local embodiments.

The Irish bourgeoisie was less divided into ‘moderate’ and ‘extremist’ wings than into Protestant and Catholic ones. Politically the Irish Catholic majority had accumulated power through the nineteenth century as its Penal Laws era disabilities were removed, local government institutions were reformed and enfranchisement qualifications were lowered. But, particularly in the urban context, Catholic advances in the political sphere were not accompanied by a corresponding growth in economic power. Especially in private sector manufacturing, transport, banking and insurance, the commanding heights of the economy long remained in Protestant hands and a sociologist studying the small Protestant

minority south of the border could chart the continuing importance of the 'Protestant firm' until its decline set in as late as the 1960s and 1970s (Bowen 1983: 98–103).

From the beginning of the twentieth century a succession of organisations emerged to combat Catholic disadvantage – principally the Catholic Association, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) and the Knights of Saint Columbanus. *Three Railways and a Bank* was the title given to a pamphlet collecting articles published in 1901 by the weekly *Leader* alleging widespread discrimination against Catholics in the filling of coveted white-collar jobs. This prompted the formation of Catholic Shareholders Committees to demand the filling of railway clerkships by open competitive examination in tandem with the launching of a national Catholic Association which aimed to overthrow the economic and social ascendancy of Protestants and to give 'organic' expression to Catholic values in Irish life. Initial support for this wider project from the Catholic hierarchy gave way to a condemnation by Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, who accused the Catholic Association of being responsible for 'enormous injury' to Catholic interests after the aggressive tone adopted in its 1903 *Handbook* prompted a strong Protestant backlash. The archbishop's action left a movement which had adopted a non-political stance – 'the Catholic Unionist is as welcome to become a member of the Catholic Association as anyone else' (Catholic Association 1903: 18) – fatally wounded.

The next home to be offered to Catholic employment discrimination and professional subordination resentments was the 'faith and fatherland' politics of the AOH. In effect a counter-Orangeism, the AOH shared with its Protestant enemy a common northern heartland and an affinity to the European artisan-Masonic family of brotherhoods with its characteristic use of symbols, signs, passwords and rituals (Beames 1982). In 1902 a new constitution stimulated membership growth by giving the Order greater unity and increased respectability. A political struggle for mastery of the AOH ensued in which, led by Joseph Devlin, the Home Rule parliamentarians comprehensively triumphed over their Sinn Féin rivals (Foy 1976). The administrative arrangements of the 1911 National Insurance Act then provided the means by which the AOH achieved national penetration and massive membership growth. By the spring of 1913 the insurance section of the Board of Erin had recruited 150,000 members or one in five of Ireland's insured population and by 1915 its Dublin head office employed 200 clerical staff. Among the bishops attitudes to the AOH ranged from the supportive to the hostile, with the latter in some instances prompting the sponsorship of rival diocesan insurance societies. Inextricably tied to the cause of Home Rule, the AOH as a major political force perished alongside the Parliamentary Party as it was swept aside by Sinn Féin during the later Great War years. Partly, perhaps,

out of filial piety, the only nationally significant post-independence southern politician to link himself with the Order was James Dillon.

The Irish organisation most durably associated with combating Catholic economic subordination is the Knights of St. Columbanus. If the AOH in its brief heyday countered the Orange Order by replicating its emphasis on public shows of strength, the Knights countered Freemasonry by adopting its secretive *modus operandi*. The order's own historian argues that 'a policy of discretion and privacy' was 'the only reasonable precaution for an infant society finding itself pitted against the entrenched power and influence of old established and not infrequently hostile interests' and admits that 'the rituals of the order were borrowed from the American Knights of Columbus who, lacking any established precedent, had derived that ritual in modified form from the Freemasons' (Bolster 1979: 33).

The Knights were founded in Belfast in 1915 and established a Dublin headquarters in the early 1920s as its birthplace was being ravaged by sectarian violence. South of the border, particularly in the late 1920s and early 1930s, claims of a red threat emanating from the pro-treaty side of the political divide had their counterpart in 'Republican, and later Fianna Fail, suggestions that Cosgrave's government enjoyed the support of Freemasons, and even that it depended for its survival on such support' (Patrick Murray 2000: 274). As with Communism, a ready supply of papal denunciations of Freemasonry could be pressed into Irish service. Public actions of the usually private Knights reflected the order's relatively educated and wealthy business and professional profile. One of the Order's Belfast founding members, the barrister James P. Kerr, wrote the first Irish book on Catholic social principles and, after the move southwards, the Knights were the source of the endowment of the Maynooth Chair of Catholic Sociology and Catholic Action first filled in 1937.

