

Upholding the commandments and the will of the majority: the Catholic hierarchy, the October 1922 pastoral, and the Irish Civil War

Published version: Co-authored with Kieran Waldron: 'Upholding the commandments and the will of the majority: the Catholic hierarchy, the October 1922 pastoral, and the Irish Civil War', *Archivium Hibernicum*, LXXVI (2023), pp 99-124.

The Irish Revolution between 1912 and 1923 proved a traumatic experience for the Roman Catholic Church. The political violence that marked the War of Independence (1919-21) and the Irish civil war (1922-3) revealed the limits of the church's influence as its denunciations of killing, destruction of property, and dislocation of law and order went largely unheeded. In a reply to an address presented to him in Ballyhaunis, County Mayo on 28 September 1923, Archbishop Thomas Gilmartin of Tuam adverted to criticisms of the hierarchy and its pro-government stance during the civil war. The bishops, he maintained, had never condemned the republican ideal but they censured the use of illegal force to override the people's will.¹ That encapsulated the position of the hierarchy from the occupation of the Four Courts by the anti-treaty IRA executive in April 1922 until the end of the civil war thirteen months later. The anti-treaty position secured just 21.26 per cent of the vote at the June 1922 general election as the Irish electorate decisively backed pro-treaty TDs.² The hierarchy treated the election as a referendum on the Anglo-Irish treaty and steadfastly supported the government during the civil war. The most obvious public intervention by the hierarchy occurred in October 1922 when, prompted by the government, the bishops produced a lengthy pastoral letter that strongly condemned the republican side in the civil war. An initial version was published in the press on 11 October.³ A more refined version with important modifications was published in pamphlet form and read at all Masses on 22 October. It is reproduced below for the first time.

This essay has three aims. The first is to trace the position of the hierarchy prior to the October pastoral and to demonstrate that the document was largely an amalgam of numerous earlier warnings by the bishops, both individually and collectively, from the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty in December 1921 onward. The second is to dissect the pastoral itself. Lastly, the essay examines the impact of the pastoral, the stance of the hierarchy in the months that followed, and how the bishops made a robust rebuttal of charges of political partisanship levelled at them.

While an in-depth survey of the historiography of the Irish civil war is beyond the scope of this essay, some brief observations are apposite. Unlike other aspects of the Irish Revolution, the civil war has not received the same abundance of scholarly attention. Michael

¹ *Irish Catholic Directory 1924* (hereafter *ICD*), p. 592.

² Michael Gallagher, 'The Pact General Election of 1922', *Irish Historical Studies*, 22, no. 84 (Sept. 1979), p. 414.

³ A copy was published as an appendix in Patrick Murray, *Oracles of God: the Roman Catholic Church and Irish politics, 1922-37* (Dublin, 2000), appendix 1, pp 425-30.

Hopkinson published *Green against green*, the first archive-based study, in 1988. Primarily concerned with military developments, it remains the standard work on the conflict.⁴ Blending a social scientific and historical approach, Bill Kissane has published widely on the political and comparative dimensions of the civil war.⁵ Gavin Foster scrutinises ‘the conflicting social interests, divergent outlooks ... and other socially inflected aspects of the 1922-3 conflict and its aftermath’.⁶ His work pays particular attention to how anti-treatyites fared in the post-civil period. The long shadows cast by the civil war over its survivors and over Irish politics, economy and society have been carefully dissected by Diarmaid Ferriter.⁷ Religion and the position of the Catholic Church are accorded only brief consideration in these specialist studies. The authoritative work on the political outlook and activities of the Catholic clergy and their bishops between 1922 and 1937 remains Patrick Murray’s masterful *Oracles of God*.⁸ This has been supplemented by the work of M.P. McCabe on the Catholic Church and Fianna Fáil and by biographies of the archbishops of Armagh and Dublin.⁹ Murray, McCabe and Dermot Keogh have explored relations between the Irish hierarchy and the Vatican during the civil war.¹⁰ Two further studies merit mention for their pioneering exploration of aspects of religion during the Irish Revolution. Drawing on the Bureau of Military History, Brian Heffernan has examined the response of Catholic clergy at parish level to political violence during the War of Independence.¹¹ This has been complemented by Sophie Cooper’s groundbreaking consideration of female religious during the Irish Revolution which addresses a glaring omission in the historiography.¹² Lastly, a growing number of local studies, in particular the county-based Irish Revolution series published by Four Courts Press, have broached the civil war and have included commentary on local prelates.¹³

I

Respect for the legally constituted government, advocacy of majority rule, support for order and social stability, condemnation of the partition of Ireland, and abjuration of political violence characterised the stance of all members of the Catholic hierarchy between the

⁴ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green: the Irish civil war* (Dublin, 1988).

⁵ Bill Kissane, *The politics of the Irish civil war* (Oxford, 2007), *Nations torn asunder: the challenge of civil war* (Oxford, 2016); Kissane (ed), *After civil war: division, reconstruction and reconciliation in contemporary Europe* (Philadelphia, 2015).

