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Where Does the State End and the Church Begin? The Strange Career of Richard S. Devane

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Abstract:

Richard S. Devane (1876-1951) was a Jesuit priest, a campaigner on a variety of social issues and a prolific author. He was also a key figure in the legislative landscape of post-1922 Ireland. He was invited as an expert witness to the Committee on Evil Literature in 1926 which enshrined a regime of literary censorship in the newly independent Ireland and he was the only witness personally invited to submit evidence to the Carrigan Committee in 1932, the infamous government commission that helped lay the groundwork for the Criminal Law Amendment Act that banned the sale, manufacture or importation of contraception in Ireland. In both his presence as a witness and in his voluminous journalistic writings on social issues, Devane provided a politico-theological legitimacy for this kind of draconian legislation. Drawing on Devane's published works, his collected papers in the Irish Jesuit Archive and government papers in the National Archives of Ireland, this biographical paper analyses Devane's central role in the Irish Free State's project of social control and raises questions about the borders dividing Church and State in the period after 1922. Moreover, I trace Devane's later political development in the 1930s and '40s; by this period, Devane had far less input in the State's legislative agenda but was producing far more detailed political writings; his two later books, *Challenge from Youth* (1942) and *The Failure of Individualism* (1948), as well as showing a clear Fascist influence also highlight the soft authoritarianism inherent to the politics of post-1922 Ireland.

Keywords: Catholic Nationalism, Church-State Relations, Historiography, Irish Free State, Jesuits

1. Where Does The Church End And The State Begin?

There is a subtle assumption in much of the mainline historiography of twentieth-century Ireland that the "Church" is logically anterior to the "State";

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the motive force which in turn pushed for State action. Lindsey Earner-Byrne, for example, has claimed that welfare-provision in Ireland remained the preserve of the Catholic Church; "the Roman Catholic Church began to organise itself in response to *its new responsibility to guide the Irish Free State* in relation to public welfare, both spiritual and temporal. The Catholic Church became one of the central lobbying forces in Irish public life and sought to assume the power of veto on matters regarding health of morality". Earner-Byrne labels this "Catholic Supremacy" (Earner-Byrne 2007, 24, 223, *emphases added*). In such a formulation, Church power determines and delimits State actions, leaving unexamined the question of *why* the State would allow itself to be made subservient. Clíona Rattigan begins her study of single motherhood and infanticide by noting that partition had created a Free State that was 92.6% Catholic and she then proceeds to note that

> The Catholic Church exerted a huge influence in Ireland throughout the period under review but particularly in the post-independence period when conservative social policies were introduced including bans on divorce and contraception along with a tightening of censorship. The Catholic Church's influence was felt in almost every sphere of Irish life, in education, health and politics as well as private matters of morality, and sexual morality in particular. (Rattigan 2012, 3)

Chrystel Hug's much-cited *The Politics of Sexual Morality in Ireland* pushes the Catholic envelope even further, ascribing anti-contraceptive legislation in the Irish Free State to the teachings of Augustine and Aquinas and to the 1930 papal encyclical *Castii Connubii* [Of Chaste Wedlock] (Hug 1999, 76)[1].

For sure, all of these scholars just mentioned also recognise the role of other factors, such as social class, the desire to maintain an image of Ireland as a virtuous nation, or the related desire for mass eugenic control. Nonetheless, their analyses do still confirm an observation of Moira Maguire: "Irish social historians tend to take for granted that for much of the twentieth century the Catholic Church was all-pervasive and all-powerful, particularly in the area of sexual morality, and that the state willingly bowed to pressure to legislate according to Catholic principles" (Maguire 2007, 79-80). The notion that the Church ruled over the State – subtly presumed in a large amount of the historiography of the Irish Free State – is not tenable. Rather, while not always in total harmony, Church and State should be seen as inextricably connected, both contributing to a shared project of moral control, social control, and the construction of an image of Ireland as a virtuous and pious nation. It is undeniable that "the Church" was a major force in post-1922 Ireland. But as I have elsewhere argued, whether done

[1] See also McAvoy 2012, which also understands anti-contraception legislation as a function of Catholic influence.

consciously or not, Church-centric explanations serve not only to place a disproportionate amount of blame on the clerical hierarchy, they also serve to exculpate the State. And in the context of a supposedly post-Catholic twenty-first century Ireland, oppressive social control ends up being historiographically represented as something *Catholics* were responsible for *in the past*, whilst the State, then as now, remains blameless (Beatty 2016, 210-211). Conversely, scholars such as Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (2008), Maurice Curtis (2010) and Emmet Larkin (1984) have placed a greater emphasis on the role of the State in shaping the moral economy of pre- and post-1922 Ireland, whilst still having a due recognition of the work that Catholicism did for the State. Such analyses are more satisfying. And Clare O'Hagan has suggested that "the Church" should be seen as part of the "ideological state apparatus" of post-1922 Ireland, in an analysis drawing on the seminal work of Louis Althusser (O'Hagan 2006).

The Marxist state-theorist Nicos Poulantzas (1975), himself a student of Althusser's, has argued against the idea that "the State" should be understood solely in terms of its formal institutions. Rather, Poulantzas contends that the State should be understood as a strategic field that blurs the boundaries between formal state institutions and civil society; the latter being the "space" in which the State acts and enforces its power[2]. And for Poulantzas, the Church is an integral part of the State: "All the apparatuses of hegemony, including those that are legally private (ideological and cultural apparatuses, the Church, etc.), all these form part of the State" (Poulantzas 1978, 36). Where Marx and Engels (1985 [1848], 82) spoke of the state as being "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie", Poulantzas started from the assumption that there is no single ruling class whose interests can be served by the State. Rather, States are "fractional", themselves representing ruling classes divided by industry, economic sector and ideology. And for Poulantzas, the Church was infiltrated by the State and acted on behalf of the State. This is too simplistic and ignores how much the Church itself is a power-source with ideologies and praxes that do not always align neatly with those of the State. Poulantzas over-determines the power and reach of the State; the Catholic Church in Ireland, for example, was not a mere adjunct of the State[3]. Nonetheless, Poulantzas provides a useful theorisation of Church-State power relations.