The insistence on Thomist orthodoxy is generally held to have gravely damaged Catholic scholarship while at the same time imparting 'a tone of confident certainly' to the wider papal project (McSweeney 1980: 73; M. Conway 1996: 14; O'Leary 2012: 100). In Ireland the elevation of Thomism and the condemnation of Modernism were not, as elsewhere, accompanied by academic purges. O'Leary (2012: 101–102) comments that 'the dominant tendency was to regard modernist ideas as a threat to very foundations of the faith' and refers only to one Maynooth professor, Fr. Walter McDonald, 'who was censured and carefully watched by his clerical colleagues' in the pre-independence period. Certainly on one, and possibly more, occasions McDonald's removal from his chair was a course of action opened up to, and possibly pressed upon, the Irish hierarchy by Rome (W. McDonald 1925: 156 and 325–326; Privilege 2009: 64 and 75). But, while he denounced McDonald vehemently to other bishops in his

correspondence, Cardinal Logue 'was supremely conscious of the fact that this was a controversy over a "scientific subject"' and that, in the context of its efforts to secure its higher education objectives, 'the Irish Church could ill-afford accusations that it was engaged in a witch hunt' (Privilege 2009: 62). Lesser sanctions were applied and the fact that McDonald's book *Motion* had been proscribed by the Sacred Congregation of the Index was not published. Nonetheless during these years an Irish Catholic institutional culture of pronounced intellectual caution and hierarchical control was strongly reinforced. This would have serious consequences for some advocates of economic and social policy change from a Catholic viewpoint after 1922.

In politics a distinction applies between the 'closed' continental European Catholicism to which papal strategy was primarily applicable and the 'open' Catholicism prevailing in the Anglo-American group of countries towards which the Irish pattern gravitates (J. H. Whyte 1981). In the former an exclusively Catholic political party was interlinked with purely Catholic organisations for employers, farmers, waged workers, youth, etc., operating amid a Catholic population under strong clerical guidance. In the latter there was no Catholic party (although there was often a distinctive skew in Catholic party preferences), key social organisations like trade unions were constituted on a non-confessional basis and the Catholic clergy did not (or at some stage ceased to<sup>10</sup>) take part in politics. However, Ireland, with its Catholic majority, was not a typical member of the Anglo-American group and, once southern statehood had been achieved, a movement to break with institutions inherited from an era of Protestant dominance and to refashion Irish institutions along properly Catholic lines soon emerged.

The ongoing flow of papal encyclicals provided the inspiration for a Catholic social movement with an institutional reconstruction agenda. In *Rerum Novarum*, the foundational document of Social Catholicism, Leo XIII sought 'to find a religious solution to the social question which for nearly a century had been posed in anti-religious terms' (McSweeney 1980: 61). The problem was unrestrained individualistic capitalism, to which socialism, by denying the right to private property, was proffering a false solution. The source of a real solution lay within a church that could teach justice to the warring, but in reality interdependent, forces of capital and labour. Justice laid duties upon both the worker and the employer. The former were entitled to organise themselves to secure their rights through trade unions; the latter were obliged to pay a just, as distinct from a market, wage. The state should be limited in its role but that role properly encompassed the protection of the worker's dignity and the prevention of abuses such as excessive labour. Here then was a third way that, whatever its limitations might be, situated social questions primarily on the terrain of justice rather than



that of charity. The great Dublin lockout of 1913–14 prompted the Irish hierarchy to issue a joint pastoral letter in which they urged that:

Employers and men should not be content with such fragments of that noble Christian philosophy of industrial and social life as seem to suit them at the moment. They should read the Encyclical over and over again. And the boys and girls of the industrial classes, as they grow up, should be thoroughly schooled in a teaching that is so appropriate to their condition of life, if they are to be trained aright for the duties of Christian citizenship.

Irish Labour Troubles. "Pronouncement by Roman Catholic Hierarchy"

*Irish Times* 23/2/1914

The lockout did not, however, result in substantial and sustained attention being given to industrial or related social issues (such as slum housing) by the clergy or by Catholic lay activists (McMahon 1981). In February 1914 the bishops had asserted that 'had the healing influence of native rule been felt for even a few years, we cannot believe that the bitter privation, the enormous waste, the loss, the shame, the sin of this insensate conflict would have been entailed on a city where commerce and manufacture need to be fostered with tender care instead of being recklessly endangered in a senseless war between workers and employers'. But native rule when it eventually came in a form that faithfully imitated British party politics, parliamentary procedures and civil service practices left some unsatisfied as to its Catholicity. The 1931 papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* – whose updating of *Rerum Novarum* 'unequivocally condemned "economic liberalism", offered still stronger support to workers, directly challenged the new national concentrations of capital, highlighted the principle of subsidiarity, and proposed a corporatist alternative to both liberal and socialist models of society' (Holland 2003: 206) – has been seen as the rallying point for radicals. Yet in the year it appeared W. T. Cosgrave was already complaining to Cardinal MacRory about:

The attitude of certain periodicals which, by their titles, lead the general public to believe that they are authorised exponents of Catholic doctrine. Though we are aware that these papers have no official sanction, we are also aware that many pious Catholics are misled by the titles of these publications whose comments on Government policy and on Government departments often inaccurate and at times so intemperate as to be violently abusive, have done considerable damage not merely to the political party associated with the Government, but to the State as a whole, and have resulted in the weakening of respect for authority. Other papers, while their comments are more temperate, purport to lay down Catholic principles and their application to various aspects of governmental activity and notwithstanding the absence of any authoritative pronouncements by the Hierarchy, criticise Government for failing to follow the interpretation of those journals in these matters. The danger and injustice of these comments and criticisms come from the fact

that the general public sees only that a charge is made against the Government of acting contrary to Catholic principles. The result is a weakening of the authority of the Civil Government in a country where such a weakening is so undesirable. (quoted in Keogh 1996: 207)