⁶ Gavin Foster, *The Irish civil war and society: politics, class and conflict* (Basingstoke, 2015).

⁷ Diarmaid Ferriter, *Between two hells: the Irish civil war* (London, 2021).

⁸ Patrick Murray, *Oracles of God: the Roman Catholic Church and Irish politics, 1922-37* (Dublin, 2000).

⁹ M.P. McCabe, *For God and Ireland: the fight for moral superiority in Ireland, 1922-1932* (Sallins, 2013); Michael Privilege, *Michael Logue and the Catholic Church in Ireland, 1879-1925* (Manchester, 2009); Thomas J. Morrissey, *Edward J. Byrne, 1872-1941: the forgotten archbishop of Dublin* (Dublin, 2010).

¹⁰ M.P. McCabe, ‘Vatican Involvement in the Irish Civil War: Monsignor Salvatore Luzio’s Apostolic Delegation, March-May 1923’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62, no. 1 (2011), pp 89-106; Dermot Keogh, *The Vatican, the bishops and Irish politics, 1919-39* (Cambridge, 1986), Keogh, *Ireland and the Vatican: the politics and diplomacy of church-state relations, 1922-1960* (Cork, 1995).

¹¹ Brian Heffernan, *Freedom and the fifth commandment: Catholic priests and political violence in Ireland, 1919-21* (Manchester, 2014).

¹² Sophie Cooper, ‘“It was the Presentation nuns who made a rebel of me”: women religious and Ireland’s Revolutionary Era’, *Women’s History Review*, 31, no. 6, pp 1047-68, DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2022.2027072>.

¹³ Edited by Mary Ann Lyons and Daithí Ó Corráin, twelve volumes have been published since 2012: Sligo, Tyrone, Waterford, Monaghan, Limerick, Derry, Louth, Kildare, Leitrim, Antrim, Roscommon, Donegal. See <https://www.fourcourtspress.ie/books/browse/history/the-irish-revolution-series/>

conscription crisis of 1918 and the end of the civil war. During this period, Cardinal Michael Logue, the archbishop of Armagh, was the senior ecclesiastic. He chaired meetings of the standing committee of the hierarchy and the bi-annual general meeting of the episcopal conference, attended by the bishops of Ireland's twenty-six dioceses, held in Maynooth in June and October. Logue was the longest serving prelate, having been ordained bishop of Raphoe in 1879 and translated to Armagh in 1887. Of his colleagues, six had been appointed in the 1880s and 1890s, six in the first decade of the twentieth century, twelve in the 1910s, and one in the 1920s.¹⁴ With few exceptions, all were educated in Maynooth and many held posts in the national seminary before their episcopal elevation. Bishops and clergy supported Irish self-government but exhibited a variety of political stances on the nature of the future Irish state. Some retained their loyalty to the Irish Parliamentary Party which sought home rule and were never truly reconciled to the separatism of Sinn Féin, whereas others travelled at different speeds towards Sinn Féin moderates. During the War of Independence, the bishops were fearful of lending moral sanction to either side and stopped short of formally recognising the underground Dáil. That position was transformed by the Anglo-Irish truce of July 1921 which heralded an end to the civil unrest which had wracked Ireland since 1916 and had caused the deaths of at least 2,850 people.¹⁵ When it became clear that Sinn Féin would enter negotiations with the British government as the Irish government in waiting, the hierarchy pragmatically embraced the party. Unsurprisingly, the bishops welcomed the Anglo-Irish treaty of December 1921. There was a belief among them that the treaty, while not perfect, facilitated the progress of the country and to reject it would spell disaster and a renewal of armed conflict with Britain.

As opposition to the treaty intensified during increasingly bitter parliamentary debates, members of the hierarchy exerted political and moral pressure on TDs to uphold majority opinion and back the settlement. For example, Bishop Robert Browne of Cloyne, one of the first prelates to express support for the treaty, emphasised in his Christmas 1921 address that 'the people are the fountain of national authority' and he urged TDs to 'obey the mandate of their constituencies'.¹⁶ Bishop Denis Hallinan of Limerick made the same point, but more forcefully, in a letter to the press:

Making all due allowance for the personal discretion vested in Parliamentary representatives of the people, I consider that it is their duty in a supreme crisis like the present, to vote in accordance with the ascertained wishes of their constituencies as revealed through the ordinary organs of public opinion and in no case wilfully to misrepresent them by voting against their wishes.¹⁷

On New Year's Day 1922, Archbishop John Harty of Cashel made clear that the vast majority supported the treaty because it contained the substance of freedom and that 'in a democratic country the will of the people is the final court of appeal. Our whole national movement has been based on the principle of government by consent of the governed'.¹⁸

¹⁴ See biographical notes below from footnotes 60 to 87.

¹⁵ On this, see Eunan O'Halpin & Daithí Ó Corráin, *The dead of the Irish Revolution* (New Haven and London, 2020).

¹⁶ *ICD 1923*, p. 540.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 541.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 542.