[2] For an application of Poulantzas' ideas to Irish political history, see: Dunphy 1995. Peter O'Neill (2016) has used Poulantzas' ideas to strong effect to understand Church-State relations in the US. See also: Gallas 2016, a work that applies Poulantzas' conceptions of the state whilst also critically revising them.

[3] A further recurring problem with both Althusser and Poulantzas is that it is rarely clear if they are discussing "the capitalist State" at some high level of abstraction, or merely their contemporary French state(s) of the 1960s and 1970s.

This paper is a study of the Jesuit priest, social reformer and political activist Richard S. Devane (1876-1951) and an investigation of how Devane's political-theological writings and activism reveal some of the important dynamics and conceptual problems of Church-State relations in the years after 1922. Devane was one of the key figures in the legislative history of the Irish Free State, with a strong influence on the soft authoritarian world of post-1922 social reform and social control. He was present at the legislative birth of much of the socio-political order of the newly independent state, from the Committee on Evil Literature in 1926 to the Carrigan Commission in 1930. Yet his importance has been underestimated by historians; while he makes an appearance in a large amount of the historiographical literature on the 1920s and '30s, to date there has been no sustained biography published of Devane and he has received only a small amount of direct scholarly attention[4].

2. More Cotton-Wool For Frail, Feckless Pat

Devane was born in Limerick City in 1876, growing up in solidly bourgeois surroundings. His father was "a well-known merchant of that city" [IJA J44/3 (2)]. After studying at Mungret College and St. Munchin's Seminary, both in Limerick, he moved to Maynooth, where he was ordained in 1901. Though he would later rail against the evils of English culture and the negative presence of the "garrison", which he claimed promoted prostitution (Luddy 2007, 195; Ferriter 2009, 148, 156), he spent the early years of his vocation at St. Patrick's Church in Middlesborough as well as serving as an army chaplain for ten years in Limerick. He was the curate at St. Michael's Parish in Limerick, "a large working class district", from 1904 to 1918. Already at this early point, he was involved in "rescue and vigilance work" – synonyms for proselytising among prostitutes and for censorship[5] – and in outreach to labourers that presumably aimed to protect them from the evils of atheistic socialism. He was also involved in temperance work and was a force behind the early regulation of cinemas in Limerick, which received the support of Limerick Borough Council. In July 1918, Devane entered the Society of Jesus at St. Stanislaus College in Tullamore and was professed two years later; his joining the Jesuits was apparently a shock to many. From 1922 to 1932, Devane was in charge of a retreat house for working men in Rathfarnham and also served in the 1930s and '40s as director of a retreat house in nearby Milltown Park. He was thus, fortuitously, in Dublin and promoting "social

[4] In my research, I only found two dedicated studies of Devane: Walsh 2014-2015, and O'Riordan 2015. Walsh's monograph-length biography of Devane - *Richard Devane SJ: Social Commentator and Advocate: 1876-1951* - was published just as this paper was going to press.

[5] For the history of "Vigilance" work in early twentieth-century Ireland, see: Curtis 2010.

Catholicism" at the founding moment of the Irish Free State, with a position that afforded him "more leisure and larger scope for his special talents". Indeed, he may have joined the Jesuits precisely because it would give him time and space, free from parochial duties, to devote to social activism[6].

As the new Free State emerged from civil war, with its legitimacy less than fully respected, it made an alliance with a Catholic Church that had long exhibited a fear of "the mob" and of mass politics more broadly. Both the new state and the Church sought a return to some sense of societal normality, order, and control after the Civil War (Curtis 2010, 11; Beatty 2016, 210). Much of this can be seen in a representative article that Devane wrote on "Indecent Literature" for the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* in 1925 (and also published as a stand-alone pamphlet). In this article, he addressed what he saw as the need for the censorship of print publications in the Irish Free State. He placed this in a broader context of contemporary reforms in other areas of sexual morality, such as prostitution, age of consent laws, and the legal status of illegitimate children. Devane said the issue of "indecent literature" must be addressed using the Free State's "new-won powers" (1925, 1) but also "according to Irish ideals and Catholic standards" (*ibidem*); in other words Church, Nation, and State were melded in his conception, and he drew on his own experiences as a social-reforming priest; but where he had lead a vigilance committee in Limerick in the previous decade that pressured Catholic shop-owners to boycott certain publications, he felt that such approaches would not work in larger and more religiously diverse cities like Cork or Dublin. Thus he argued that the State has to step in, calling this "the necessity of falling back upon the law"[7] (23). Fitting with Poulantzas' conceptions, Devane's short 1925 essay certainly highlights how a statist project was being carried out through the "private" machinery of the Church.

Of central concern for Devane were publications that advertised or otherwise promoted the use of contraception. Devane condemned contraception on Catholic lines, identifying its "immorality" and discussing how adver-

[6] Devane's personal papers in the Irish Jesuit Archives contain little about his early life; he may have suppressed his personal documents from before 1918, to cover up his work as a chaplain for the British army, or he may have discarded any personal documents from before his joining the Jesuit order, also in 1918. The biographical information presented here comes from the entry on Devane by Maurice Cronin in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Martin Walsh's essay on Devane (listed above) and from the obituaries of Devane in his papers at the Jesuit Archives J44/1: *Mungret Annual* (Limerick, Mungret College: 1952) and *Irish Province News* (July, 1951). Both of these draw heavily on the obituary of Devane in the *Irish Independent*, 24 May 1951; a press cutting of that obituary is available at the Irish Jesuit Archives (IJA) J44/3 (2).