## Sociology and the Irish Catholic social movement

The story of how the Catholic social movement became a force in independent Ireland is told in John Whyte's (1971 and 1980) standard work on Church–state relations. By comparison with continental European countries – or even the neighbouring island, where the Catholic Social Guild had existed since 1909 – Irish Social Catholicism is judged to have been weak in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Before partition Belfast had been to the fore in this field thanks to the efforts of Fr. James O'Neill (Bolster 1979: 16–27), while south of the border the Jesuit Fr. Edward Cahill had taken the initiative in 1926 by founding *An Rioghacht*. *Quadragesimo Anno* was the catalyst for a strong upsurge in Irish Social Catholicism. In relation to the movement's subsequent growth the first Irish university appointments of sociologists are linked by Whyte to the creation of new organisations (particularly Muintir na Tire), the proliferation of social study weeks (especially those held at the Jesuit Clongowes Wood College), the rise of press advocates (notably the weekly *Standard*, to which UCC's Alfred O'Rahilly was a prolific contributor), the emergence of episcopal champions (bishops Dignan of Clonfert and Browne of Galway as well as Archbishop McQuaid of Dublin) and a current of extreme radicalism represented by the writings of Archbishop McQuaid's fellow member of the Holy Ghost order, Fr. Denis Fahey.

Whatever their party composition, Irish governments had from the outset enshrined Catholic moral values in state law through censorship of books and films, prohibition of the sale of contraceptives and (from 1937) a constitutional prohibition on divorce. Applying Catholic social principles that called for radical institutional reconfiguration within the state was a different matter. Here Whyte chronicles how a clash between vocationalism and bureaucracy took shape in the 1940s with battles being fought over the Dignan plan for social security, the Report of the Commission on Vocational Organisation and the Mother and Child Scheme. From this contest bureaucracy emerged victorious in terms of institutional architecture, although in policy fields like health arguments based on the Catholic principle of subsidiarity were effectively deployed to shape the form and limit the extent of state intervention.

Whyte's study is essentially one of relations between the Irish national hierarchy and the southern Irish state. It does not explore the relationship of either

with the Vatican. Yet 'by the end of the nineteenth century Rome was the centre of Catholicism' in everyday practice as well as in theory (McSweeney 1980: 50). Liturgical regulation, journal publishing and high-level appointment control were key features of this centrality. They were reinforced by a range of other binding ties such as national seminaries established in Rome 'to instil that Roman bias in attitude and theology in the more promising clergy selected for Roman training by their national hierarchies' and the 'lines of authority centred on Rome' systematically implanted within the religious congregations (McSweeney 1980: 50–51).

Later studies of Church and state relations in independent Ireland (particularly Keogh 1995) have gone beyond Whyte to explore these Roman dimensions. In politics they have highlighted the Luzio mission undertaken during the Irish Civil War of 1922–23, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Irish state and the Holy See at the end of the 1920s, the visit to Rome of the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs to forestall papal opposition to de Valera's constitution in 1937 and the channelling of Irish funds to opponents of the Communist Party in Italy in the run-up to the crucial general election of 1948. In relation to the social sciences, two Roman initiatives stand out. The first of these came in June 1938 when the Vatican's newly established Central Office for Catholic Action informed Cardinal MacRory of 'the programme it intends to carry out in accordance with the sovereign wish of the Holy Father'. This required the Irish hierarchy 'to ensure the coordination and thereby the greater efficiency of the apostolate of the laity'.<sup>11</sup> The second was communicated to the cardinal in June 1939 by the papal nuncio, who wrote that 'In order that a start may be made towards ensuring some practical provision for a deeper study of Catholic Sociology in the Seminaries of Ireland, I have been instructed by the Cardinal Secretary of State to beg Your Eminence, in the name of the Holy See, to include this important question among the matters which are to be taken up by the Irish Bishops at their coming annual meeting.'<sup>12</sup>

## Irish catechisms of sociology

How the growth of an Irish Catholic social movement within the broader framework of papal engagement with modernity's political and social complexities surrounded Irish Catholic Sociology's emergence can be illustrated by examining its staple non-periodical literary product: the manual, primer or textbook of social science. In 1916 the December issue of *Studies* reviewed three books under the heading 'Social Science'. One emanated from the Catholic Social Guild in England: the other two were Irish. Alfred O'Rahilly's *A Guide to Books for Social Students and Workers* was the first title in

the University and Labour series and reflected a sustained interest in adult education and sociology on the part of a mathematical physicist that would fully flower while he held the UCC posts of (unpaid) sociology lecturer (1937–48) and president (1943–54). Two further titles were to be published in this series – one a study of poverty in Cork (MacSweeney 1917) and the other a discussion of Marxian socialism (Larkin 1917) – before it lapsed into an inactivity from which it would be revived twenty years later. The other Irish book was James P. Kerr's *A Catechism of Catholic Social Principles: For Employers, Workmen, Social Workers, Study Circles, etc.* In its Preface, Kerr traces its origins to a call by Bishop Tohill of Down and Connor for members of the St. Anthony's University Graduates' Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Belfast to undertake the task of disseminating these principles. The spiritual director of that conference, Fr. James O'Neill, was the founder of the Knights of St. Columbanus, a project with which Kerr was closely associated (Bolster 1979: 18–28). The book's two later editions – in 1924 and 1927 – are dedicated to Fr. O'Neill's memory.