The treaty was also endorsed by John Gregg, the influential Church of Ireland archbishop of Dublin, who pledged the loyalty of the Church of Ireland to the future Irish Free State: 'The new constitution will claim our allegiance with the same solemn authority as the one that is now being constitutionally annulled.'¹⁹ This point was reiterated when Gregg led a delegation representing the general synod to a meeting with Michael Collins and W.T. Cosgrave in May 1922 to raise their anxieties at instances of sectarian violence against Protestants, described by Charles D'Arcy, Church of Ireland archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland, as a 'veritable nightmare of violence and bloodshed' in his address to the general synod that month.²⁰ The loyalty of the Church of Ireland to the new political dispensation was again emphasised when Archbishop Gregg led a delegation to present an address of welcome to the governor-general in March 1923.²¹ All of the main Protestant churches decried acts of violence as Ireland slide towards conflict. For instance, the Dublin, Limerick and Sligo synods of the Methodist Church passed resolutions to this end in May 1922 which also wished that the 'honourable neighbourly relations that have existed in the past will be perpetuated in the Ireland of the future'.²² In a pastoral letter that month, Rev J.J. Macaulay, moderator of the Presbyterian Church, hoped in vain that the 'night of travail which has hung so darkly over our beloved land' would come to an end.²³ Public statements by the minority churches during the civil war were modest in number and at pains to avoid taking political sides beyond calling for a restoration of law and order. By contrast, there was no such inhibition on the part of the Catholic hierarchy.

The treaty stunned many members of the IRA who believed that they had fought to achieve an Irish republic.²⁴ Although a majority of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the leadership of the IRA supported the settlement, most of the rank and file – some estimates suggest three-quarters – did not.²⁵ On 7 January 1922, the Dáil voted in favour of the treaty by sixty-four votes to fifty-seven. Three days later, this action was condemned by a meeting of senior IRA officers as a subversion of the republic. Richard Mulcahy, minister for defence, parried a demand for an army convention to reaffirm allegiance to the republic by postponing the request for two months. He used the interlude to establish a pro-treaty National army.²⁶

¹⁹ George Seaver, *John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg Archbishop* (London, 1963), p. 119. The historiography of the Church of Ireland is extensive. General histories are provided by R.B. McDowell, *The Church of Ireland, 1869-1969* (London, 1975) and Alan Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland, 1691-1996* (Dublin, 1997). On the phenomenon of Protestant emigration following Irish independence see Andy Bielenberg, 'Exodus: The Emigration of Southern Irish Protestants During the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War', *Past & Present*, 218, no. 1 (2013), pp 199-233 and Marie Coleman, 'Protestant Depopulation in County Longford during the Irish Revolution, 1911-1926', *English Historical Review*, 135, no. 575 (2020), pp 931-77. On Protestants and Irish life, see Michael Hurley (ed.), *Irish Anglicanism, 1869-1969: essays on the role of Anglicanism in Irish life* (Dublin, 1970), Jack White, *Minority report: the Protestant community in the Irish republic* (Dublin, 1975), Ian d'Alton & Ida Milne (eds), *Protestant and Irish: the minority's search for place in independent Ireland* (Cork, 2019).

²⁰ *Irish Times*, 13 May 1922. On sectarian killings in Cork see Andy Bielenberg, John Borgonovo & James Donnelly, "'Something of the Nature of a Massacre": The Bandon Valley Killings Revisited', *Éire-Ireland*, 49, nos. 3-4 (2014), pp 7-59. On violence against loyalists see Gemma Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014).

²¹ *Irish Times*, 20 Mar. 1923.

²² *Ibid.*, 6 May 1922.

²³ *Ibid.*, 29 May 1922.

²⁴ See Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 40.

²⁵ John Borgonovo, 'IRA Conventions' in John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, Michael Murphy & John Borgonovo (eds), *Atlas of the Irish revolution* (Cork, 2017), p. 670.

²⁶ Hopkinson, *Green against green*, pp 58, 66; Pádraig Ó Caoimh, *Richard Mulcahy: from the politics of war to the politics of peace, 1913-1924* (Newbridge, 2019), p. 107.

In the early weeks of 1922, there was a steady increase in lawlessness as armed groups conducted raids and settled private scores. The deteriorating situation prompted several bishops to use their Lenten pastorals in February 1922 to appeal for a restoration of law and order, and to bolster support for the treaty. Archbishop Harty lamented that ‘the sanctity of the Seventh Commandment seemed to have vanished from many minds’ and ‘disgraced the fair name of Ireland’.²⁷ In Kildare and Leighlin, Bishop Patrick Foley referred to ‘bands of marauders’ in parts of the diocese who had been ‘trying by terrorism to deprive people of their money and other property’.²⁸ For Bishop Bernard Hackett of Waterford and Lismore ‘only a desire for revenge or private gain’ could account for the outrages in his diocese, which if not checked would produce ‘a spirit of anarchy’.²⁹ Carefully avoiding any reference to political divisions, Archbishop Edward Byrne of Dublin endorsed the treaty by emphasising how ‘the unsympathetic, wasteful and unintelligent rule of men alien to us in blood and traditions’ would be replaced by a native one with ‘knowledge of our people’s needs’ which would ‘take a real interest in solving the many problems that concern our people’s well-being’.³⁰ Bishop Michael Fogarty of Killaloe forcefully addressed the theme of disunion: ‘Even though we have not achieved all that we should wish ... Ireland is now the sovereign mistress of her own life. The rusty chains of bondage are scrapped for ever – unless, indeed, by our own folly we put them on again’.³¹

