Social and Religious Transformations in Ireland: A Case of Secularisation?

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Introduction

IN HIS WELL-KNOWN ESSAY on the alleged demise of the supernatural, Berger claimed that it was 'reasonable to assume that a high degree of secularisation is a cultural concomitant of modern industrial societies' (1971: 30). In an earlier study he defined secularisation as 'the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols' (1973: 113).

This paper aims to address this secularisation thesis and its supposed relationship to the processes of industrialisation and modernisation by considering the major social and religious transformations which can be discerned in the Irish Republic over the past three or four decades. First, it will outline the changing social and religious context within which religious world views strive for plausibility (Berger, 1973). Of particular importance are the social concomitants of the economic transformations which have taken place since the 1950s and the religious transformations, especially in Roman Catholicism since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65).

Secondly, the extent to which one can find in recent decades evidence not only of secularisation but also of counter-tendencies will be explored. For this purpose I will review data on the religious transformations in Ireland in terms of Dobbelaere's three dimensions of secularisation (1981) and levels of analysis (1985). It will be suggested that the evidence indicates that there is no necessary link between industrialisation and secularisation. Thirdly, the implications of our findings for secularisation theory and the interpretation of the religious transformations in Irish Catholicism will be considered.

Among social scientists generally, the secularisation thesis in an age of industrialisation, modernisation, rationalisation, bureaucratisation and urbanisation is 'the conventional wisdom' (Hammond, 1985: 1). Even so, the proliferation of 'new religious movements', the evident strength of an aggressive conservative Christianity and the 'religious right', the resurgence of fundamentalist Islamic movements, and the power of the basic Christian community movement legitimated by Third World liberation theology, should all give empirically-oriented sociologists grounds for reappraisal (Hadden and Shupe, 1985). The stance taken here is one of empirical agnosticism. It is necessary to take seriously Dobbelaere's requirement that 'we should be ready to falsify our theories on the basis of new empirical material' (1989: 28). Post-war Ireland provides an important test-case for the secularisation thesis.

In a recent literature review (1992), the author has suggested that Martin's early critique of the concept of secularisation (1965) remains important, although he has since modified his position (1969; 1978). In the first place, the existence or not of a process of secularisation is largely a definitional matter involving 'the very notions of religion and the sacred' (Ireland, 1988: 1). In its simplest formulation, Wilson defined it as 'the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions . . .' (1966: xiv) or 'by which religious institutions, actions, and consciousness, lose their social significance' (1982: 149). Given an exclusive, substantive definition of church-oriented religion, evidence of institutional decline appears to be a clear indication of secularisation. In his earlier work Wilson seems largely to have taken this view and he commences with a comprehensive review of statistical trends of religious indicators. On the other hand, when an inclusive, functionalist definition of religion is employed, secularisation seems to be ruled out. Luckmann's 'invisible' religion (1970) seems to fall into this category. Related problems arise where different interpretations are placed upon the same religious indicator —for example, church attendance—in different social and cultural settings —for example, the United States and Poland; and also where the cultural meanings and significance of the same religious phenomena—for example, traditional devotions or styles of spirituality—change over time.

Secondly, the concept of secularisation refers to a *process* so that historical data of some kind are necessary for any empirical testing of the secularisation thesis. In a recent analysis of religious trends in post-war America, Greeley (1989) has taken this quite literally and confined himself to an investigation of survey findings only where the same question wording has been employed at two points in time. But given the 'oscillating' nature of religious phenomena (Wilson, 1979: 11), the choice of the earlier point is inevitably contested and arbitrary (Martin, 1965). In

my own studies of English Catholicism I have argued that there never was a 'golden age' of consistently high levels of religious belief, practice and commitment (Hornsby-Smith, 1987: 26-31), and suggested that there are close similarities between the interview responses of grassroots Catholics in the London of Booth's survey at the turn of the century (McLeod, 1974; 1981; 1986a; 1990) and the 'customary' religion of 'ordinary' Catholics in the 1970s and 1980s (Hornsby-Smith, 1989; 1991). In the case of Ireland an 'alternative popular culture' existed in pre-famine days and religious practice was much lower at the beginning of the nineteenth century than later (Kirby, 1984; Connolly, 1982).

There are, then, good reasons to be wary of an uncritical assumption of inevitable secularisation resulting from processes of social and economic change such as industrialisation and urbanisation. In order to explore the social implications of the religious changes which have taken place in recent decades, it is necessary to recognise the complexity of those changes and to identify appropriate criteria for monitoring them.

Dobbelaere (1981: 11–12; 1985) is one of several researchers who has sought to clarify this complexity. In particular he has distinguished three dimensions of the problem of secularisation:

1 *laicisation* at the macro or societal level—the process of structural differentiation whereby 'institutions are developed that perform different functions and are structurally different';
2 *religious involvement* at the micro or individual level, which 'refers to individual behaviour and measures the degree of normative integration in religious bodies'; and
3 *religious change* at the organisational level which 'expresses change occurring in the posture of religious organisation . . . in matters of beliefs, morals, and rituals, and implies also a study of the decline and emergence of religious groups'.

Dobbelaere postulates 'an underlying modernisation process—i.e. differentiation, rationalisation, societalisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, bureaucratisation, mobility, etc.—on the disengagement of modern man from religious bodies' (1981: 136–7). On the other hand, he allows for contrary processes of 'delaicisation' and 'desecularisation', and argues that 'secularisation is not a mechanical process, and it allows for religious groups to react' (1989: 37). Dobbelaere's framework is helpful and will be used in this paper to summarise religious changes in Ireland over the past three or four decades. Before considering the evidence in the case of Ireland, however, it is first necessary to review in outline the changing social and religious context.

The Changing Context

Social and economic change

Of relevance for the analysis of religious transformations are the changes which have taken place in economic structures and loci of control, demographic changes, processes of urbanisation, and the indications of major shifts in values resulting from the opening up of Irish society to external forces and influences. As we shall see, in this process the role of the Catholic church has been transformed.

　˙ In the first place, the Republic of Ireland in large measure reflects its former status as a colony of Britain (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1988; Hechter, 1975). Thus, Mair (this volume) argues that one consequence of the British occupation was that the forces of clericalism and conservative nationalism became legitimised after independence. Catholicism and nationalism had become the two main pillars on which Irish political culture rested. A further reflection of its long historical domination by Britain is the fact that Ireland has exported some eight million people, or twice the present population of the whole island, over the past two centuries, as its agricultural economy, structure of landholdings and system of inheritance failed to absorb a large increase in population (Hornsby-Smith and Dale, 1988; Kennedy, 1973b; Drudy, 1985; Lyons, 1974; Breen *et al.*, 1990).