A university lecturer and a barrister, both O'Rahilly and Kerr were laymen. Admittedly O'Rahilly had spent about a decade in various Jesuit houses of formation and was all but ordained when he changed career path. His wife having died before he retired from the presidency of UCC – the couple had two children – O'Rahilly then proceeded to ordination as a member of the Holy Ghost order, spending the last years of his life in Dublin as a member of the Blackrock College community. Apart from later publications by O'Rahilly while he remained a layman or associated with his UCC initiatives, this early burst of lay activity was followed by a period in which all the authors of Irish Catholic sociology books were priests.

The third (1927) edition of Kerr's catechism was not only revised and enlarged but also adapted for use in schools. 'Boys and girls attending Intermediate schools' were also the target audience of Monsignor Michael Cronin's *Primer of the Principles of Social Science* first published in 1924 and of which new editions continued to appear into the mid-1950s, more than a decade after the author's death. Thorough schooling of 'the boys and girls of the industrial classes ... in a teaching that is so appropriate to their condition of life' was, as we have seen, advocated by the hierarchy in the light of the great Dublin lockout, although the proportion of such southern Irish children receiving secondary schooling during the period of the primer's succession of editions was not high. Publication of the primer came at a point in Cronin's life where he left the academy for a parish (Rathgar) and a range of other archdiocesan responsibilities. After studies in Ireland, Germany and Rome he had been a seminary (Clonliffe) professor of ethics, a Fellow of the Royal University and, from 1909 to 1924, Professor of

Ethics and Politics in UCD. After 1924 he was to exert considerable influence over publications by Irish clerics dealing with economic and social issues in his role as the Dublin ecclesiastical censor, upon whom Archbishop Byrne placed the greatest reliance. On his death an appreciation in the *Irish Independent* described him as ‘one of Dublin’s most cultured and versatile priests’.<sup>13</sup>

In 1932 a work of much greater length than anything hitherto published in Ireland on the subject appeared – Fr. Edward Cahill’s *The Framework of a Christian State: An Introduction to Social Science*. Its preface described its contents as ‘originally prepared in connection with the writer’s duties as Professor of Social Science in Milltown Park, Dublin’ and his lectures to the Central Branch of An Rioghacht (Cahill 1932: xiii). Its close to 700-page length was the result of joining with the usual Catholic social principles exposition of an extended historical sketch. This began in the time of the Roman Empire, dwelt in detail on medieval Christendom before proceeding to deal with the succession of evils made up by Protestantism, liberalism, individualistic capitalism, socialism, Bolshevism and Freemasonry. The Jews feature under the last two of these subject heads. The Bolshevik overthrow of Kerensky’s Russian government in 1917 is said to have been aided by Jewish finance. Jewish interests are said to control the press and the cinema in Europe and America and to exercise this control in a manner which is ‘definitely anti-Catholic and Masonic’.

When the UCC governing body approved the establishment of a lectureship in sociology in 1937 the college found that it did not have the funds to pay a lecturer. Alfred O’Rahilly – then UCC’s Registrar, Professor of Mathematical Physics and much else besides (Gaughan 1986, 1989, 1992 and 1993) – was to take on the additional role of unpaid sociology lecturer for nearly a decade until Fr. Jerome O’Leary was appointed. A revival of the University and Labour series followed, with ten titles appearing between 1938 and 1951 (see Table 1.3).

Four of these were contributed by O’Rahilly himself. Of the seven authors published in the series, only two were clerics. O’Rahilly’s own contributions varied from short booklets with an unfinished quality (*Aquinas versus Marx*, *Social Principles*) to the much longer work on *Money*, whose second edition (1942) ran to 642 pages. This tome O’Rahilly described as ‘a development of some of my lectures on Sociology, a University Extension course and some articles in *The Standard*’. Originally conceived as ‘merely a popular pamphlet ... the matter grew to such an extent that only half of it is contained’ in the 436-page first edition. The second edition was half as long again because ‘the two final chapters – on *Purchasing Power* and on *State Intervention* – may be regarded as a very condensed summary of the projected and mostly written second volume ... which is unlikely to be published during this unpropitious period’ (O’Rahilly 1942: vii and xxiii).

**Table 1.3** Titles in the Cork University Press University and Labour series, 1938–51

Author	Title	Year published
O'Mahony, James E.	<i>Reform or Revolution?</i>	1938
Hogan, James	<i>Modern Democracy</i>	1938
Larkin, Rev. W. Paschal	<i>Economics and the Worker</i>	1938
O'Rahilly, Alfred	<i>Money</i>	1941
Bastible, Rev. James	<i>Radio Talks on Politics</i>	1944
McCarthy, Bridget G.	<i>Some Problems of Child Welfare</i>	1945
O'Rahilly, Alfred	<i>Aquinas versus Marx</i>	1948
O'Rahilly, Alfred	<i>Moral Principles</i>	1948
O'Rahilly, Alfred	<i>Social Principles</i>	1948
Geary, R. C.	<i>The Official Cost of Living Index Number and Its Critics</i>	1951

Source: library catalogues

If endowment by the Knights of Saint Columbanus meant that paying a sociologist's salary was not a problem at Maynooth, the qualifications required in the person filling the chair were, with the Faculty of Philosophy unanimously passing in October 1937 a resolution declaring 'that according to our conception of the duties attaching to this professorship (of Catholic Sociology and Catholic Action) none of the applicants is at present adequately qualified either academically, or from the point of view of published work, or from the point of view of practical experience in social organisation'. The successful appointee, a priest of the Armagh province, Fr. Peter McKevitt, was dispatched first to Louvain and then to Rome for further study before he began teaching in Maynooth in the 1939–40 academic year. In 1944 he published *The Plan of Society*: 'this work which forms the basis of the course in Catholic Sociology in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, is offered to a wider public in the hope that it may prove useful to the increasing number of students of social science'. The book features the rarity of a mention for a nowadays acknowledged founder of the discipline other than the routinely denounced Marx – there are disapproving references to Durkheim – but remains on a well-trodden path with its proclamation that 'the social teaching of the Church is then the only foundation of a complete study of society' (McKevitt 1944: iii–ix).