Fogarty’s sense of foreboding swiftly came to fruition. Mulcahy’s prohibition against an IRA convention was flouted when a meeting was held in the Mansion House in Dublin on 26 March and resumed on 9 April 1922. The tone had been set at a press conference on 22 March. When asked if he proposed a military dictatorship, Rory O’Connor notoriously replied: ‘you can take it that way if you like’.³² The convention revoked the authority of Dáil Éireann by electing a sixteen-member army executive. On the night of 13 April, anti-treaty forces seized the Four Courts, the centre of the Irish judiciary, which became the headquarters of the executive. This was a blatant challenge to the authority of the government. However, it did not instigate civil war at Easter 1922 and two months elapsed before hostilities began.

Alarmed at the increasingly real threat of a military coup or civil war, Bishop Thomas O’Doherty of Clonfert directly addressed disunity within the army on 2 April in a sermon that drew praise from his brother bishops. He maintained that ‘in every civilised state the army is one of the instruments of the civil power. It is not the master but the servant of the people ... Any other procedure inevitably leads to civil war and anarchy’.³³ In Tuam Cathedral a week later, Archbishop Gilmartin prayed for deliverance from the curse of disunion. He urged that ‘the good of society required that a stable government be allowed to function for the maintenance of law and order. Always united, with the existing Government, no matter what its form, we stand; divided we fall’.³⁴ This position on the army and ordered government was at the heart of the hierarchy’s stance throughout the civil war.

Archbishops Harty and Byrne were acutely aware of the dangers of appearing to take political sides in any public utterances, a sensitivity not exhibited by Cardinal Logue. Byrne

²⁷ *ICD 1923*, p. 552.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *ICD 1923*, p. 553.

³⁰ *ICD 1923*, pp 551-2. On Byrne’s stance, see Morrissey, *Edward J. Byrne*, pp 75-9.

³¹ *ICD 1923*, pp 552-3.

³² Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 67.

³³ *ICD 1923*, p. 560.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 561.

and Laurence O'Neill, the lord mayor of Dublin, took a bold initiative on 19 April by inviting pro- and anti-treaty representatives to a conference at the Mansion House.³⁵ This bridge-building exercise broke up in failure on 29 April. Other discreet peace efforts were conducted at this time by Bishop Joseph MacRory of Down and Connor, and by Archbishop Gilmartin but to no avail.³⁶ Seemingly unaware of Byrne's conference, Logue called a general meeting of the hierarchy on 26 April. This produced a strong pronouncement that directly addressed the possibility of civil war. Describing the condition of Ireland as 'a subject of the deepest distress and humiliation', the statement took care not to pronounce politically on the treaty or 'obtrude' the bishops' views because it was 'a legitimate question for national discussion' on which 'every Irishman is entitled to his own opinion, subject, of course, to truth and responsibility to God'. The hierarchy recognised that the treaty was 'a national question, to be settled by the national will, ascertained by an election carried out in the ordinary constitutional way'.³⁷ The statement suggested that the cause of the turmoil was the unconstitutional policy of certain leaders 'who think themselves entitled to force their views upon the nation, not by reason but by firearms'.³⁸ The bishops denied that any part of the army had the moral right to declare itself independent of the civil authority: 'Such a claim is a claim to military despotism and subversive of all civil liberty. It is an immoral usurpation and confiscation of the people's rights.'³⁹ According to the *Scotsman*, not since the plan of campaign in the 1880s had the bishops produced a 'deliverance so strong and so emphatic'.⁴⁰ In the view of McCabe, the episcopal pronouncement was 'an invitation to republicans to cease violent resistance and rejoin the political discussion'.⁴¹ The October pastoral reiterated the arguments presented in the April statement. The bishops were, in Murray's compelling phrase, 'sustaining' and reinforcing the authority of a nascent Irish state and were committed to the survival of the treaty settlement.⁴²

In the weeks before the June general election, individual bishops, anguished at the condition of the country, repeatedly decried violations of the moral law and urged the people to vote despite episcopal distaste for the election pact between Michael Collins and Éamon de Valera. This was an agreement that a panel representing pro- and anti-treaty wings of Sinn Féin would be established based on each side's existing strength in the Dáil and that a coalition government would be formed after the election which was the first to be held under proportional representation.⁴³ Addressing a congregation at Clerihan in County Tipperary, on the occasion of his triennial visitation in May 1922, Archbishop Harty was pained at Ireland's drift 'into ruin, anarchy, and civil war' and the prospect of 'fine young boys turning their guns on one another'. Echoing the April statement, he stated that the bishops 'had their views, strong and definite, about the advisability of the Treaty, but would not impose them on

³⁵ Morrissey, *Edward J. Byrne*, pp 81-4; Thomas J. Morrissey, *Laurence O'Neill (1864-1943): lord mayor of Dublin (1917-1924): patriot and man of peace* (Dublin, 2014), p. 214; David McCullagh, *De Valera. Volume I, Rise 1882-1932* (Dublin, 2017), pp 276-7; Daithí Ó Corráin & Gerard Hanley, *Cathal Brugha: 'an indomitable spirit'* (Dublin, 2022), pp 148-9.