　Hannan and Commins (this volume) argue that the rural fundamentalist ideology which was inherited by the new Irish state was congruent with Catholic social thought and was espoused by church leaders. It was also legitimated by the romantic claim that Ireland 'did not place as high a value on economic development as other countries did' (Kennedy, this volume). The steady bleeding away of the young, however, reflected the failure of an economy based on private enterprise and protective barriers and the absence of a 'constructive social vision' on the part of the church. It was not until the late 1950s that there was a shift to an explicit drive for economic growth by means of an 'aggressive capitalism' largely aligned with the 'project of the bourgeoisie' (Peillon, 1982). Although the immediate consequence of the drive for industrialisation in the 1960s was that the international migration flow was reversed in the 1970s, in the more unsettled economic conditions of the 1980s, both emigration and unemployment rates increased significantly (Breen *et al.*, 1990: 144–145, 147).

　With the dash for growth, agriculture declined in importance and a major process of urbanisation was generated by the migration of workers from the land and peripheral regions to the towns. The population of Dublin increased by one-sixth between 1971 and 1978, faster than any

other western European capital (Lee, 1989: 605). The result is that around one-third of the population now lives in the greater Dublin area. But as the economy faltered in the 1980s, the frustration of expectations of higher living standards led to higher levels of anomic disturbance: crime, marital breakdown and drug abuse increased, especially in working-class areas (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1988: 208).

The new economic strategies of the 1960s resulted in a significant shift of employment from agriculture to manufacturing and services. There was also a steady increase in the female labour force participation rate. This was especially striking for married women, the increase being from one in twenty in 1961 to one in five in 1987 (Breen *et al.*, 1990: 101, 117). Associated with this is evidence that contraceptive practices in Ireland are converging with those of other industrialised nations and that a majority of the population no longer accepts the teaching of the Catholic Church on contraception (Coleman, this volume).

Mention must also be made of the undoubted impact of the mass media in opening up the Irish consciousness to the social and cultural changes which were taking place elsewhere and especially in Britain. The proclivity to censorship in Roman Catholic Ireland collapsed in the face of the range of developments in mass communications in recent years, especially television, pirate radio, video recorders and satellite broadcasting (Farrell, 1984: 115). A greater openness to external influences also resulted from membership of the EC and was reflected in the impact of equality legislation and the judgements of the European Court (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1988: 213).

Religious changes

Around 95 per cent of the population of the Irish Republic declare themselves to be Catholics (Fogarty *et al.*, 1984: 125; Mac Gréil, 1991: 2–3). 'It is the only predominantly Roman Catholic country in the English-speaking world' (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1988: 205) and 'with the loss of the Irish language [the Catholic church] became the single most important mark of [Irish] separate identity' (Kirby, 1984: 62). For Catholics, the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) was a watershed between the 'late Tridentine Victorian' Catholicism 'combining Roman ultramontanist legalism with British Victorian prudery' (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1988: 206–7; cf. also McRedmond, 1980; Kirby 1984) of the pre-Vatican church and the new post-Vatican model (Hornsby-Smith, 1987, 1989). Any understanding of religious change must take due account of the renewal processes taking place since, and as a consequence of, the Council

(Abbott, 1966; Butler, 1981). The historian of church–state relations in Ireland has observed that 'it would be natural to expect that in so intensely Catholic a country as Ireland these effects should have been particuarly strong', and he refers especially to the growth of the ecumenical movement, the growing freedom of discussion in the church, and the development of Catholic social teaching since Pope John XXIII's 1961 encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (Whyte, 1980: 345–5).

Up to the end of the 1960s the sociological reality of the church corresponded closely to the institutional model identified by Dulles (1976). The emphasis here is on the church as a structured community led by office holders with clearly defined rights and powers. Dulles suggests that by itself this model tends to be doctrinaire and to result in rigidity and conformity. In a stable, unchanging world the church manifested such characteristics of a 'mechanistic' organisation as a distinct hierarchical structure of control, authority and communication; tendencies for interaction between superiors and subordinates to be vertical, and for normal behaviour in the institution to be governed by instructions and decisions issued by superiors; and an insistence on loyalty to the institution and obedience to superiors as a condition of membership (Burns and Stalker, 1966; Fulton, 1991). The hierarchical authority structures were seen as mediating grace and truth to the laity and there was a marked tendency for the institution to be concerned with its own maintenance and survival.

The pre-Vatican church stressed the virtues of loyalty, the certainty of answers, strict discipline and unquestioning obedience (Greeley, 1972). In this model the priest was viewed as a 'man apart' and the 'sacred' ministry of the priest was asserted over the priesthood of all believers (Moore, 1975). In the pre-Vatican theology, with its fidelity to tradition (*Pro Mundi Vita*, 1973), God was seen as remote, unchanging and perfect (Neal, 1970). There was a close relationship between an emphasis on a transcendent God, a hierarchically structured church, an authoritarian clergy and social distance between the clergy and the laity (Sharratt, 1977). At the parish level there was an emphasis on the objectivity of the sacramental system and a discouragement of full lay involvement in liturgical worship. The sermon provided an opportunity to legitimate traditional practices and reinforce traditional status and power differentials. Control of information was monopolised by the priests who discouraged ecumenical ventures and independent lay initiatives. The 'sacredness' of the separate Catholic community was preserved by insistence on marital endogamy and religious socialisation in separate Catholic schools. Separation from contamination by the world was emphasised and, though there was the exercise of charity to save souls, social and political involvement as a requirement of the gospel was rejected (Leslie, 1980).

However, it was becoming increasingly clear that this model of the church was inadequate in the post-war, post-colonial world of the nuclear threat, democratic imperative, new contraceptive technology and mass communications. The strategy of suppression or intransigence (Berger, 1973: 156), which had been ruthlessly followed for over half a century since the condemnation of modernism, was beginning to break down. The Vatican Council's emphasis on collegiality and participation by all the 'People of God' can be seen as indicating a shift within a changing world to an 'organic' management structure with far more emphasis on lateral consultation than vertical command (Burns and Stalker, 1966). The church was to be transformed from a pyramid of organisation and power into a community of service and mission on the move (Moore, 1975: 34–5). Alternative 'community', and also 'sacrament', 'herald' and 'servant', models of the church were to be given increasing emphasis (Dulles, 1976).