The next impetus for Irish sociology textbook writing came from 'another indication of His Grace's "up-to-date" solicitude for the members of his flock' (J. Kavanagh 1954: vi) – the foundation by Archbishop McQuaid of the Dublin

Institute of Catholic Sociology (DICS) in the early 1950s. The *Manual of Social Ethics* that its first director, Fr. James Kavanagh, published in 1954 was intended 'primarily to meet the needs of the many adults' attending DICS courses. A new and revised edition appeared in 1964, the year in which Fr. Kavanagh was appointed a Lecturer in Social Science in UCD. His elevation to Professor of Social Science followed two years later.

Between the two editions of Kavanagh's manual the DICS spawned an alternative introductory treatment, *Catholic Sociology: A Beginner's Textbook* by Fr. Ambrose Crofts, which appeared in 1960. The Dominican author was by this time a veteran worker in the fields of Catholic Action and Catholic sociology. Ordained in 1920, he had studied in Ireland, Rome and Louvain, 'where he took a special course in social studies'. Based in Dublin, he took a leading role in reorganising and revitalising the Catholic Young Men's Society movement in the 1920s. Moving to Waterford as prior, he was the directing influence of that city's Aquinas Study Circle for much of the 1930s.<sup>14</sup> During this period the Circle focused its attention on the Labour Party and the trade unions, seeking to combat leftist tendencies and foster Catholic influence within these bodies (Crofts 1935). It was with specific reference to the activities of this Circle that one speaker at the 1937 Irish Trade Union Congress observed that 'practically all actions of labour leaders, trade union officials and unions had been under a semi-theological microscope'.<sup>15</sup> Appointment as his order's vicar-provincial took Crofts to Australia in 1938. Attached to the Dublin office of the *Irish Rosary* on his return to Ireland, he was one of an increasing number of priests (and later of lay people) drawn into teaching adult classes by the expanding activities of the DICS.

From 1916 to 1960 Irish Catholic writers constructed sociology as the social branch of ethics. A staple set of topics – marriage, family, Church, state, private property, relations between capital and labour – was dealt with in terms of very general principles. Variation in treatment was primarily due to the level of sophistication of the audiences addressed, which principally consisted of adult learners, school pupils and seminarians, with a nod towards a more general readership of conscientious Catholic lay people. In so far as this literature had any developmental impetus, this was introduced by the ongoing flow of papal encyclicals. Providing an overarching framework for these social ethics expositions was the Thomistic concept of natural law. Taking *Rerum Novarum* as an example, Curran (2002: 25) underlines how 'the encyclical heavily depends on neoscholasticism and its natural law approach' by pointing out that 'nine of the thirty-nine footnotes refer to Thomas Aquinas; all but two of the others refer to scripture (the exceptions are two references to Gregory the Great and Tertullian from the era of the early church)'. There is, he notes, 'no dialogue with contemporary thinkers'.

Several of the Irish Catholic sociology books just discussed begin with an outline of natural law and it is regularly invoked in all of them. Thus Fr. McKevitt (1944: 8) argues that, while the natural law does not lay down rigidly the type of social institution that men must adopt, history also shows that ‘man has a limited range and that he cannot comfortably fit into any type of society’. Referring to English industrial capitalism he observes that ‘violation of the natural law brings its retribution, though the evil may not be apparent for a long time’. In common with many other Catholic scholars of the period, Fr. Crofts (1960: 51) idealises the ‘organic medieval type of society’ and associates with it ‘certain principles of social co-responsibility which are valid for all time and for all conditions of human society’. First among these is ‘the acceptance of a social code founded on the divine and natural law’. A more contemporary and inclusive role for natural law was envisaged by Fr. Kavanagh (1954: vi), who hoped that it ‘will have a message for the many outside the Church, to whom Pope Pius XI extended a warm invitation to join in the battle against the powers of darkness’.

In 1950 Pope Pius XII reaffirmed the status of Thomism in the encyclical *Humani Generis*. With his death in 1958 the Leonine era, and with it the Catholic philosophical monopoly of Thomism, drew towards a close. In January 1959, the holding of a new Church Council was announced by his successor, Pope John XXIII. It is tempting to attribute change in the practice of Irish Catholic sociology to a late 1950s confluence of this new Church departure and the gathering momentum of a southern Irish state developmental strategy shift. But the empirical turn in Irish Catholic sociology was by this time well under way. Fr. Jeremiah Newman, who succeeded McKevitt in Maynooth in 1953, was its main public standard bearer. While steeped in Thomist philosophy by his clerical education, Newman nonetheless conceived sociology in distinctly different terms from those hitherto prevailing in Ireland. To a Muintir na Tire audience in 1959 he criticised over-concentration on the exposition of social principles: ‘Sociology was a science ... one aspect of this science had been largely neglected in Ireland and that was the careful collation and study of social facts’:

This aspect of sociology is the one that has made most progress outside Ireland. In Europe and America – either through the financial help of the State or of big business foundations – social survey work and research have made huge strides over the past half century. Failure to take adequate cognisance of facts is an insuperable obstacle to efficient organisation and good planning. It entails a basic carelessness as regards the adequacy of policies, which are bereft of an important criterion of their suitability ... Only factual surveys will show with certainty what should be concentrated on, where this or that industry should be located and what are the root causes of migration and emigration. Indeed in every sphere we have need of a greater consciousness of more efficient organisation and the adequate use of material and human resources.<sup>16</sup>



One version of the salient facts of the Irish economic and social situation was set out in November 1959 for an officer of the Ford Foundation in New York by an English economist:

Ireland's economy is indissolubly linked with the UK by the force of emigration (40–60,000 a year), a common banking and currency system, exports and imports (about 80% either way), capital ownership. It is therefore analogous to a poor part of the UK. It is based upon an inefficient and declining industry – agriculture. There is little future in expanding agriculture, and in any case the expansion is certain to *reduce* the number of people employed ... Extreme protection had led to a few small and highly-inefficient locally based industries. This has raised the price level and (by depressing real wages) adds to the emigration probably more than the employment it gives retards emigration. Indeed without emigration the Irish would starve. Recurrent crises plus the development of the Common Market have led to a reversal of the protectionist policy; and the only alternative appears to be complete free-trade and *laissez-faire*. (Already with hardly any defence expenditures Irish taxation is as heavy as the UK's!) (John Vaizey to Stanley Gordon, 1/11/1959: reproduced in Peter Murray 2012a: 74)

The author, John Vaizey, had acquired his familiarity with Irish conditions through his visits to Dublin to carry out archival research for the portion of a bicentenary history of Guinness's brewery he would co-author (Lynch and Vaizey 1960). For the southern state he prescribed a change of outlook which he claimed was already starting to occur within the national elite:

First, clearly get rid of their illusions. Above all, nationalism and Irish mysticism. Next that all the world loves them and hates the English, and that Northern Ireland is languishing under oppression ... Then that agriculture plus protection equal a rising standard of living. Lastly, and above all, that emigration is a 'Bad Thing'. Already Lemass, the Prime Minister, Dillon, the Leader of the Opposition, and a few others are feeling their way towards this point of view. They are handicapped by a lack of informed public support. (The press is still uniformly nationalist), but the top civil servant – T. H. Whitaker, Dept. of Finance – their head economist, McCarthy at the Dept. of Statistics – their adviser, Patrick Lynch, chairman of Aer Lingus – and people like Senator (Professor) George O'Brien of U.C.D., say all these things in private. (Peter Murray 2012a: 74)

Whether this was an entirely accurate representation of the views of the people named may be questioned, but, in its own breezily brutal way, Vaizey's letter does vividly register a sense of the crisis with which they were confronted. Recurring balance of payments difficulties had been addressed by restrictive policies that had depressed economic activity and sent emigration soaring to ever greater heights. There had been little or no engagement with the movement

towards greater European integration until this had become inevitable. Then the Irish position was to seek, alongside Greece and Turkey, special concessions as a country 'in the process of economic development'. Greater integration with the UK economy was pursued but no progress was made as a result of the absence of British interest in the Irish proposals. A British U-turn in relation to the EEC provided a route out of this becalmed situation in 1961. Ireland joined its neighbour as an applicant for full membership, performing its own policy U-turn by claiming to be capable of coping with the free-trade conditions it had sought a few years earlier to stave off into the indefinite future.

A positive economic growth performance over a number of years was by now available to back this claim, but even the official Irish position was premised on a major programme of adaptation in Irish industry being successfully carried through. Serious examination of the Irish application had yet to begin when the French veto on British entry ended the negotiations for EEC enlargement. Full EEC membership remained the state's objective and the conclusion of an Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement in 1965 marked the decisive defeat of the protectionism whose advocates had been fighting a losing battle since the late 1950s (Whitaker 2006). From this point Ireland's future industrial growth lay not with indigenous industries adapted to face free trade but with an industrial base newly created by an inflow of foreign direct investment. Successful adaptation of most of the existing base may or may not have been a feasible objective but it was never pursued by the Irish state in a manner that could have held out a prospect of successful attainment. Instead a revamped and much better-resourced Industrial Development Authority (IDA) sought to attract US investors who had hitherto shown little inclination to locate plants south of the Irish border. Alongside the key low taxes and generous grants elements in the package offered to such investors was a suitably skilled workforce, the product of an education system whose radical transformation had begun in the early 1960s.

The transformation of Irish education had two key aspects. First, participation in its second and third levels was dramatically expanded from what had been in international terms a very low level. Second, the overriding priority hitherto given to religious formation and language revival was altered by a new emphasis on mathematics, science and business or business-relevant subjects like modern languages. Initially the combined thrust of expansion and reorientation had its greatest impact on second-level secondary and vocational schools and through new regional technical colleges offering sub-degree courses. But for the universities the shape of things to come was revealed when in 1967 the Minister for Education set aside the recommendations the Commission on Higher Education had produced after extremely lengthy deliberations and announced the merger of Trinity College and UCD. Ultimately this merger did not proceed, but in the

upheaval its proposal caused the hierarchy's Trinity ban – the cornerstone of denominationalism in Irish higher education – was fatally undermined (O'Flynn 2012; Walsh 2014).