³⁶ Murray, *Oracles of God*, pp 57-8.

³⁷ *ICD 1923*, pp 598-9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 599.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Scotsman*, 1 May 1922.

⁴¹ M.P. McCabe, *For God and Ireland: the fight for moral superiority in Ireland, 1922-1932* (Sallins, 2013), p. 66.

⁴² Murray, *Oracles of God*, p. 34.

⁴³ On this see Michael Gallagher, 'The Pact General Election of 1922', *Irish Historical Studies*, 22, no. 84 (1979), pp 404-21.

anyone. That question should be settled in the ordinary constitutional way by the people'. The archbishop prayed that they would 'unite and defeat the new militarism which, if allowed to continue, would be the bane and the curse of the country'.⁴⁴ Speaking in St Mary's Church in Ardee, Cardinal Logue attributed the disunion prevailing in the country to jealousy among its political leaders. He denounced the spate of bank robberies, murder and bloodshed, implored the people to set their face against violence, and counselled them to make their voices heard at the election.⁴⁵ At the end of May Archbishop Gilmartin referred to the taking of oaths during a confirmation address in Claremorris. In a direct challenge to the anti-treaty IRA, he maintained that an oath could not bind if it were injurious to the country and that an oath 'calling on men to do something which their conscience told them was wrong was not binding. They could not use religion to profane religion'.⁴⁶ This was a subject given considerable prominence in the October pastoral.

The result of the general election on 16 June 1922 conferred a democratic mandate on the provisional government but did not avert civil war because political affairs were swiftly overtaken by military developments. On 18 June, before the results of the election were announced, a further anti-treaty IRA convention was held which broke up in confusion and division. One faction favoured an immediate attack on the residual British forces in Ireland while another sought further discussion with the government. In London, Sir Henry Wilson, a retired British field marshal, former chief of the imperial general staff, adviser to the Northern Ireland government and Ulster Unionist MP for North Down, was assassinated on 22 June by two members of the IRA, both First World War veterans.⁴⁷ Placing the blame on those in occupation of the Four Courts, the British government demanded that the provisional government in Dublin take action or threatened to do so itself. This forced a reluctant Michael Collins to act. The kidnapping of J.J. 'Ginger' O'Connell, the National army assistant chief of staff, provided a pretext. At 4 a.m. on 28 June 1922, the Four Courts complex was shelled with two eighteen-pounder guns borrowed from the British army. The long-anticipated Irish civil war had begun. For the *Tablet*, an English Catholic newspaper, the provisional government set itself 'fearlessly to carry out the known wishes of the people' against the 'forces of Autocracy' entrenched in the Four Courts.⁴⁸

In word and deed, individual Catholic prelates endorsed the majority electoral position and supported the provisional government during the opening months of the conflict. Preaching at Mass in Carlingford on 16 July, Logue emphasised that when the people 'got a chance of registering their opinions they declared for the Treaty because it gave them the widest liberties'. Furthermore, he deemed the self-nominated faction which flouted the authorised government to have 'developed into brigandage'.⁴⁹ Archbishop Gilmartin expressed similar sentiments a week later. He appealed to the young men of Ireland to pursue a constitutional means of ending the conflict and stressed the only government was that 'accepted by the majority of the people's representatives'.⁵⁰ On the same day Bishop Edward Mulhern of Dromore told a congregation in Newry cathedral that it was their 'duty to do all

⁴⁴ *Cork Weekly News*, 20 May 1922.

⁴⁵ *Drogheda Independent*, 20 May 1922.

⁴⁶ *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 3 June 1922.

⁴⁷ Keith Jeffery, 'Wilson, Sir Henry Hughes', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.009074.v1>.

⁴⁸ *Tablet*, 15 July 1922.

⁴⁹ *ICD 1923*, p. 578; *Privilege, Michael Logue*, p. 166.

⁵⁰ *ICD 1923*, p. 579.

to promote ordered government and security for life and property' and that it was 'pitiable to see men who had worked so loyally together for years now opposing each other'.⁵¹ In Limerick Bishop Hallinan paid an official visit to the headquarters of the National army at Cruise's Hotel on 22 July and offered congratulations to Commandant-General Michael Brennan on the success of his forces in retaking the city the day before.⁵²

