The control of education

CHURCH, STATE AND THE CONTROL OF SCHOOLD IN IRELAND
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The Christian Brothers withdrew from the National scheme in protest against this arrangement. The hierarchy were also against the teacher training system known as the "Model Schools". The hierarchy opposed the training of teachers of different denominations boarded together. Titley does not dwell long on the National school system but gives a detailed account of the Intermediate Board system which Titley, more sympathetic to the hierarchy because it left private schools intact and merely recognised them for examination purposes. Teachers were paid on a results system which left the lay teachers in a very precarious position. Titley details the fight by the ASTI (founded in 1909) to win proper contracts, salaries and recognition from the Catholic hierarchy. 敢首iHl's Association who were reluctant to relinquish their advantage. Under the system, lay teachers could be let go whenever a religious person, regardless of qualification, was available. Augustine Birrell played a large role in resolving the dispute which gave better pay to teachers, but left hiring and firing to the managers.

In the first two decades of the 20th century, the British government, through men like Birrell and later James Macpherson, attempted wide-ranging reform of Irish education. Titley argues that the hierarchy became nervous of this, seeing it as an attempted state takeover of their interests and organsied the people to strongly resist state control. In so doing they saw the emergent national Catholic/Gaelic Ireland as a threat to their denominational ambitions as useful to their cause. "The Church backed the winning horse," says Titley. Macpherson's plans were wrecked.

Titley sees Sinn Fein as a conservative force willing to accept church rulings on educational matters, particularly de Valera. The first Dail appointed no Minister of Education, yet the state be seen to interfere with church control. Educational matters were dealt with under Aireacht as Na Gaedhilge. In 1920, the Gaelic scholar Eoin MacNeill became the first Minister for Education in the Free State. This was a poor administrator and never challenged the Church's claim to control. He was moreover deeply influenced by the enormously powerful figure of Rev. Professor Timothy Corcoran.Such power was so strong. Titley writes, "as an educational factor" at U.C.D. and also a lover of Irish. Corcoran propounded educational ideas of the narrowest and most traditional kind. He was a lover of the classics, a proponent of stern corporal discipline, a fierce opponent of Froebel and Montessori methods.

Throughout the coming decades, the revival of Irish language in the schools went hand in hand with entrenched religious and political differences in the Irish state system of education. The equation of Irish with Catholic and Gaelic received institutional expression. Here Titley is at his most polemical. He attacks the attempt to restructure Irish through school language and its history as a "ritual of linguistic necromancy." He claims that the hierarchy, through teaching church history could use it as less immoral than English, citing a 1925 pronouncement of Archbishop O'Donnell of Armagh on this matter. He claims that Pearse's school, St. Enda's, was "sectarian and segregated by sex," and that Pearse in the long run agreed with the church. Vocational and technical education for all was to develop only in so far as they did not threaten church interests in the secondary schools. All through the 30s and 40s state developments in education ceded power and control to the church. Training became more and more restricted for lay men and women after 1944. Carysfort was doubling its hostel for nun training as teachers. Thus state cutbacks in education increased those other, o r religious in teaching.

The end result was a nation which put educational aims behind moral and religious aims, for Titley a "spiritual empire" was created with Ireland exporting religious abroad to the missions. The principal function of the Irish school system became the production of clergy. Clearly this is a provocative book, vigorously against Catholic education. However as a critical analysis its value is limited. Titley likes to keep his thesis simple, and often overlooks understanding the complexities of Irish history, or the complicated relation of the people to their priests. He ignores the growing interest of Protestant authorities in denominational education; institutional duplication has been a safeguard to pluralism in Ireland as Micheal MacGriil has argued in Prejudice and Tolerance in Ireland. Moreover state interests could often become Protestant interests; the Protestant Bishop Whately saw the National school system of the 19th century as "the only hope of weaning the Irish from Catholicism". When Whately was a long serving member of the National Schools Commission.

Titley misunderstands the relationship of the bishops to the Irish language before independence. The relationship was far from being supportive in most cases. One only has to read Papal Nuncio to Ireland, the diaries of Dr. O'Hickey from Maynooth to realise this. Furthermore, Titley's assessment of Pearse is out of tune with the facts. Far from being a sectarian bigot, he was in fact of multi-denominational religious background and he was critical of church influence and control.

Titley never analyses his own presuppositions. For him state control is necessarily good. But his narrow focussing on the Free State obscured the manner in which state schools b e c a m e Protestant schools in the刹那. During the same period. While the book is very readable, and useful for its facts and for pointing out that the Church, when Corcoran, it is unsatisfactory as a critique of Irish education. Church control of education in Ireland needs to be criticised, but it must be done in the light of all the denominations, so that the true nature of the pressures on the Irish educational system be understood.