[7] In one footnote to the article, Devane revealed what he means by the problem of enforcing vigilance in a religiously diverse city. He condemned one bookshop as having an Irish name "which is in strange conflict with that of the alien who owns it", in what was presumably a coded reference to a Jewish-owned business.

tisements for contraceptives educate women "in hideous forms of vice" (13). But he also called contraception a form of "race suicide" (14) promoted by dangerously independent female "Malthusians" (16). His concerns were both sacred and secular, clerical and statist, gendered and racialised. Privileging the State over the Church, though, Devane said he had "no doubt that the Ministers of the Irish Free State, who have the custody of the Nation's life and morals in their hands, will not hesitate to take every means necessary for the exclusion of this vile stuff [contraception], and we trust that they will have the support of every member of the Dáil and the Senate who has the moral welfare of the Nation, especially of the young, at heart, and who truly represent the mind of the Irish people" (14). Throughout this discussion of "indecent literature", Devane moves between Ireland and Irish politics *as it is* and as he *expects it to be* once the State, not the Church, has enacted the proper reforms (Devane 1925)[8].

Devane claimed in this article that, through his work with the Priests Social Guild, he had urged the then Minister for Justice, Kevin O'Higgins, to act on this issue, to "legally [strangle] this vile traffic". This appears to be disingenuous. According to the records of the Censorship Judgements for the Jesuit Province of Ireland, Devane wrote his article on "Indecent Literature" after it had been "suggested" to him by Minister O'Higgins, "who is conscious to excite an atmosphere in advance so as to facilitate legislation" [IJA ADMN12/13 (1)]. There is an important dynamic on display here; "the State", represented by the Minister of Justice, requested that "the Church", personified by Fr. Devane, write an article that will publicly tell "the State", the legislature, what to do. The circularity of all this reveals an important conceptual problem in Irish historiography; it is rarely clear where the Church ends and the State begins in modern Ireland. Devane ended his article by affirming that it "has been written to help to clear the way and to inform public opinion" (1925, 23), perhaps meaning that public opinion is to be massaged by the Church and convinced to go along with the State's legislative agenda? The intertwining issues on display in both Devane's article and in its background – the borders of Church and State, the power-relations between Church and State, the question of which of the two was leading and which was being led – are well known in Irish historiography and yet remain under-theorised.

Moreover, just as understanding "the State" solely in terms of its formal institutions can be narrowly restrictive, so too "the Church" was not (and is not) a coherent entity. The conceptual fuzziness of "the State" finds a paral-

[8] This essay was reprinted from *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, February 1925. Peter Martin (2006, 60-67) places Devane's views in the broader framework of contemporary debates about censorship.

lel in that of "the Church". Devane's article was published in *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, "a monthly journal under episcopal sanction". Devane, as a Jesuit, worked outside of that episcopal hierarchy. In addition, he regularly worked in concert what a number of lay vigilance groups. Such lay Catholic groups were often at odds with the hierarchy and certainly tended to have a different perception of the nature of Church-State relations[9]. The Church is just as fractional as the State.

The support for censorship of the press on display in Devane's 1925 essay on "Indecent Literature" was a trope that ran through much of his career. He had already been a strong advocate of "vigilance" in the 1910s, and showed a willingness to work "outside the law" up to and including seizing newspapers from trains as they arrived in Limerick and burning them (Devane 1950, 10). He would later fondly recall this as a "memorable and effective attack on the filthy Sunday cross-Channel papers" (Devane 1925, 4). When Devane was called as a witness to the Free State government's Committee on Evil Literature in 1926, his testimony was primarily concerned with the "hideous literature" and "filthy pornographic matter" in which the use of contraception was promoted (NAI JUS 7/1/1). He also provided the Committee with examples of this published material, which he had legally purchased in Dublin; *A Letter to Working Mothers* by Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger's *Family Limitation (Handbook for Working Mothers)* were two prominent titles[10]. Devane's testimony was peppered with voyeuristic stories about various businesses in Dublin that sold contraception which Vigilance activists had surveilled or a story about a "jew" [*sic*] found selling contraceptives in Ballina; when the Gardaí failed to stop him, the local parish priest held an ad hoc trial and attempted to extract a £100 fine from him. "The jew paid £10 and cleared out" (NAI JUS 7/2/9)[11]. If and when the State could not enforce moral control, the Church could step in.

In a 1927 pamphlet on *Evil Literature*, which publicised his contributions to the Committee on Evil Literature, Devane spoke of the need to make the public "sufficiently prepared" for the implementation of censorship. He felt there had been a "failure to create atmosphere […] the Government needs

[9] In his study of elite Catholic schools, Ciaran O'Neill (2014, 14-15) touches on the similar problem of speaking of "The Church" in singular terms, since secular clergy, the various monastic orders, and the episcopal hierarchy are all included under this umbrella term, as are the autonomous Jesuits. And it is worth adding that the Jesuits were never as uniformly reactionary as Devane.

[10] Both books were probably purchased in Kearney's on Stephen Street, Dublin, which he mentioned in his testimony to the Committee on Evil Literature (McAvoy 2012, 43).