What was involved was nothing less than the adoption of a strategy for transformation and revitalisation, which has been the subject of intermittent conflict between competing exponents in the more pluralistic post-Vatican Church. The Church had a completely 'new agenda' with less emphasis on the defence of the faith and more on the interpretation of religious symbols (Greeley, 1975). There was a movement away from the legalistic following of institutional rules and regulations to a concern with how Christians were to live fully human and liberated lives. This was legitimated by significant shifts of theological emphasis from 'tyrannous transcendentalism' to 'radical immanentism' (Daly, 1981: 220–2) and by the promotion of pluralist participation. Whereas the pre-Vatican church had been top-heavy with 'duty-language', the Second Vatican Council stressed reciprocal rights and duties, dialogue and consultation (Coleman, 1978). A major feature of the post-Vatican period has been its doctrinal relativism (McSweeney, 1980) and, for the individual Catholic, the loss of the fear of hell—that is 'the traditional Hell of Roman Catholics, a place where you would burn for all eternity if you were unlucky enough to die in a state of mortal sin' (Lodge, 1980: 113).

Irish Catholicism was seriously unprepared for the Vatican Council. The liturgical reforms and new ecumenical openness were dutifully encouraged according to the letter, though not perhaps the spirit of the Council (McRedmond, 1980: 42; Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1988: 209). All the same, the European Value Systems Study Group (Fogarty et al., 1984: 104) noted that there was clear evidence that the Council had influenced Irish Catholics in three ways:

> it revealed to many Catholics the possibility of a private world of conscience and behaviour; it stressed that the Church was not merely the pope and

bishops but the entire people of God whose common convictions carry an inner truth of their own; and it transformed religious thinking from being introverted and pessimistic to be outward-looking and optimistic.

While the Second Vatican Council undoubtedly initiated transformations globally in the Roman Catholic church, its impact varied from society to society, depending largely on the proportion of Catholics in the population. Martin, in his encyclopaedic study of patterns of secularisation (1978), has suggested a fundamental contrast between an organicist Catholicism and a pluralist Protestantism. This leads him to distinguish situations of monopoly, duopoly and various forms of pluralism.

The Republic of Ireland clearly presents a case of Catholic monopoly and has been regarded as 'an unself-consciously Catholic state' (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1988: 206). Martin argues that in the post-Tridentine period Catholicism was a kind of 'reaction formation . . . as a sociological consequence of an organic system trying like a limpet to defend itself by clinging with more and more intense desperation to the rock . . . of Peter' (1978: 37). It manifested, in other words, an ultramontane deference to Roman centralism. However, by way of modification, he notes that in the case of Ireland, as of other nations such as Poland, 'an indissoluble union of church and nation arises where the church has been the sole available vehicle of nationality against foreign domination'. Such countries continue to be characterised by high practice and belief (1978: 107).

A second modification follows from Martin's analysis of centre–periphery relations. Where there is no viable alternative language as a source of identity and where 'the centre is perceived as different, . . . then religious nationalism is the likely outcome' (1978: 148). But the case of Ireland is unusually complex:

> Ireland is peripheral to England but England is peripheral to Europe and to Rome. The Roman centre at its moment of weakness before the barbarians, was strengthened on its distant Irish periphery, from which the faith returned to Scotland and England . . . So Ireland like Poland is the hard circumference of the Roman centre of the circle. Since Ireland is indeed peripheral to England and England defines its marginality in relation to Europe through Protestantism, Ireland is strengthened in her Catholicism and in her relation to England's historic enemies, Catholic Spain and France . . . In Southern Ireland where Catholicism and the State are one, the historical enmity no longer obtains. The Protestant cause is defeated without any doubt . . . Five per cents are rarely dangerous . . . (1978: 150)

Finally, in a recent appraisal of global Catholicism, Martin has warned that 'the seeming power of religion when linked to feelings of repressed national identity, as in Eire . . ., is not to be interpreted as proof of the

eternal and inevitable role of faith in the psyche and in the community'
(1978: 28).

Secularising and Counter-secularising Tendencies

This review of the historical context of religion in Ireland and of the social,
economic, political and religious changes which have taken place in recent
decades, is the setting in which we can ask how far secularisation is a
concomitant of the modernisation process. In this section we will review
the evidence for religious transformations in Ireland in recent decades in
terms of Dobbelaere's three dimensions of secularisation.

In a famous broadcast for St. Patrick's Day in 1943, De Valera
expressed the dominant and 'stifling Catholic nationalist orthodoxy'
(Kirby, 1984: 18) in his 'unworldly vision' (Murphy, 1975: 84) of the good
society:

> That Ireland which we have dreamed of would be the home of a people who
> valued material wealth only as a basis of right living, of a people who were
> satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to things of the spirit
> —a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose
> fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the
> romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths and the laughter
> of comely maidens; whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of
> serene old age. It would, in a word, be the home of a people living the life
> that God desires that man should live. (Moynihan, ed., 1980: 466).

Critics have suggested that this dream was unrealistic, 'bore no relation-
ship' to people's material and spiritual lives (Kirby, 1984: 18) and was a
totally unsuitable basis for the construction of national economic policy
(Lee, 1989: 334). It does, at all events, illustrate a strong Catholic suspicion
of industrial capitalism and its attendant materialism and consumerism.
But there seems little doubt that continuing economic stagnation and the
huge loss of young people by emigration in the post-war years led
eventually to the search for new economic policies of growth which were
not premised on an unrealisable nostalgic vision of a benevolent rural
society. In 1964 Garret Fitzgerald, writing in the Jesuit journal *Studies* on
'seeking a national purpose', suggested that

> in some respects the thinking of the Catholic Church in Ireland has lagged
> far behind Catholic thought elsewhere. This has been particularly notable in
> relation to such matters as social welfare. One cannot resist the conclusion
> that in the 1930s and 1940s the Irish Church took a wrong turning in its
> thinking on these matters. (quoted in Whyte, 1980: 334)

Table 1. Secularising and counter-secularising tendencies in the Republic of Ireland.

TENDENCY		LEVEL	
	Societal	Organisational	Individual
		DIMENSION	
	Laicisation	Religous Change	Involvement
SECULARISATION	Accommodation strategy	Indicators of decline	Indicators of decline
	Process of differentiation	— fall in and aging of personnel	— erosion of traditional beliefs
		— fall in vocations	— erosion of traditional practices
	— education		
	— health		
	— law		
RELIGIOUS REVITALISATION	Special purpose groups	Emergent 'People of God'	Emergent laity
	— abortion amendment	— *Trocaire*	— participation
	— divorce referendum		
		— justice	— social awareness
	Moral monopoly	concerns	
	— 'conscience of nation'	Moral monopoly	— small groups

Six years previously T. K. Whitaker had in fact heralded the search for new strategies of state economic planning in his report, *Economic Development*. Is it right, however, to regard these new economic goals and their consequences as implying a process of secularisation? Table 1, which is based on Dobbelaere's analysis, summarises the evidence and suggests that the answer is not as clear-cut as some have supposed.