Individual bishops raised the issue of ecclesiastical sanctions for infractions of the moral law *before* the publication of the October pastoral, a point insufficiently emphasised in the historiography which focuses solely on the pastoral's warnings of excommunication.⁵³ Logue contemplated excommunication for parishes in Carlingford and Dundalk during July. This, he believed, would little affect 'the desperate characters who fear neither God nor man, but it might deter some people who have a rag of conscience left from co-operating with or aiding or abetting them'.⁵⁴ Bishop Hackett told a congregation in Waterford cathedral in late August that he would rather resign the see of Waterford and Lismore than remain silent. He warned young men in his diocese that those who set themselves against the teaching of the bishops were not fit to receive absolution. Hackett also proclaimed that any oath taken by them did not bind. Therefore,

if in pursuit of that oath as an order from some superior or other, you do an action, for example, take a life, you are guilty of murder. If you take property you are guilty of robbery; and if you do anything against your country's interest you are not a patriot but a parasite.⁵⁵

In a pastoral letter read throughout the diocese of Cork in late September, Bishop Daniel Cohalan emphasised the 'duty of confessors to withhold absolution in cases where he knows that a penitent is committing or abetting crimes'. He also dismissed the republican oath because a promise of fidelity to a non-existing form of government was invalid.⁵⁶

The pronouncements of the hierarchy were supported by their confrères in other parts of the Catholic world. For example, on 4 September Logue published a letter from Michael Kelly, the Waterford-born archbishop of Sydney, on behalf of nineteen archbishops and bishops of Australia (but not the fervently anti-treaty Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne) who 'strongly deprecate national dissension' and 'look for practical union of action according to majority vote'.⁵⁷ Preaching in his native Athlone while visiting Ireland, Archbishop Michael Joseph Curley of Baltimore questioned if the young men lying in wait to murder were going 'to bring liberty to Ireland by a campaign of destruction that was a scandal to the world and was ruining their little land?'⁵⁸

II

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *ICD 1923*, pp 578-9.

⁵³ Hopkinson, *Green against green*, p. 182; Kissane, *Politics of the Irish civil war*, p. 89; Ferriter, *Between two hells*, p. 83.

⁵⁴ *Tablet*, 5. Aug. 1922.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 26 Aug. 1922.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 30 Sept. 1922.

⁵⁷ *ICD 1923*, p. 584.

⁵⁸ *Tablet*, 9 Sept. 1922. For a discussion of the support of the Catholic Church in the United States and Australia, see Murray, *Oracles of God*, pp 92-9.

The conventional phase of the civil war lasted for about two months and witnessed the anti-treaty forces being driven from urban centres. This was followed by a reversion to guerrilla warfare. The republican cause lacked public support and was further demoralised by the government's ruthless prosecution of the war. On 27 September 1922, the Army (Emergency Powers) Resolution⁵⁹ – a draconian public safety measure – was introduced under which military courts were empowered to impose the death penalty for a range of offences.⁶⁰ Before this came into operation in mid-October, the government offered republicans an amnesty and deployed the moral authority of the hierarchy. At a meeting of the executive council on 4 October, it was considered desirable that the bishops make a pronouncement regarding the 'low moral standard prevailing throughout the country'.⁶¹ This was the immediate background to the bishops' pastoral of 10 October, following a full meeting of the hierarchy in Maynooth. Only Patrick O'Donnell, coadjutor archbishop of Armagh, was not present. However, his name was printed in the pamphlet version of the pastoral.⁶² The bishops had just six days to complete their document but as argued here few of the ideas expressed were new. A rather rushed draft was published in the *Freeman's Journal*, the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times* on 11 October to coincide with the government's amnesty offer. The more refined pamphlet version, read at all Masses on 22 October, contained a number of subtle but important alterations.

The pastoral had five objectives and strongly reiterated the hierarchy's April statement. The first was to deny the republican campaign, which was accused of attacking its own country 'as if she were a foreign Power', of any political or moral legitimacy.⁶³ For the bishops, what republicans called a war was, in the absence of any legitimate authority based on the popular will, 'only a system of murder and assassination of the National forces' and they emphasised that 'killing in an unjust war is as much murder before God as if there were no war'.⁶⁴ The pastoral admonished the destruction of property, criminality and the 'demoralisation especially of the young, whose minds are being poisoned by false principles'.⁶⁵ The second plea was for civic obedience to government authority because 'no one is justified in rebelling against the legitimate Government ... set up by the nation and acting within its rights'.⁶⁶ This, the bishops maintained, was church teaching since the time of St Paul, without which ordered government would be reduced to chaos. The pamphlet contained an additional sentence not included in the 10 October version that the 'Government has been elected by the nation, and is supported by the vast majority or public opinion'.⁶⁷

A third aim was to assert (or reassert) episcopal authority in terms of the bishops' right to pronounce on political or moral matters, and the duty of the faithful to accept such advice. The bishops claimed that a campaign was being waged to silence their pastoral office 'by

⁵⁹ The term 'resolution' was used instead of 'act' or 'decree' because the draft constitution of the Irish Free State was not due to come into legal effect until 6 December 1922. On this see Thomas Mohr, 'Precursors to the Offences Against the State Act – Emergency Law in the Irish Free State' in Mark Coen (ed.), *The Offences Against the State Act 1939 at 80: A model counter-terrorism act?* (London, 2021), pp 26-7.

⁶⁰ *Dáil Éireann debates*, vol. 1, no. 13 (27 Sept. 1922).