With courses that were more applied in content and governance that was less autonomous in relation to the state than that of the universities, two National Institutes of Higher Education offering degree-level qualifications were established in Dublin and Limerick. Both were later reconstituted as universities, by which time the formal autonomy of the institutions that already had this status had long been eroded by their incorporation into the state's manpower planning. This exercise geared graduate output to the demand projected to arise from new investments by the US high-technology companies being targeted by IDA promotional activity (Murray and Wickham 1982; White 2002: 184–188). By this means the lion's share of funding was channelled into engineering and computer science, although such was the scale of increase in student numbers feeding through from lower levels that all disciplines experienced a degree of expansion in the late 1960s and 1970s. Arts and social science subjects began to expand again at the end of the 1980s after the dramatically cheaper cost of production of their graduates was rediscovered within the twin contexts of very high levels of technical graduate emigration and of general unemployment (see Sheehan 1987).

Growth in the size of university departments as a result of broader educational expansion was one of two major changes affecting Irish sociology. The second was the creation, from the late 1950s, of a new sector of research institutes. These owed their existence in most cases to an injection of resources that either came from a source external to Ireland (usually the USA) or whose use was subject to agreement between external (again usually US) and Irish decision-makers. Sociological input featured alongside that from a range of other, usually 'harder', scientific disciplines in institutes concerned with agriculture, physical planning and social medicine. A fully-fledged specifically social scientific institute was created in 1965 when the existing Economic Research Institute was converted into an Economic and Social Research Institute. Integration of education into economic plans had formed the context in which its expansion gathered pace and a further widening of the scope of planning to encompass social development as well as economic growth lay behind the creation of the ESRI.

Before the ESRI was created a succession of proposals emanating from the Catholic social movement for state funding to assist the creation of research centres or institutes had been turned down. The empirical turn in Catholic sociology could not therefore be translated into the generation – as distinct from the consumption – of social research on any significant scale, as all Catholic social movement actors without a university base were denied the resources needed to become involved in the production process. By the early 1970s non-university embodiments of Catholic

sociology were disbanding (the Christus Rex Society) or seeking to reinvent themselves in ways that would effectively sever their social science connections (Muintir na Tire). While university chairs of sociology were still almost exclusively in the hands of clerics who had been directed into the field by their ecclesiastical superiors (J. H. Whyte 1980: 332), the supply of qualified clerical candidates was drying up at a time when a state policy of third-level expansion was creating additional teaching positions. The laicisation of the discipline was well under way. The state rather than the Church now shaped its structures. Ironically the government programming approach that had provided the context of educational transformation and research institute creation that produced this shift in control had itself fallen into disarray just as the state's goal of full EEC membership was attained.

## Plan of this book

A key reason why the Irish Catholic social movement failed to realise its project of reconstruction was because a conservative hierarchy balked at the radicalism of some of its proposals. Critiques of banking and finance capital formulated within the movement were particularly divisive and, as Chapter 2 shows, on these issues ecclesiastical disciplinary mechanisms were invoked to silence some of its radical voices. During the Second World War/Emergency period Communist influence became the movement's overriding concern and Catholic adult education initiatives were launched to counter this threat. To provide such education a number of new institutions with a social science focus – the Catholic Workers' College and the Dublin Institute of Catholic Sociology – were created alongside the colleges of the National University of Ireland.

Chapter 3 examines the changing face of Catholic sociology in Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s. It has four principal strands. First, the collaboration of Maynooth's professor with Muintir na Tire in seeking European and North American help to foster rural sociology. Second, the use made by Archbishop McQuaid of his power within UCD to establish social science teaching in the state's largest university. Third, the tension between useful and critical social science that emerged as the growing number of Irish Catholic immigrants in an increasingly secular Britain became a focal point for research proposals. Finally, the manner in which Ireland's initially abundant, but later faltering, supply of religious vocations and the maximisation of its clergy's contribution to worldwide Catholic missionary efforts was studied. All of these strands are tied together by a common turning away from a predominant preoccupation with ethical principles and towards increasing involvement in empirical social investigations.

Chapter 4 broadens out the focus from Irish sociology to examine Irish scientific research. Its central theme is the way in which resources provided or jointly controlled by US actors underpinned the development of a modern scientific research infrastructure within the state in the period after the Second World War. The scientific fields principally affected by these financial injections were applied research related to agriculture, industry and economics. Money flowed into these fields from two major sources: the Grant Counterpart Fund, which was a legacy of Ireland's participation in the Marshall Plan, and private US foundations. In other fields, such as management and 'human sciences', significant resource transfers took place in kind as much as in cash through productivity and technical assistance programmes. The infrastructure developments that clustered in the late 1950s and the early 1960s interacted with older scientific institutional configurations laid down under the union with Britain and subjected to emaciating neglect after the advent of political independence.