Church–state relations: secularising tendencies

Focusing first on Dobbelaere's societal level, evidence of processes of structural differentiation in recent decades, and particularly developments in education, health and law, has been taken to indicate 'a gradual secularisation' (Breen *et al.*, 1990: 108–11). The 'moral monopoly' of the church (Inglis, 1987) in these three areas has loosened since the 1960s with the emergence of 'a form of pro-religious anti-clericalism' on the part of middle-class laity (Fulton, 1991: 194).

  In Ireland the control of schools and of cultural tranmission by the Roman Catholic church dates from the colonial period in the middle of the nineteenth century. Fulton sees schooling in Ireland as an instance of 'political religion' (1991: 171–97). A schools system emerged which was paid for by the state but was effectively under clerical control. In this way

the religious socialisation of young Catholics was ensured, differentiation from Protestants and an ethnic sense of identity reinforced, the threat of secularising influences countered, hierarchical clerical control over the laity maintained and the power of the church to define morality extended. In exchange the church provided legitimation for the state. This clerical control of schools has been jealously guarded as 'the single most important institutional means of reinforcing Catholic precepts' (Peillon, 1982: 92). For much of its history the education system was firmly rooted in dogmatic 'truth peddling'. However, the rapid expansion in the provision of second level education and the decline in the numbers of those in religious orders resulted in a significant laicisation process and the decline in the proportion of teachers in religious orders at the second level from over one half in 1961 to 16 per cent in 1983 (Breen *et al.*, 1990: 109). Concessions from a traditional intransigence regarding the Catholic control of education were also made in the 1970s. The new flexibility of the hierarchy first showed itself in the lifting of the ban on Catholic students attending Trinity College and later over the issues of community schools and multi-denominational schools. Whyte has observed that 'to anyone who knows the previous history of Irish education, the astonishing thing is that [the Catholic bishops] conceded so much' (1980: 395).

A similar process of laicisation occurred in the health services. 'As hospital services mushroomed, the dominance of religious orders in hospital administration and staffing dwindled' (Breen *et al.*, 1990: 109). Early post-war proposals for state welfare failed in large part owing to the strong opposition of the Catholic church on two main grounds: (i) a deep suspicion of state power over the individual and consequently its advocacy of the principle of subsidiarity, that is, that the state should not undertake what smaller bodies can properly do; and (ii) its concern that improper health advice, not according to Catholic moral teaching, for example on contraception, might be given. A similar concern with the growth of state power on the part of the English Catholic hierarchy had led initially to their opposition to the construction of the welfare state in post-war Britain (Coman, 1977).

The strong overt and covert opposition of the Catholic bishops to Dr. Noel Browne's 'Mother and Child Scheme' was dramatically exposed when the Minister resigned at the request of his party leader in 1951 and in an unprecedented move released the relevant correspondence to the press (Whyte 1980: 196–272, 419–38). Whyte's judgement (pp. 260–1) that Browne 'courted a showdown' and 'wished to bring about a collision between the Irish State and a powerful vested interest . . . [and so] crack the mould of Irish society' in order to bring about radical social change, has the ring of plausibility. The 1951 crisis does seem to have been an

important milestone even if 'the growth of State power was a genuine problem in Ireland, especially in view of the centralising tendencies and the impatience with interest groups that were so noticeable in Irish administration'.

In reviewing the role of the Catholic church in Ireland in the post-war years, Peillon has argued that it abandoned its former vision of a society constructed on corporatist principles, which provided an alternative to both capitalism and communism, and has, in recent years regarded the increasing dominance of Irish society by large national and multinational enterprises with growing concern. However, the church

> will adapt to the society which is today in the making, but will make no creative contribution to its elaboration. In the past it looked with aversion on the advance of urbanisation and industrialisation in Ireland and found itself incapable of holding it back. Today it no longer proclaims commitment to a particular type of society and to this degree it has ceased to be a social force. The Irish Catholic Church professes a social doctrine but no longer entertains a coherent social project. (Peillon, 1982: 99)

The third example of laicisation is the increasing independence of the law and judiciary in the determination of social policy, even in areas where previously the hegemony of the Catholic church was unchallenged. Some changes were clearly designed with a view to appeasing the fears of Northern Ireland Protestants. One instance of this was the removal from De Valera's 1937 Constitution, following a referendum in 1972, of the reference to 'the special position' of the Catholic church (Whyte, 1980: 388–9; Murphy, 1975: 90). A second was the changes in the law relating to the sale and distribution of contraceptives (Whyte, 1980: 403–16; Breen *et al.*, 1990: 109–10). Following the McGee case in 1973, in which the Supreme Court held that a 1935 law which forbade the importation of contraceptives was unconstitutional and violated basic human rights, the law was finally amended in 1979. One of the most unexpected aspects of the debate, however, was the statement by the bishops in 1973 that 'there are many things which the Catholic Church holds to be morally wrong and no one has ever suggested, least of all the Church herself, that they should be prohibited by the State' (*Irish Independent*, 26 November 1973; quoted in Whyte, 1980: 407). A third instance, which also reflects the increasingly independent role of the courts and the failure of the church to maintain a previously intransigent position, relates to the matter of legal adoption. A revision of the law in 1974 for the first time allowed a couple of mixed religion to adopt a child.

Whyte has characterised the secularising tendencies we have reviewed as 'adjustment by consent' (1980: 380) and there are signs that the response

of the Catholic church in Ireland to the massive economic and social changes since the 1950s has increasingly been one of accommodation (Berger, 1973: 156). Thus it no longer espouses a commitment to a rural society based on small scale agriculture. On the other hand, it has not replaced an earlier vision grounded in pre-war papal encyclicals (chiefly Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 and Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* of 1931) with 'a coherent social project'. While this reflects the 'great flexibility and political realism' of the church in the pursuit of its essential survival goals (Peillon, 1982: 89), it also demonstrates that the church has become increasingly divorced from participation in major areas of social and economic policy determination.

The election in 1990 of Mary Robinson, a well-known campaigner for individual and minority rights and for a pluralistic, modern Ireland, as President of the Republic, has been interpreted as a tacit sign of the emergence of a 'new' Ireland (O'Sullivan, 1991) and of the inability of the religious authorities in the Roman Catholic church seriously to retard such developments. In this sense the result can be seen as an indication of latent secularising tendencies.

Church–state relations: religious revitalisation

The evidence we have reviewed above does not give the whole story of the religious transformations which have taken place. It is also necessary to evaluate the evidence for religious revitalisation and counter-secularising tendencies.