⁶¹ Murray, *Oracles of God*, p. 72.

⁶² *Weekly Irish Times*, 14 Oct. 1922; Murray, *Oracles of God*, p. 75.

⁶³ See below, paragraph 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, paragraph 4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, paragraph 6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, paragraph 13.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, paragraph 13.

calumny and intimidation' and to 'browbeat' them and 'revolt against their authority'.⁶⁸ The pastoral warned the Catholics were 'conscientiously bound to abide' by the bishops' interpretation of divine law, subject to an appeal to the Holy See.⁶⁹ The hierarchy described the 'agony' of knowing that church teaching might 'wound the strong feelings' of sections of the faithful but they were emphatic that to 'teach the Truth in this grave crisis, no matter what the consequences' was their solemn duty.⁷⁰ However, the assertion of episcopal authority was undermined by the fallacious claim that the teaching of the bishops was not founded on 'political bias' because it would be 'unworthy of our sacred office'.⁷¹ The use of the propagandistic term 'Irregular' in paragraphs 14 and 16 laid bare the absence of episcopal political neutrality. Accordingly, some clergy questioned the right of the bishops to condemn the republican cause. Berthold Meleady, a Discalced Carmelite, described as blasphemous the bishops' invocation of divine law in support of the government and of being 'callously and wilfully blind to the torturing and murdering of Irish Republicans by Free State forces'.⁷² Concerns about deference to episcopal authority had been regularly ventilated in the months before the pastoral. For example, in August 1922 Bishop Charles O'Sullivan of Kerry warned that Catholics could not disregard 'the divinely appointed teachers in matters of morality' without 'imperilling your immortal souls'.⁷³

The fourth aim of the pastoral was to warn those engaged in unlawful rebellion, who nonetheless claimed to be good Catholics, that they may be denied absolution in confession or admission to Holy Communion. While commentators have argued that this amounted to a politicisation of the sacraments, such an interpretation is too narrow.⁷⁴ As outlined above, several bishops warned unequivocally of sacramental strictures for those in breach of the moral teaching of the church. Furthermore, sympathetic priests were warned against being 'false to their sacred office' on pain of suspension. In his forensic examination, Murray has revealed that a sizeable number of clergy ignored their bishops.⁷⁵ The activities of some clergy were raised by the government with the local ordinary. For example, in March 1923 Bishop Foley received a formal complaint from General Richard Mulcahy, commander-in-chief of the National army, against two priests in his diocese.⁷⁶

Lastly, the bishops enjoined republicans to pursue their grievances through constitutional action, a plea that had been made repeatedly since the outbreak of conflict by individual prelates and by Archbishop Gilmartin in particular. For instance, while speaking at a confirmation in Islandeady on 8 October he stated that those who 'wished for another form of government had a constitutional way of trying to attain their ideal'.⁷⁷ Gilmartin returned to this theme in early December while making a plea for peace. He claimed that the bishops were being criticised as partisan politicians for laying down moral truths and that in fact they

have made no new laws; they have issued no excommunications; they have made no new sins. They have not condemned a Republican form of government. They have only

⁶⁸ Ibid., paragraph 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid., paragraph 12.

⁷⁰ Pastoral, paragraph 18.

⁷¹ Ibid.,

⁷² Murray, *Oracles of God*, p. 16

⁷³ *Cork Examiner*, 31 Aug. 1922 cited in McCabe, *For God and Ireland*, p. 69.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Privilege, *Michael Logue*, p. 168.

⁷⁵ Murray, *Oracles of God*, Appendix two, pp 431-64.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 148

⁷⁷ *ICD 1923*, pp 589-90.

declared the moral law, that the end does not justify immoral means. They have only preached the fifth and seventh Commandments.⁷⁸

In Gilmartin's view, the mission of the church was to bring about peace by upholding the doctrine of the church and encouraging those who erred to repent. The October pastoral bolstered the actions of the government by urging republicans to avail of the amnesty offer. For those conflicted by an oath to the republic, the bishops cautioned that 'no oath can bind any man to carry on a warfare against his own country in circumstances forbidden by the law of God'.⁷⁹

In an editorial entitled 'A Grave Pronouncement', the *Freeman's Journal* hoped that the bishops' appeal would meet 'with a response in keeping with the traditions of Catholic Ireland'.⁸⁰ It was never likely to evoke such a response from republicans who were outraged. De Valera agreed to act as president in the 'charade of ... an emergency republican government' ratified on 25 October.⁸¹ At the end of that month, a resolution mandated de Valera to protest to the Vatican, which had remained silent on the pastoral, against 'the unwarrantable action of the Irish Hierarchy in presuming and pretending to pronounce an authoritative judgment upon the question of constitutional and political fact now at issue in Ireland'.⁸² An appeal, written in French, was drawn up by a Catholic Appeal Committee and comprised a letter addressed to the pope and over eighty pages of appendices.⁸³ The documentation was delivered to the Vatican by Arthur Clery, a professor of property law at University College Dublin, and Dr Conn Murphy, a civil servant. Assisted by Monsignor John Hagan, rector of the Irish College, they secured three interviews with Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, Vatican secretary of state, who received the appeal, and an audience with Pope Pius XI.⁸⁴ In January 1923 Logue, who had hoped for a Vatican pronouncement of support after the October pastoral, received a copy of the appeal for comment.⁸⁵ In March 1923, by which time the civil war was entering its final stage, the pope dispatched Monsignor Salvatore Luzio to report on the Irish situation. The papal envoy was cold-shouldered by church and state authorities and the government petitioned the Vatican to recall Luzio for endeavouring 'to interfere in the domestic affairs of the country'.⁸⁶