[11] See also: Keogh 1998, 80. For a critical study of the broader history of Irish antisemitism, see Douglas 2018. On Devane's voyeuristic knowledge of the various places one could buy contraception in Dublin, see: Ferriter 2009, 193-194.

an informed public opinion to facilitate its efforts in introducing legislation, and to help towards countering in advance a certain opposition which cannot be burked and which must be faced" (3). Devane revealed much here about the role the Church played in shaping public opinion for the State; needless to say, he saw his published work as a way to do all this (Devane 1927). In 1950, a year before his death Devane published a short pamphlet that restated his verbal assault on *The Imported Press*. What is perhaps most noteworthy about this late career pamphlet is how much it repeats Devane's views from a quarter century earlier; on issues of censorship and the building of a correctly moral nationalist culture he was not prone to changing his mind. It is not for nothing that Myles nagCopaleen once snapped that Devane sought to impose, via censorship, "more cotton-wool for frail, feckless Pat" (IJA J44/2, Undated Cutting). Devane remained motivated by a desire to protect the child-like Irish people from dangerous foreign ideas.

3. An Irish Sun Was Replaced By An English Sun

In that pamphlet on *The Imported Press*, Devane looked back at his early years as a priest in the north of England, asserting that his experiences from that time informed his desires for press censorship. He claimed to have witnessed with unease how English workers spent their Sundays reading salacious tabloid news until the pubs opened and they could start their heavy drinking (Devane 1950, 8). Devane - who on occasion let slip his contempt for the popular classes - had lived in the heavily industrial city of Middlesborough and some class-based snobbery mixed with his anti-English sentiments. The idea that England was a morally dangerous place, and thus that publications coming from that country must be censored, were intensified by Devane's emotive language and turns-of-phrase; "the cross-Channel unclean press"; "the reptile press"; "cross-Channel looseness, grossness, and vulgarity that are nowadays being propagated with impunity throughout the country"; "unclean and vulgar literature"; "tainted goods"; "Advertisements of manuals of immorality, of immoral appliances, and of diabolical books, mostly written by women, are becoming quite common in what is appropriately styled the "gutter press," which is dumped by the ton each week on the Dublin quays". He also spoke anxiously about the dangers that Irish "girls" faced upon moving to the fleshpots of England (NAI JUS 90/4/1; NAI 2005/32/105; Beatty 2016, 201). Indeed, Devane believed that "English Standards" of legislation, which gave legal sanction to contraception, were the source of much of Ireland's problems (NAI JUS 7/1/1). This moral horror in turn worked to buttress an image of Irish moral purity over and against the baseness that supposedly existed on the other side of St. George's Channel. Devane happily talked of "the clean tradition of the Irish Press" (Devane 1925, 13; Beatty 2016, 200) and said that "The Irish people have been ever remarkable for their high appreciation of purity and chastity" (Devane 1924, 58).

There was indeed a strongly felt disgust at England and English culture running throughout Devane's prose. In one of his oddest moments, he used a 1928 essay to attack Daylight Savings Time, describing it an insidious British importation. While other European nations - "saner" nations - have rejected the "hysteria" of Daylight Savings, "We retain it because it has been imposed on us together with Greenwich Time by Great Britain, and because we have neither the social sense nor the national spirit to reject it" (1928, 3). Devane saw something important in the fact that Daylight Savings Time was imposed on Ireland just after the Easter Rising, when the nation was distracted:

> Let me emphasize the fact that we were never consulted as to whether an agricultural country such as ours needed Summer Time or not; it was simply thrust on us when the nation was sorely distracted, in one of the most tragic periods of our history, and in the sole interest of Great Britain. We have had the power of removing this cruel infliction on rural Ireland for many years, but we still lie slavishly under it. (6)

Ireland had been forced into British Time, literally and figuratively: "by a few lines of a British Act we lost our own Irish Time […] an Irish sun was replaced by an English sun" (Devane 1939, 6-7). Now Ireland must break out of this[12].

It would be all too easy to caricature Devane as an unthinking anglophobe. And yet there was a certain kind of respect for England, as well as a desire for England to respect Ireland, that recurs in Devane's writings; even the notion that Ireland needs to prove its moral superiority over England draws on a tacit desire for English respect. His 1927 discussion of *Evil Literature: Some Suggestions* was introduced with a preface by Evelyn Cecil, a Tory MP who had advocated censorship in the UK and whose work had attracted European-wide attention. In a 1931 essay on the dangers of public dancing, Devane approvingly quoted the more stringent regulations enforced in Britain (discussed below) and he also praised the English system of local government as a form of social organisation that could rectify "the disintegrating influences operative to-day". With some adjustments for "our own peculiar conditions" such English-style governance would "preserve our rural traditions" and "keep our people rooted in the soil" (Devane 1931, 8). He also maintained a correspondence with Alison Neilans, the General Secretary of the English-based Association for Moral and Social Hygiene (Ferriter 2009, 145-146).

[12] For the broader history of the often heated debates over the adoption of daylight savings time, see Ogle 2015.

Indeed, Devane showed an awareness of international currents in censorship, and in moral legislation in general, that is at stark odds with the stereotypical image of Ireland as an isolated *sacra insula* in the years after 1922. He approvingly referenced the International Convention for the Circulation and Traffic in Obscene Publications, organised under the auspices of the League of Nations on 31 August 1923. Devane showed himself aware of similar work being done by the New England Watch and Ward (Vigilance) Society and looked to the British Dominions of Canada and Australia for models of literary censorship worth emulating (Devane 1925, 6, 8, 16). He praised the anti-dancing legislation passed in Mussolini's Italy, in the Netherlands, and in Kemalist Turkey and contemporary Cuba as well as the attempt in the German state of Thuringia to ban "jazz music and negro dances" which, Devane claimed, "glorify negroism and strike a blow at German kultur" (Devane 1931a, 186, 190; Devane 1928[13]). Similarly, his support for film censorship (of which more later) looked for inspiration from, among others, Japan, Germany, France, Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, and, incongruously, the USSR (IJA J44/10). Devane had "an encyclopaedic knowledge of international law [related to sexual morality] and of the debates that informed it in a variety of jurisdictions" (O'Riordan 2015, 131). His transnational conservatism highlights how the moral anxieties of post-1922 Ireland - focusing on jazz music, modern styles of dancing, flapper girls - were part of a broader global moment. And in all of the places to which he looked for inspiration, he saw (or at the least, imagined he saw) interventionist states willing to regulate and control the leisure activities of their citizens, the model of social control he wished to import back into Ireland. Devane's internationalism did important ideological work for him.