In a recent study of religious change in the United States, Wuthnow has drawn attention to the growth of special purpose groups and their increasing public role. These groups clearly constitute 'one of the ways in which the faith is continually revitalised' (1988: 121). It might be argued that such lay-initiated and lay-run organisations have also been enormously successful in the Irish Republic in mobilising Catholics in defence of traditional positions regarding abortion and divorce in the two referenda in the 1980s. Any secularisation thesis has to face the fact that the aggressive Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC) on the very first occasion 'that they [had] openly initiated and directed such a campaign' (Inglis, 1987: 86), successfully persuaded the Irish electorate to constitutionalise the issue and insert an anti-abortion clause into the constitution. Article 40, paragraph 3, section 3, now reads:

> The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right of life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws, defend and vindicate that right.

One view of the referendum was that it was a rite of renewal directed at the maintenance of traditional cultural supremacy and an attempt to pre-empt the democratic consideration of alternative rights and liberties (O'Carroll, 1991). Other commentators regarded the referendum as a 'vulgar farce' since about 4,000 Irish women were going to Britain for abortions each year and abortion was already illegal in Ireland. Rather 'the exercise was symbolically significant . . . It was a cleansing ritual, of a type central to the traditional value system . . . [which] had now broken up, but substantial fragments still survived' (Lee, 1989: 653–4). Inglis saw this as the first time that the full power of Catholic laity to split any major power bloc or alliance in Irish society with its demand for loyalty to traditional Catholic morality had been demonstrated (1987: 86).

The second successful mobilisation of Catholic laity was demonstrated in the victory of the anti-divorce lobby in the referendum of 1986 on amending the constitution to allow divorce in certain circumstances, despite evidence of increasing marital breakdown. The emergence of the lay-run 'special purpose' groups is a new phenomenon and must reasonably be considered as evidence of powerful counter-secularising forces in Irish society. Thus, in an analysis of recent movements for social change in the Republic of Ireland, and in particular the mobilisation of the Catholic 'ideological bloc', Hannigan concludes that 'secularisation . . . has not proceeded in Ireland in an evolutionary, linear fashion'. Rather, given the dualistic nature of the bloc—conservative in private morality and liberal on social justice issues—'it appears more useful to conceputalise secularisation in Gramscian terms as a process of ideological contestation in each of the main societal sectors' (1989: 83).

Lee suggests that the abortion referendum was a device for diverting attention back to traditional concepts of personal morality and away from areas of social morality and the operation of capitalistic enterprises (1989: 654–5). However, the Catholic hierarchy had begun to develop a critique of social policy in the 1970s as unemployment levels and attendant social problems rose as a result of major social and economic reconstruction and increasing exposure to global economic forces. This concern culminated in the publication of the joint pastoral letter *The Work of Justice* in 1977. While it seems to have made little public impact, Whyte observes (1980: 396–7) an interesting shift of methodology. Whereas previously the bishops had slavishly attempted to apply the papal social encyclicals to the Irish situation, now they 'started looking at Ireland as it actually was, and applied their consciences to the evils they saw'. Hannigan speculates about the consequences of 'social justice' elements in the Catholic bloc allying with reformist political elements in a way which 'could significantly affect,

and perhaps realign, the power relations between the main contending social classes in their dispute for hegemony in Ireland' (1989: 82).

In his masterly review of the evidence of church–state relations in Ireland, Whyte concluded that there were only sixteen measures out of about 1,800 statutes enacted by the Irish parliament between 1923 and 1970 where there was clear evidence that one or more bishops had been consulted or made representations (1980: 363–4). This led him to reject any suggestion that Ireland was a theocratic state. He also rejected an alternative view that the Catholic hierarchy was simply one interest group among many and, following the suggestion of Liam Ryan (1979), concluded that 'the best model to use for the hierarchy's current role is to see it as seeking to be *the conscience of society*' (1980: 416). In this role the hierarchy is seen less as the close collaborator of the state and more as 'a left-of-centre' social critic on behalf of the poor, deprived and those oppressed and vulnerable as a result of social and economic change. In my view, it is misleading to see such a transformation of social role as evidence of secularisation. Rather it is appropriate to regard the change as evidence of a slow process of revitalisation in Roman Catholicism which commenced a century ago with the first modern social encyclical but which in recent years dates from the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

Organisational decline: secularising trends

While some secularisation theorists are chiefly concerned with the influence of religion at the societal level, attention is also given to the organisational and individual levels. At the organisational level, Kirby (1984: 38) has pointed to evidence of a significant fall in the numbers of church personnel to serve Ireland's growing population:

> The numbers of priests, sisters and brothers have shown a steady decline since 1970. In that year the total number was 33,092 while in 1983 it was down to 28,607. In every year since 1974, when these statistics first began to be compiled at a national level, the numbers of deaths or departures from the ranks have far exceeded the number of entrants. Another important factor is the age structure of Church personnel. Whereas in 1970 40% were under the age of 40 and 41% were over the age of 50, by 1981 only 25% were under 40 and 55% over 50. Smaller numbers of young priests, sisters and brothers have to support ever larger numbers of older ones. This is going to be a major drain on the financial resources and freedom of action of many religious orders in years to come. (1984: 38)

The former director of the Irish bishops' Council for Research and Development reported that 'in 1989, the total strength of the Irish Catholic church clerical and religious personnel was 24,546' (Weafer, 1990), a fall

of more than one quarter in the past twenty years. The number of new entrants was only two-fifths of the number in 1970. Other commentators have bemoaned the failure of the Catholic church in Ireland to exploit the potential of the Vatican Council's reforms and have suggested that it has remained wedded to 'outmoded parish structures' and 'more concerned with maintaining the institutions functioning rather than with fostering new forms of mission through which this generation of Irish people could be excited by a vision of what it is to be a Christian' (Kirby, 1984: 32). Tendencies such as these appear, then, to indicate processes of institutional decline and hence of secularisation.

Institutional reform: counter-secularising tendencies

It is, however, necessary to balance the consideration of institutional decline with an assessment of the huge scale of the Catholic church's physical and bureaucratic organisation. In his comprehensive review of the situation in 1982, Inglis (1987: 33–62) has indicated that for an estimated Catholic population (in the whole island) of 3.7 million there were 1,322 parishes, 2,639 churches, 591 Catholic charitable institutions (including hospitals, homes for the deaf and blind, and reformatories and 3,844 primary and 900 secondary schools. He argues that it is the sheer scale of these resources which enables the Catholic church 'to control the moral discourse and practice of the Irish people' and maintain a 'moral monopoly'.