Chapter 5 returns the focus to the social sciences. The injection of resources into Ireland's scientific research infrastructure at the end of the 1950s created two new social science research producers – the Rural Economy Division of An Foras Taluntais and the Economic Research Institute. In the former rural sociology took a recognised place alongside a variety of other agriculture-relevant disciplines. In the latter the distinction between the economic and the social was a blurred and indistinct one. During the first half of the 1960s the unenclosed field of social research was to be the subject of a series of proposals from actors located within the Catholic social movement to a variety of government departments for the creation of research centres or institutes. This chapter details these proposals and the fate of consistent refusal with which they met. Empirical social research in Ireland was funded and organised in a manner that effectively excluded the participation of any Catholic social movement actor without a university base when the government approved the transformation of the Economic Research Institute into the Economic and Social Research Institute. This approval for a central social research organisation was crucially linked to the project of extending the scope of government programming to encompass social development as well as economic expansion.

Chapter 6 examines the relationship between the programming state and social research. Initial crisis conditions had enabled increased social spending to be left off the government programmers' agenda. The changed politics of increasing prosperity, as well as the expanding ambitions of the programme framers, meant that this could no longer be sustained during the 1960s. Ireland's social security provision became an object of both political debate and social scientific analysis in this period. The official response to this ferment was a Social Development Programme to which the ESRI was initially seen as a vital provider of inputs.

During the 1960s a Save the West movement challenged both programmers and governing politicians. The official response to this challenge involved new structures for rural development with which the social sciences interacted, as well as expanded social welfare provision to a class of smallholders whose resilience would later become an object of significant sociological study.

Chapter 7 concludes the study by first noting how ambivalently clerical sociologists responded to the changes wrought by state planning practice in the 1960s. Demands from champions of such planning that the discipline should begin to play a different societal role are next examined. During the 1970s the hierarchy combined failure to plan for a continuation of a significant clerical presence among practitioners of sociology with the casting of itself as the conscience of Irish society. The warding off of abortion, contraception and divorce was thereby entrusted to a highly selective but this-worldly 'sociological' empiricism rather than to theological dogmatism. Initially successful, this strategy has become progressively less effective as popular confidence in Church leaders has declined dramatically. Detached from the institution that framed the working lives of their disciplinary predecessors, today's sociologists debate the respective contributions that factors such as higher education levels, economic marginalisation of the poorly educated and the uncovering of hidden histories of the abuse of clerical power have made to this decline.

## Notes

- 1 TCD Library, Manuscripts Department, J. O. Hannay Papers, Ms. 3,455, D. Hyde, President, Gaelic League, to Rev. J. O. Hannay, Gaelic League Executive member, 11/7/1906.
- 2 Dublin University Defence Committee, Pamphlets Bearing on Mr. Bryce's Proposed University Legislation for Ireland, 1907, 'Trinity College Dublin and the Proposed University Legislation for Ireland', p. 6.
- 3 Dublin University Defence Committee, Pamphlets Bearing on Mr. Bryce's Proposed University Legislation for Ireland, 1907, 'Trinity College Dublin and the Proposed University Legislation for Ireland', pp. 4–5.
- 4 Dublin University Defence Committee, Pamphlets Bearing on Mr. Bryce's Proposed University Legislation for Ireland, 1907, 'Mr. Bryce's Speech on the Proposed Reconstruction of the University of Dublin. Annotated Edition issue by the Dublin University Defence Committee', pp. 27–31.
- 5 Dublin University Defence Committee, Pamphlets Bearing on Mr. Bryce's Proposed University Legislation for Ireland, 1907, 'Mr. Bryce's Speech on the Proposed Reconstruction of the University of Dublin. Annotated Edition issue by the Dublin University Defence Committee', annotation on pp. 31–32.

- 
- 6 Dublin Lenten Regulations, *Irish Independent*, 21/2/1944
  - 7 COFLA, D'Alton Papers, ARCH 12/4/3/6–8, box Education -2 Universities, folder 'The National University', correspondence dealing with meeting of Episcop. Comm. with Presidents, M. Tierney, President, UCD, to Archbishop D'Alton, Armagh, 18/9/1950.
  - 8 ESRI, box 1, History of ERI/ESRI, file 'No. 1 Closed', M. D. McCarthy, director, Central Statistics Office, to T. K. Whitaker, Finance, 14/10/1966.
  - 9 DDA, McQuaid Papers, AB/8/B/XV/C/392–3992, D. Mageean, Bishop of Down and Connor, to J. C. McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, 10/9/1948, J. C. McQuaid to D. Mageean, 13/9/1948.
  - 10 In the Irish case, according to Patrick Murray (2000: 417) by 1937 'the Church had disengaged itself from active participation in the electoral process in the South: priests featured only to a minimal extent as platform speakers or public supporters of candidates'.
  - 11 COFLA, MacRory Papers, ARCH/11/1/3, Actio Catholica, Cardinal Pizzardo, Vatican Central Office for Catholic Action, to Cardinal MacRory, Armagh, 29/6/1938.
  - 12 COFLA, MacRory Papers, ARCH 11/1/4, Apostolic Nunciature, Archbishop P. Robinson, papal nuncio, to Cardinal MacRory, Armagh, 10/6/1939.
  - 13 'Right Rev. Mgr. Cronin: An Appreciation', *Irish Independent*, 25/8/1943.
  - 14 'Obituary: Very Rev. Ambrose Crofts O.P.', *Irish Press*, 30/9/1963.
  - 15 'Trades Congress and Mr. Larkin', *Irish Times*, 7/8/1937.
  - 16 'For Success in Life We Must Face Facts', *The Landmark*, September 1959.