4. A Chivalrous And Catholic Nation

Devane's views of sexual morality, taken as whole, reiterated the notion that a Catholic conception of individual sexual morality would make for a neat partnership with the State. This was certainly the case with his contribution to the infamous Carrigan Committee of the early 1930s[14]. Devane was present at the Committee's fourth meeting, on 1 July 1930, and like Frank Duff (who had presented his evidence a week earlier, on 27 June), Devane agreed that prostitution was rife in Ireland. For Devane, it was temporary migration to England, as well as the new fashion of dance halls, which had "ruined" these

[13] This essay was reprinted from the June 1928 issue of the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*.

[14] For background, see James Smith's discussion of the Committee and the "partnership" of Church and State (Smith 2004, 208).

"girls" (NAI JUS 90/4/1)[15]. Devane, like Duff, urged that prostitutes be sent to special "homes" for treatment, something the Carrigan Report repeated in its recommendation that "Girl offenders" (i.e. those aged 16-21) should be dealt with via a borstal system (NAI 2005/32/105). In other words, Devane was a supporter of what James Smith has aptly called Ireland's "architecture of containment", the institutional machinery that allowed "the decolonizing nation-state to confine aberrant citizens, rendering invisible women and children who fell foul of society's moral proscriptions […] a national identity that privileged Catholic morality and valorized the correlation between marriage and motherhood while at the same time effacing nonconforming citizens who were institutionally confined" (Smith 2007, 46-47)[16].

The fallout from the Carrigan Committee also shows that "the Church" is not a singular or static entity. The "Catholic" input into the Carriage Committee was from figures such as Devane or lay activists like Frank Duff, founder of the Legion of Mary, as well as conventional priests subject to episcopal authority[17]. And Devane and Duff's attitudes were far closer to the extreme measures recommended in the Carrigan Report than was the Catholic Hierarchy. Indeed, the Hierarchy were themselves far closer to the Government in their shared unease about Carrigan's findings[18].

A year after his appearance at the Carrigan Committee, Devane returned to the perceived dangers of public dancing in an article for the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*[19]. Here, he described dance halls as "A moral and national menace" and claimed they were bastions of drunkenness and even worse: "Not only is drink taken by the men but girls [*sic*] are induced to do so. Hence the orgies one sees so often reported in the Press and which centre round the dance-halls". Devane spoke of dance venues as "man-traps" and physically dirty places; notions of sanitised space were central, if subtle, elements in his thinking (Devane 1931a, 174)[20]. Fitting with his complicated perceptions of British society,

[15] See also: NAI JUS 90/4/13, Memo of Evidence of Rev. R.S. Devane, S.J. These are "Heads of Evidence", rough notes based on Devane's evidence. Under the heading "Preventive Work" Devane spoke of "Unmarried Mother; Mentally Defectives; Girls out of Control; Dance Halls…".

[16] For Devane's views of Magdalen Laundries, see: Luddy 2007, 120.

[17] See: National Archives of Ireland (NAI), JUS 90/4/2, Criminal Law Amendment Committee, List of Witnesses.

[18] NAI JUS H247/41B, Criminal Law Amendment Committee (1932-1933), Rough Notes made by the Minister for Justice after an interview on the 1st December, 1932, between the Bishop of Limerick, the Bishop of Ossory, the Bishop of Thasos and the Minister.

[19] For the broader history of the gendered and racial history of dancing, and of moral panics surrounding it, see: O'Connor 2003; Craig 2013.

[20] One article by Devane, *The Dance Hall: A National and Moral Menace*, was censored by the Jesuits' authority for the "province" of Ireland, since it was felt that the earlier draft included language "more indelicate or suggestive than need be", particularly in its descriptions of dances (IJA, Censorship Judgements (1924-1968), ADMN12/15 (2), *Judicium Cen-*

Devane approvingly quoted the more stringent regulations enforced in Britain, whereby dance halls were more closely monitored by the authorities: "There is a spirit of discipline in all this that it would be well we should copy, if for no other reason than to teach many of our young folk a sense of restraint and discipline, of which they seem scarcely to have a rudimentary idea" (Devane 1931a, 191-192). Whereas Devane saw Irish public spaces as increasingly polluted by dance halls, British state authorities, he believed, had hygienically disciplined their public spaces. His conclusion was that "The moral health of the [Irish] Nation is not quite sound and shows signs of being gradually undermined… There is a general languor and *malaise* in the body corporate which seem to imply a general poisoning of the national system" (*ibidem*). Pushing his medical metaphor, Devane urged: "Remove the source of infection and a surprising recovery will soon take place… We need the hand of a national surgeon, of a strong Minister, to rid us of its poisoning influence and so to lead to the restoration of our normal moral health. God send it soon" (*ibidem*)[21]. Where organisations such as the Catholic Truth Society argued for a Church-led reform of Irish society, Devane saw the State as the ideal motive force (Beatty 2016, 202)[22]. He felt the State should work in a negating way, to remove the problem of public dancing, while the Church, the Home and the School would work in a positive way, to promote a better alternative morality (Devane 1931a, 194).