Of course, the sheer size of the institution does not bear directly on the processes of religious decline or revitalisation. It is mentioned simply in order to guard against too hasty a judgement of decline. In spite of the fact that some commentators have felt it necessary to ask *Is Irish Catholicism Dying?* (Kirby, 1984), there are indications of processes of religious revitalisation following from the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. There is evidence of a stirring among the laity to realise their newly discovered status as 'the People of God', to resist 'top-down' traditional styles of religious authority, to 'reclaim their story' and insist on their right to participate in the determination of priorities (O'Kelly, 1986). Seeds of a transformed Catholicism are also to be found in the success and international recognition of the work of *Trocaire*, the main Irish development agency, in the charismatic movement and in various forms of basic Christian communities. A growing number of groups are working in inner-city areas or with deprived groups and attempting to raise awareness of some of the social injustices associated with uncontrolled forms of western capitalism (Kirby, 1984). In my judgement, it would be perverse to regard such new stirrings of a revitalised religious faith as evidence of secularisation.

Finally, Peillon (1982: 90) has observed that the dual nature of the church's structure, that is, a diocesan clergy which serves the everyday needs of parishioners and members of religious orders who have the autonomy to respond more rapidly to changing needs (teaching, nursing, charitable works, etc.), contributes to institutional resilience. This flexibility is also manifested in a 'plurality of languages' which enables clergy speaking from a variety of standpoints to maintain some contact with marginal groups and even the 'enemies of the moment'. By means of a variety of strategies—organisational flexibility, the plurality of its languages, adaptable methods of clerical recruitment, control over the schools, and so on—the church continues with a high measure of success to reproduce itself.

Individual involvment: declining traditional practice

Between the 1971 and 1981 censuses in the Irish Republic there was a five-fold increase in the number of people who declared that they had 'no religion' from 0.3% to 1.2% in an increased population. Such figures 'seem to support the assertion of some people that Ireland is witnessing the gradual but persistent movement towards a secularist society' (Weafer, 1986b: 507). As we shall see, however, the evidence in terms of individual involvement is by no means all in the direction of secularisation.

There is no shortage of survey data about the changing religious beliefs and practices of Irish people over the past two decades. Chief sources are the national survey of 1974, a subsequent survey in 1984 designed specifically to monitor changes over the ten-year period (Breslin and Weafer, 1985), and more recently another national survey of religious practice and attitudes (Mac Gréil, 1991). There have also been two national surveys conducted by the European Values Systems Study Group in 1981 (Fogarty et al., 1984) and 1990 (Whelan, forthcoming).

Weafer (1986a,b) has reported the main findings: a small decline in orthodox beliefs and weekly Mass attendance and a big decline in the use of monthly private confession. Orthodox belief was found to increase with age, to decrease with educational qualifications, and to be higher among women and lowest in urban areas. Similarly higher sacramental participation was found among women, those living in rural areas and those in higher social classes. In a comparison of the findings from surveys of the religious beliefs and practices of Irish university students in 1975–76 and 1987–78, MacAirt also reported lower levels of 'basic' beliefs, much lower levels of Mass attendance more than weekly, and concluded that 'the spiritual climate in Ireland is changing rapidly' (1990: 183).

Of particular interest for the purposes of both trend and cohort analysis

are the two surveys of the European Value Systems Study Group. The findings from the 1990 study will be reported in due course. On the basis of the 1981 study it was reported that:

> there is the shift across generations from stronger to weaker acceptance of orthodox beliefs and religious practice and of the authority of the Church . . . The shift has been sharpest in attitudes to the Church and the authoritativeness of its teaching: and in this area the age and generation shift has been reinforced by a similar, though modest, trend towards a more critical attitude to the Church and its authority among those with higher levels of education and occupational qualification (Fogarty *et al.*, 1984: 12).

This survey also reported that the unemployed stood out as a particularly alienated group and that women in employment were, if anything, running ahead of trends away from orthodoxy. As we noted earlier, there were large increases in the size of both these groups in the 1980s.

Where longitudinal data are not available, tests of the secularisation thesis have been claimed by comparing more modern and more traditional groups or sectors of the population. For example, Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, using data from a national survey in 1973–74, showed that men were less religious than women, younger cohorts less religious than older cohorts (apart from the 18–20 age group), urban residents less religious than rural residents, farmers more religious than those in the non-farming sector, those with emigration experiences less religious than those who had not been exposed to such influences, and those with a higher consumption of foreign media less religious than those with lower exposures. She concluded that 'indicators of modernisation are negatively related to measures of religiosity and so provide some support for the secularisation theory' (1986: 153).

In a review of the survey evidence, Ryan has suggested that 'a picture emerges of a people largely believing in God and in the Church, but in possession of a belief which increasingly has little impact, not just on the wider world of business and politics, but also in many areas of private morality' (1983: 6). A new type is beginning to appear among middle-class Catholics, similar to Greeley's 'communal Catholic' (1976), wanting a less authoritarian and more participative style of leadership and demanding that the leadership speak out more authoritatively on social morality but less on moral matters which affect his or her private life.

Individual involvement: resilience and reform

In the surveys we have briefly reviewed not all the indicators support a secularisation thesis. For example, there were small but quite consistent declines in the proportions rejecting basic church doctrines between 1974

Table 2. Religious and moral values in the Republic of Ireland: average scale scores 1981–1990 (N = 2,217).

	Scale				
	Traditional religious beliefs	Religiosity	Confidence in the church	Permissiveness	Civic morality
1981	5.36	3.60	1.65	2.09	8.11
1990	5.30	3.63	1.45	2.49	8.43
p (1981–90)	NS	NS	<.01	<.001	<.001
European average, 1990	3.18	2.57	1.21	3.81	8.37
Items in scale	7	6	3	8	14
Max. score	7	6	3	10	10

Source: Hornsby-Smith and Whelan (forthcoming), where full details of the scales, based on work at the University of Tilburg, are given. The items forming the three religious dimensions are all dichotomous and the scores are the average number of items agreed with. The items in the two morality scales are scored on a scale from 1 ('never justified') to 10 ('always justified') and the scale scores are the average scores on the items included.

and 1984, an increase in the proportions attending Mass more than weekly (from 23 to 30 per cent), and a big increase in the proportions receiving Holy Communion weekly (from 28 per cent in 1974 to 43 per cent in 1988–89). More people said they prayed daily and more said their families prayed together at home. In sum, 'the state of religion among Catholics in the Irish Republic is in a relatively stable condition' (Breslin and Weafer, 1985; cf. Weafer, 1986b) Mác Greil, 1991).

The two European Values surveys have also demonstrated the substantial stability of religious and moral values in the 1980s. The findings show that whatever secularising trends there might have been in the Irish Republic in recent years, they have gone 'nowhere near so far in Ireland as in Britain or in Europe generally' (Fogarty et al., 1984: 12; Harding et al., 1986). The results summarised in Table 2 show that overall there has been no change in the level of traditional Christian beliefs or in religiosity, a modest decline in confidence in the church, a significant increase in permissiveness and a strengthening of civic morality. A comparison of Ireland with Western European countries as a whole shows that the scores of Irish respondents on the religious dimensions are well above the European average and that they also display lower levels of permissiveness and a slightly more absolutist view on civil morality.