Yet Devane's sense that England was also a source of moral danger did play a determining role in his views of Irish sexuality. In a 1928 pamphlet on *The Unmarried Mother and the Poor Law Commission*, Devane claimed that 317 pregnant Irish women had arrived in Liverpool in 1926-1927, based on statistics supplied by the Liverpool Port and Station Work Society. Reflecting the surveillance culture of Irish sexual morality in the Free State years, Devane said that "It would be interesting to follow the careers of these 300 of our young country women, stranded in a large seaport city, and to discover their

sorum Provinciae Hiberniae, 29 December 1930). Like his fellow Jesuit, Edward Cahill, who dabbled in Republicanism, antisemitism, and conspiracy theories about the Free Masons, Devane also found himself at stark odds with the Irish leadership of the Society of Jesus. It is highly questionable if Devane can be seen as representative of the broader Jesuit order, whose leadership tended to be more politically cautious.

[21] Devane also supplied copies of this article to the members of the Carrigan Committee, along with a contemporaneous article, also from the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, on "The Legal Protection of Girls" (NAI JUS 90/4/13).

[22] It is perhaps also the case that public dances tapped into Devane's fears of anonymity and social control in a modern society no longer based around isolated villages: "[I]n lonely country places the dangers are too obvious to need description. If the dance were confined to the people of the district one could be more tolerant. But, when it is open to all and sundry who come from many miles away, and who are complete strangers, then a new element of danger becomes only too apparent" (Devane 1931a, 170).

fate" (1928, 6). It is telling that in Devane's prose, Irish women seem to have no free will; they are "stranded" in England, rather than being emigrants. This recurs throughout this piece, which moves to a discussion of age-of-consent laws. Devane worked from the premise that any sexual contact is initiated by men, with "prematurely developed girls, inexperienced and an easy prey to the seducer", being acted upon *by* these men (12). He elsewhere spoke of "the insuppressible lust of men" which exists in contrast to "the independent and free and easy airs of the growing girl of to-day". Thus, Devane concluded that there was a "greater need for protection", to guard "girls" from both "the seduction of the designing blackguard" as well as from "her own silliness and stupidity". Such protection was something women had a right to expect in "a chivalrous and Catholic nation" (Devane 1924, 58-64). In this mode of analysis, Devane departed sharply from the views of Frank Duff, perhaps *the* prominent lay Catholic social reformer of the early Free State. For Duff, sexually active girls and women were a source of danger who actively seduced otherwise innocent men (Beatty 2016, 191-196). For Devane the dangers resided within men themselves as "girls" remained innocent victims or, at most, foolish children[23]. And both State and Church would need to legislate for this.

5. The Films Are A Grave National Menace To Our Culture

Later in life, Devane developed a keen interest in film production and the regulation of the cinema industry. He saw films as a useful means of modern mass education and also as a prophylactic against "demoralising and denationalising influences" (IJA J44/14). Accentuating the need for a nationalist cinema to educate the people was Devane's fear that Irish children's nationalist education would be erased by the deracinating effects of commercial movies. "Will their impressionable minds be any more able to resist the seductive lessons of the screen than African primitives armed with bows and arrows can oppose a modern mechanised army with airplanes and tanks?". He also believed that adults were just as liable to be infected by the commercial cinema. Films, he said, have the potential to be "a grave national menace to our culture" (Devane 1942, 4), using almost the exact same phraseology he had used to warn about dance halls and imported literature.

Unsurprisingly, Devane had favourable views of film censorship. He was certainly aware of the (in)famous Hays Code in the US, having learnt of it from the book *Decency in Motion Pictures* by Martin Quigley, which he also recommended to the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, in 1941

[23] Elsewhere, though, Devane showed himself to be closer to Duff's horror in the face of uncontrolled female sexuality (Luddy 2007, 200, 207).

(IJA J44/22)[24]. On this issue, Devane returned to his regular idea that public opinion needs to be "formed" so as to support film censorship and said that the film industry is so powerful that "nothing but the State can control them" (Devane 1942). He was particularly interested in establishing a National Film Institute that could co-ordinate all this and thus ameliorate the "baneful influences" (IJA J44/14) of commercial cinema:

> The National Film Institute should link up various organised elements of the nation and help towards awakening national consciousness as regards the propagandist, cultural and educational value of the films. It would act as a clearing house for information on all matters affecting films at home and abroad, particularly as regards education and general culture, influence public opinion to appreciate the value of films as entertainment and instruction and advise educational bodies and other organisations. (*Ibidem*)

As with so much else of his proposals, Devane looked overseas for examples worth emulating, identifying the Danish Film Institute as a useful model.

There was also a certain kind of fear of global capitalism here. In his contribution to *The Irish Cinema Handbook* (1943), Devane spoke of "our commercial exploitation by cosmopolitan adventurers" in the film industry. He claimed that Irish cinema owners worked under "oppressive conditions imposed by foreign film renters" who force Irish cinemas to take their products. He called this a "despotic invasion of authority from outside" which "should not be tolerated in a sovereign State", though it is not clear if he was offended by the coercion itself rather than its foreign origins (Devane 1943, 13, 14, 16, 18). Confirming the idea that Devane was animated by a certain fear of capitalism, his obituary in his alma mater's school magazine talked of how he "did not underestimate the power of paganism backed by wealth" and "he often met bitter opposition from those who made money at the cost of human souls" (IJA J44/1).

In a preface [*Brollach*] he wrote for a one-off film magazine published by the short-lived fascist group *Ailtirí na hAiséirghe* [Architects of the Resurrection] (Devane 1942a), Devane voiced his fears about the denationalising effects of the film industry, "which has all the driving power of limitless capital behind it, appealing to the taste of the ignorant and the half-educated who constitute the great majority of humanity" (3-5), thus mixing his idiosyncratic anti-capitalism with old-fashioned social snobbery. There were clearly nationalist concerns at work here, as he pondered: "Can any people preserve for long a distinct national character, a national culture, when these

[24] Quigley was a devout Catholic, instrumental in the establishment of the Motion Picture Production Code (Hays Code) and was the publisher of the *Motion Picture Herald*, a trade publication.

huge organisations, with unlimited resources can break into and take possession of the minds of men everywhere, creating images, sensations, ideas of life which with few exceptions are cheap, vulgar and sensational?" (*ibidem*). Anxieties about "the degeneration of culture under the impact of modernity" were one of the main "thematic prongs of the Right in the twentieth century" (Balakrishnan 2000, 6). Devane certainly appears to have feared the fissiparous effects of the global capitalist culture industry on Irish traditions and such thinking, as Peter Martin has suggested, often slipped into antisemitic hostility against an international film industry presumed to be controlled by Jews (Martin 2006, 176). Also worth noting is the suggestion, again, that some people are passive in the face of danger (as with "girls" in the face of rapacious men); even Devane's description of the culture industry penetrating men's minds has an almost sexual tinge to it (Devane 1942)[25].

In his views on the cinema, though, he did not find favour with Fianna Fáil governments. An attempt to gain an audience with Eamon de Valera, so that Devane and a group of supporters could present proposals for "a government inquiry into the use of the cinema for nationalist propaganda purposes", appears to have been received with a polite rebuttal (IJA J44/10; IJA J44/11)[26]. Despite his strong views on the topic, Devane does not appear to have been consulted in 1935 when the Fianna Fáil government was preparing the Dance Halls Act. He was thus unsurprisingly dissatisfied with this piece of legislation (Luddy 2007, 199). It seems that by the mid-1930s Devane's links to the State had been sidelined by Fianna Fáil; indeed, the Republicans never seem to have had an interest in him. Perhaps his longstanding association with the legislative agenda of Cumann na nGaedheal put him at odds with the anti-Treatyites. His contributions to the debacle of the Carrigan Committee may also have hurt his reputation in government circles. All of which raises interesting questions, again, about how the State interacts with the Church; shifts in control of the State clearly affect which factions of the Church are consulted or allowed access to State power. Additionally, Devane's own ideological development further compounded his problem of finding a stable place within fluid Church-State relations.

6. Ireland Wants Neither Extremists Of The Right Nor Of The Left

By the 1930s, Devane began to flirt with continental fascism. While he appears to have been a supporter of Mussolini (Douglas 2009, 50), he reserved a special note of affection for António de Oliveira Salazar, "one of the greatest statesmen in Europe to-day", who had expurgated French imported "Grand

[25] For the history of *Ailtirí na hAiséirghe*, see: Douglas 2009.

[26] See also Martin 2006, 151-152.

Orient Masonic Liberalism" from Portugal. In a pamphlet in the early forties, proposing reforms in local government, and which drew on examples from across Europe, Devane held particular praise for the reforms under Salazar. Only the heads of families could vote in local elections in Portugal's *Estado Novo*, a reform Devane praised for the way it made families the basic unit of society; a familial state would, he claimed, be free of internecine ideological strife. Devane, though, did recognise the existence of female political concerns, naming welfare and school lunches specifically, and so did allow that mothers, as well as fathers, should retain voting rights (Devane 1940, 13-21). Three years prior to this, Devane had used a similar vocabulary to praise de Valera's new constitution. Breaking from "conventional liberalism", with its undue focus on the individual, Devane wrote to the Taoiseach of his happiness that the family would now be the basic unit of Irish society. Fr. Devane suggested that Dev now borrow from Salazar and give votes to heads of families only in future elections. The letter leaves it diplomatically unstated, but tacitly assumed, that heads of households are generally men (NAI TAOIS/ S9856)[27]. In a 1938 article for the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Devane reiterated his support for Salazar, praising his focus on the family, his anti-liberalism, and his "restoration of a Christian Portugal" (1938, 26), a country that was supposedly "poisonously anti-Catholic" (24) prior to Salazar. Devane also boosted Portuguese education as a model for Irish schools, "a scheme of moral and civic instruction *drafted by the State itself* – no doubt acting in accord with the Church" (30; emphasis added).

In the 1940s, Devane published his two longest and most ambitious works, both of which continued in this far-right political vein. In *Challenge from Youth* (1942), Devane looked at various youth movements in contemporary Europe; in Soviet Russia, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Portugal, Pétain's France, and Britain. Much of this was a continuation of an earlier interest in adolescence as *the* deciding period in citizens' religious, moral and political development[28]. And again, Devane showed a sharp awareness of developments elsewhere in Europe[29]. He stated that in a Christian country such as Ireland, "there can obviously be no place for State regimentation of youth and, furthermore, that religion must be the basis and formative spirit of youth training" (Devane 1942b, xi). Thus, he seemed to suggest that the Church should take an unquestioned lead in organising the nation's youth. Devane was clearly shocked by the irre-

[27] The fact that this letter was summarized for the Taoiseach, rather than de Valera directly reading it himself, suggests that his ideas were being kept at arm's length.

[28] This is the central focus of O'Riordan 2015.