There are no significant social class variations in the measures of traditional religious beliefs and religiosity but the unskilled manual workers

express higher levels of confidence in the church and lower levels of permissiveness than all other social classes. Interestingly, educational level has no significant impact on traditional religious beliefs though religiosity is significantly lower for those with third level education, but only for those under 40. Confidence in the church falls and permissiveness increases with increasing educational qualifications. In the case of women, both traditional religious beliefs and religiosity decline and permissiveness increases as they move from home duties to part-time and full-time employment, as might have been predicted (Luckmann, 1970), but the highest levels of alienation are expressed by the unemployed. Levels of confidence in the church are not significantly related to employment status.

The largest variations are associated with age and are a great deal more substantial than period effects. In general terms, in both 1981 and 1990, the older the respondent the higher the levels of traditional religious beliefs, religiosity and confidence in the church and the lower the level of permissiveness. Cohort analysis shows that during the 1980s, traditional religious beliefs and religiosity showed no overall tendency to decline. These results are not consistent with the secularisation thesis at the individual level.

When individual items of religious belief are looked at, comparison with the European averages shows how exceptional the Irish are. They are twice as likely to believe in heaven, hell and the devil, and susbtantially more likely to believe in God, life after death, and sin. There was no change in the 1980s in the proportion believing in God, very slight increases in belief in life after death, a soul, and heaven, and slight decreases in belief in hell, the devil and sin. The overall picture is of no significant change in the past decade, but of a move towards a more optimistic interpretation of religion. Finally, the Irish are also much more likely than people in Europe as a whole to pray and to obtain comfort and strength from religion. Cohort analysis shows that the proportions of middle-aged respondents (in their thirties and forties in 1990) who draw comfort and strength from prayer has increased significantly over the past decade. Again, this result does not support the secularisation thesis.

Other survey data point to a growing 'awareness of the social responsibility deriving from one's religion' and increasing proportions involved in parish activities such as reading the lesson, helping to organise parish social events, and serving on parochial committees (Weafer, 1986a). Among Irish university students there was also a slight increase in the proportions conforming to the weekly Mass attendance obligation between the mid-1970s and the late-1980s (MacAirt, 1990).

We have previously noted Martin's (1978) qualifications about the

extent to which secularisation occurs where there is a close linkage between religion and national identity. Likewise, Nic Ghiolla Phádraig has noted that 'the colonial inheritance of an underprivileged Church, which had often mediated on behalf of an underprivileged people, has headed off anticlericalism at source and provided loyal, if not always uncritical support' (1986: 142–3). This was illustrated in the report of the conference of the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the role of the laity in the church and in the world (O'Kelly, 1986). As in the United States (cf. Wuthnow, 1988), 'there has been some increase in polarisation among Irish Catholics, with some moving away from legalism to spirituality, on the one hand, and secularism on the other'. Thus, while some have taken the 'option for the poor' and identified with the needs of marginalised groups and worked alongside the left on welfare and human rights issues, others have allied themselves with those resisting amendment in the traditional Catholic positions on abortion, divorce and traditional sexual morality (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 1988: 210–1; Hannigan, 1989).

A balanced interpretation of recent religious changes in Ireland would therefore recognise that not all religious indicators have been in decline but that there is evidence of a considerable transformation in what was until recently an extremely rigid and authoritarian church, with emergent groups struggling to articulate new interpretations of their Catholic faith. As in England (cf. Hornsby-Smith, 1991):

> a rigid adherence to the rules and regulations of the Church has been giving way to a more individually principled ethics. Irish Catholics are now more willing to make up their own minds about what is right and wrong rather than to follow the dictates of the Church (Inglis, 1987: 217).

The conclusion is, therefore, that rather than a process of secularisation following inevitably from the processes of industrialisation promoted since the late 1950s, religious changes in the Irish Republic have been complex and multiform. Certainly there have been major changes in the way in which the largely implicit assumptions of an inevitable alliance between the Roman Catholic church (or rather its clerical leadership) and the state have been expressed in recent decades. But this has also gone along with transformations in Roman Catholicism encouraged by the Second Vatican Council and resulting in a patchwork of renewal processes which have revitalised some aspects of Irish Catholicism. Catholics seem clearly to have emerged from a state of dependence and legal conformity to face the more challenging demands of lay participation in the church and responsibility for the civic society and the wider world.

Discussion

In this paper we have summarised recent social and religious changes in the Irish Republic in order to test the proposition that modernisation processes have led inevitably to secularisation. Although we have not been concerned here with the situation in Northern Ireland, it is evident that, with its high levels of religious affiliation and practice after more than a century's experience of industrialisation, any assumption of a direct causal link between industrialisation and secularisation in that province is preposterous. In the case of the Irish Republic, using a model of three levels and dimensions of secularisation derived from Dobbelaere, it has been shown that at each of the societal, institutional and individual levels it is possible to discern both secularising tendencies, on the one hand, and counter-secularising tendencies or evidence of religious revitalisation, on the other. In other words, the reality is a great deal more complex than evolutionary theories of religious decline would suggest.

The first century of industrialisation in Europe, as Fahey (this volume) reminds us, coincided with an expansionary phase for institutional religion. In the case of Irish Catholicism, this ran from the post-famine period to the middle of the twentieth century when there was a period of levelling off in church expansion. Fahey suggests that while in some respects Catholicism may have entered a period of incipient decline, the evidence for this is uneven and, in any event, the pace is slower than elsewhere in Europe. This leads him to speculate that Ireland is not so much a deviant case as at an earlier stage in an (inevitable) process of secularisation. Given the evidence reviewed in this present chapter, this conclusion seems both premature and overly pessimistic. The evolutionary expectations of the secularisation thesis seems to be a theoretical cul-de-sac and a diversion from the search for explanations of the multifarious ways in which religious phenomena emerge, are transformed, or disappear during periods of rapid, economic, social or political change.

The role of the Roman Catholic church in Irish politics has been the focus of much debate. There seems little doubt that the power and influence it has wielded and the substantial absence of serious anti-clericalism, can be attributed to the role of the clergy in resisting the British Protestant state and articulating the distinctiveness of an Irish Catholic identity during the colonial period. This resulted in a privileged status for the church after independence, and while the Republic might not have been a theocratic state, neither was the church simply another interest group. It used its 'moral monopoly' to keep key issues, such as educational policy, off the state's agenda for many decades.