[29] Other than the six chapters on the USSR, Germany, Italy, France, Portugal, and the UK, Devane also drew on material related to Finland, Switzerland, Poland, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and South Africa.

ligious nature of the USSR and the Third Reich, yet he also recommended a Catholicised version of the Nazi *Arbeitsdienst* [Work Service] as a model to be adopted in Ireland and concluded that

> the secret of the success of Communists, Fascists and Nazis lies in one single fact, namely, that they have an intense, personal, all-consuming *faith*, *a totalitarian faith*, colouring their minds, influencing their outlook and operating in a conscious way throughout the actions of their daily lives. The question of questions for the whole of Christianity to-day, and much more of to-morrow is - "Can we Christians develop such a totalitarian Christian faith of a like white-heat intensity?" (149; emphasis in original)

And he spoke of his hope that the Irish could become "as consciously Christian or Catholic as the Germans are Nazi, the Russians, Communist, the Italians, Fascist" (168). What he thus seemed to be arguing for was a state-backed youth movement that would percolate an authoritarian and political Catholicism throughout Irish society (149, 168). Looking approvingly at youth labour schemes in post-1939 Britain, Devane observed that "The *laissez-faire* attitude of Liberal Democracy towards Youth is at last being buried in Britain; how long more will it be allowed to remain alive in Éire? There is a big job waiting to be tackled both by Church and State in Ireland… It is useless to suggest that we have too many things on hands at present; Britain, with her colossal war, can yet find time for her youth; why cannot we also?" (Devane 1942, 256). State and Church were, here, coterminous in his conceptualisations.

Where *Challenge from Youth* ranged across the spaces of Europe, his next book, *The Failure of Individualism* (1948) manoeuvred back in time, to find the root cause of the turmoil Devane felt was gripping post-war Europe. Devane described this book as a "Handbook of Politics and Economics" (1948, xi), for citizens who wish to understand "the present social chaos" (*ibidem*). And he traced this "chaos" back to the post-Reformation erosion of "the organic structure of society", replaced by individualism, atomism and an antisocial and unnatural isolation (5). He identified three forms of individualism; political individualism, represented by the liberalism of Locke and Rousseau (though the latter could hardly be called an anti-statist individualist); religious individualism, embodied in the English Protestantism he believed had destroyed the unity of medieval Catholic Europe; and economic individualism, also known as capitalism. Devane drew on an eclectic range of sources for all this; the Anglo-French Catholic intellectual Hilare Belloc, Thomas Hobbes, Voltaire, Montesquieu, the Chinese nationalist leader Sun Yat Sen, the French Catholic intellectual Jacques Maritain, Max Weber, and Nicholas Berdyaev, a Russian philosopher who had moved from Marxism to an Orthodox-inflected Christian existentialism and was duly exiled by the Bolsheviks. Devane also critically referenced Friedrich Hayek and, from the opposite end of the political spectrum, Harold

Laski (Devane 1948, 12, 88, 112, 140-141, 167, 285)[30]. When Devane turned his attention to economic individualism, he drew on Marx and Engels, "two remarkable men". He evinced a certain sympathy for the duo, admitting that "Capitalism was no doubt an evil economic system" but argued that socialism and communism, by destroying private property, would be far more evil and would reduce all men to the level of the oppressed proletariat (Devane 1948, 313)[31]. Devane's reference points are broader and far more cosmopolitan than is generally presumed for the dour guardians of Catholic Ireland; worldliness does not necessarily equate with the "correct" form of politics.

There is also a curious paradox here: as he moved further from access to power, his writings become far more in depth and far more sophisticated (if still deeply reactionary), from succinct polemical essays of the 1920s to 300-page treatises by the 1940s[32]. Moreover, that Devane went from consultant-at-large on important pieces of government legislation in the 1920s and early 30s, to an overt authoritarian-sympathiser in the following decade, has been largely ignored. Scholars like John Regan (1999), R.M. Douglas (2009) and Kenneth Shonk (2015) have all shown how authoritarianism was by no means alien to the political culture of post-1922 Ireland. The trajectory of Devane's writings fits with this assessment. As Devane moved from being a Cumann na nGaedheal surrogate to a booster of Pétain and Salazar, there was a marked consistency across his writings. A Catholic political theology was always central to his worldview, but so also was a strong state that could enforce this social project. Devane's clerical fascist leanings were as much statist as they were religious. Indeed, fitting with Nicos Poultanzas' model, it is rarely clear where the Church ends and the State begins in Devane's politics.

Clare O'Hagan has presented the Church as a key plank of the "ideological state apparatus" of post-1922 Ireland (O'Hagan 2006, 66). This structural Marxist analysis fits with my own (though I give more weight, I think, to fluency and agency within these structures). And building on O'Hagan, it is worth inquiring what independent "Power" did the Church, as a disciplinary machine, have in post-1922 Ireland? Did the "base" of the Repressive State Apparatus underpin the superstructural Ideological State Apparatus of the Church? Church and State needed each other, rather than one being more powerful or being logically anterior. This complicated symbiosis of Church and State is the crux of what I have aimed to investigate here, via Richard Devane's vast written output.

[30] Devane also had a strong familiarity with Freud (O'Riordan 2015, 140), but was unsurprisingly suspicious of his ideas.

[31] It is interesting that Devane writes about capitalism in the past tense here; it *was* an evil system, but presumably no longer *is* evil.

[32] *Challenge of Youth* was 297 pages. *Failure of Individualism* surpassed this, at 342 pages.

Studying Devane's voluminous writings reveals much about these tortuous dynamics of Irish Church-State relations, as well as showing how strong an impact European politics and philosophy had on the country's intellectual scene (thus countering any lingering caricatures about isolated Ireland), and how anti-capitalist notions bubbled under the surface of Irish political debate[33]. Paraphrasing a recent study of the legal theorist-turned-National Socialist ideologue, Carl Schmitt, R.S. Devane "is a difficult figure. But even people of diametrically opposite political allegiances *can* profit intellectually from taking him seriously, and not just with the intention of refuting everything he has to say" (Balakrishnan 2000, 9).

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[33] Drawing from the work of Nicos Poulantzas, Richard Dunphy has defined Fianna Fáil's economics as the "status quo anti-capitalism" common to the petit-bourgeoisie (Dunphy 1995, 39-40). Devane's writings suggest that this conservative anti-capitalism had purchase elsewhere in Irish society.

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