Recently, however, it has become evident that there has been an

'adjustment by consent' (Whyte, 1980: 380) in the relations between the clerical leadership of the church and the state. The election of Mary Robinson as President may be interpreted as indicative of this trend. On the other hand, the 1990 European Values study showed that very large majorities of the Irish people believed that the church should speak out on a wide range of political, social and moral issues, though only a minority favoured its intervention in government policy.

A process of structural differentiation has been discerned, especially in education, health and law. There is also evidence of a significant decline in the number of priests and personnel in religious orders and some decline in adherence to traditional beliefs and practices. On the other hand, there have been powerful counter-secularising tendencies, manifested for example in the emergence of powerful lay-led 'special purpose groups' to strengthen the traditional opposition to abortion and divorce. In the maintenance of its 'moral monopoly', the church has shifted its strategy from one of coercion to one of being the 'conscience of the nation'. With the economic and social transformations of the past three decades the Republic has experienced increasing problems of unemployment, urban deprivation and alienation. This has called forth notable responses from the church or its agencies and there is growing evidence of a more participative and socially aware laity seeking ways of realising a Christian dimension in their everyday lives.

It is tempting to regard some of the religious changes which have been noted as indicative of a 'protestantisation' of Catholicism. Thus, the evident tendency for increasing proportions of Irish Catholics to make up their own minds on contraception points to the greater prominence of private judgement and moral decision-making. Nevertheless, such a view is unsatisfactory, not least because of the continued salience of the Catholic identity, sharply distinguished from Protestantism. Such emphatic self-definition must be respected as socially meaningful to the actors themselves. Secondly, the evidence from both historical (e.g. Hynes, 1989) and ethnographic (e.g. Taylor, 1989; 1990a; 1990b) studies shows that the ordinary lay Catholic has always made up his or her own mind on some matters. Religious beliefs and practices have always been 'in flux' (Hynes, 1989) even if religious power has been unevenly distributed. A process of 'protestantisation' misleadingly implies that Catholics have simply assimilated to a clearly identifiable static model of Protestantism. It seems altogether more satisfactory to regard the religious transformations which have undoubtedly taken place as evidence for a process of normative convergence (Goldthorpe and Lockwood, 1963) in a modernising society.

Some final methodological reflections may not be out of place. For some sociologists, secularisation is a self-evident consequence of

the process of modernisation, industrialisation, rationalisation, bureau-cratisation and urbanisation. Others see in the emergence of new religious phenomena an obvious refutation of ideological assertions of inevitable evolutionary change. The attempt to provide an appropriate framework for the empirical testing of the thesis (Dobbelaere, 1981, 1989) is therefore very welcome. This framework has been employed in this chapter but, even so, the relative weights to be attributed to secularising and counter-secularising trends at each level of analysis will remain a matter of judgement.

Thus, in the analysis of the power of the Catholic church in Ireland, there is a considerable gap between the claim, on the one hand, that it possesses a 'moral monopoly', and on the other hand, the argument (on the basis of an estimate that the hierarchy made direct representations to the government on only a tiny fraction of the legislative measures since independence) that there is no automatic deference to the hierarchy by the government. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the sociologist must proceed systematically to examine at each level whose interests count in the determination of specific policy issues, who controls the economic, social and political agenda, and who can mobilise bias to include or exclude issues (Lukes, 1974). In other words it is necessary to examine empirical instances of the 'dialectic of control' (Giddens, 1986: 16), involving a variety of actors, including the church hierarchy and emergent lay groups and politicians, in order to arrive iteratively at a better understanding of the power of the Catholic church in Ireland today and in what ways and to what extent it is changing.

In our review of the transformations which have taken place in Catholicism in Ireland in recent decades, we have in the main drawn on two types of data. First, we have referred to historical analyses, especially of the interrelationship between the Roman Catholic church and the Irish state since independence. Secondly, we have reviewed data from a large number of structured surveys carried out over the past two decades. Recently, however, pleas have been made for an empirically-based anthropology that 'does justice to the range of human experience, and will develop some systematic methods of asking how different moral principles become acceptable and different versions of reality plausible' (Douglas, 1982: 18). Such an approach can contribute to understanding 'the mutual conditioning of power and meaning' and the 'antagonistic inter-dependencies' which exist in rival religious regimes, the dynamics of which depend on shifting balances of power (Bax, 1987).

In the case of Ireland, Taylor has recently contributed some note-worthy anthropological studies of popular Catholicism in Donegal. These include an account of the radical shift in the religious discourse of the

parish mission with its accommodation to a changing world, for example, in its neglect of hell, while continuing to stress 'the necessary sacramental structure of the Church' (1989: 13). In a second study of a charismatic 'healing Mass' Taylor stresses that beneath the superficial impression of great ritual unity, those attending felt and thought very differently about it (1990a: 101) and that it provided 'significantly different religious experiences' for the participants. Taylor, like other anthropologists of religion who stress 'essentially loyal heterodoxies' (Brandes, 1990: 188), shows how devotional innovations may nevertheless be 'incorporated into pre-existing frameworks' and contribute to 'the solidification of clerical domination in a firmly established diocesan regime' (1990a: 106). This was apparent in the dramatic shift away from the expressive emotional and noisy form of charismatic prayer in the early days of the Irish Catholic charismatic movement to an emphasis on non-participatory contemplative worship, personal spirituality and a stress on the 'deeper' meanings of silence (Szuchewycz, 1989). Thirdly, in a study of the stories of the healing powers of drunken priests, Taylor notes how they can be read as a commentary 'on the longer historical process of the growth of institutional Church power through priestly domination' and 'the dynamic nature of the relationship between local and official religion' (1990b: 181–3).

In these various studies there are two significant conclusions. Firstly, historically there has been, and still is, a wide variety of ways of 'being a Catholic' in Ireland, and there is no strong evidence that ordinary Catholics have ever found 'different orders of belief irreconcilable or even particularly discordant' (Hynes, 1989: 53). Secondly, neither individuals nor communities are entirely passive in their stance towards their Catholicism. There is no simple top-down imposition of orthodoxy. Ordinary Catholics always have made up their own minds on some issues (for example, boycotting in the nineteenth century, contraception today). In spite of the religious status of the priest, authority is enhanced where it resonates well with everyday experiences and situations (Hynes, 1989: 56–7). In the present state of 'flux' there are opportunities for emergent groups to contest the existing distribution of power and authority.

In sum, in spite of considerable social turmoil and the religious transformations over the past three decades, it is clear that modernisation processes in Ireland have not been accompanied unambiguously by secularisation. The case illustrates the dangers of a simplistic and deterministic view of the relationship between modernisation and secularisation. More generally, it demonstrates that religion in particular and culture in general have a resilience which is at least partially independent of industrialisation processes. The study of industrialisation is, therefore, incomplete without some consideration of the religious variable.

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