What impact did the pastoral have? As the *Westminster Gazette* observed, the timing of the episcopal intervention strengthened 'in some measure the stability of a governing authority that needs still all the support it can get'.⁸⁷ The pastoral may, as Murray suggests, have 'emboldened the Provisional Government and many of the clergy to take a

⁷⁸ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 7 Dec. 1922.

⁷⁹ Pastoral, paragraph 20.

⁸⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 11 Oct. 1922.

⁸¹ Ronan Fanning, *Éamon de Valera: a will to power* (London, 2015), p. 139.

⁸² *ICD 1923*, p. 593.

⁸³ See Patrick Murray, 'The Anglo-Irish Treaty: the Catholic Appeal Committee to Pope Pius XI, 10 December 1922', *Analecta Hibernica*, 51 (2020), pp 207-27.

⁸⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Jan. 1923; Kissane, *Politics of the Irish civil war*, p. 89; Ferriter, *Between two hells*, p. 85.

⁸⁵ Murray, *Oracles of God*, p. 184.

⁸⁶ Michael Laffan, *Judging W. T. Cosgrave* (Dublin, 2014), p. 123. For an in-depth assessment of the failed Luzio mission see M.P. McCabe, 'Vatican Involvement in the Irish Civil War: Monsignor Salvatore Luzio's Apostolic Delegation, March-May 1923', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62, no. 1 (2011), pp 89-106. See also Murray, 'Catholic Appeal Committee', pp 216-20.

⁸⁷ *Westminster Gazette*, 12 Oct. 1922.

sterner stand ... against militant Republicans'.⁸⁸ The most controversial and divisive policy was the use of executions. Several bishops were appalled and privately appealed to the government for clemency. When Byrne protested against the first executions on 17 November 1922 of four Dublin youths for possession of revolvers and ammunition without authority, W.T. Cosgrave, president of the executive council, made clear that the security of the state was at stake and referenced the October pastoral.⁸⁹ To no avail, both Byrne and Patrick O'Donnell personally intervened to seek a reprieve for Erskine Childers who was executed on 24 November. Byrne visited Cosgrave in a failed effort to prevent the executions without trial of Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joseph McKelvey and Richard Barrett on 8 December in reprisal for the killing of Seán Hales, a pro-treaty TD, the day before. In a subsequent letter to Cosgrave, the archbishop deemed the executions were 'not only unwise but entirely unjustifiable from the moral point of view. That one man should be punished for another's crime seems to me to be absolutely unjust'.⁹⁰ Byrne also appealed for clemency for a number of prisoners, such as Mary MacSwiney who was on hunger strike in November 1922. That the government stood firm, as it did with subsequent appeals for other prisoners during 1923, demonstrated the limits of the hierarchy's political influence. As Byrne put it, 'my power in these matters is very small'.⁹¹ However dismayed the bishops were in private at the excesses of the Irish government or the National army during the civil war, no public condemnation was issued.

III

The support for the government expressed in the pastoral alienated many republicans and seemed to contradict the idea of religion being above politics. Nevertheless, the bishops stoutly defended their stance during the remainder of the civil war. This was made especially apparent in several Lenten pastorals read in churches on 11 February 1923. Reflecting on the October pastoral, the *Freeman's Journal* suggested that 'the sole mistake of the Bishops was that they understated their case'.⁹² Such a charge could not be made against their Lenten pastorals, which reiterated the main tenets of the October plea and in some cases offered an even stronger indictment of the republican position. Four recurring themes were evident: condemnation of physical force as a political method, the duty of the people to support the properly constituted government, the right of the bishops to speak out, and mounting alarm at the social disintegration of the country.

Addressing the clergy and faithful 'probably for the last time', Logue robustly defended the treaty which conferred on Ireland 'all the freedom which a Republic or any other form of government could give, limited by a mere nominal tie with the other nations of the British Commonwealth'.⁹³ He witheringly dismissed republican opposition to the treaty: 'never before in the world's history did such a wild and destructive hurricane spring from such a thin, intangible, unsubstantial vapour'.⁹⁴ The cardinal was greatly perturbed by the

⁸⁸ Murray, *Oracles of God*, p. 77.

⁸⁹ Morrissey, *Edward J. Byrne*, pp 98-9.

⁹⁰ Draft letter Byrne to Cosgrave, 10 Dec. 1922 (Dublin Diocesan Archives, Edward Byrne papers, MSS 466, Office of the president of the Executive Council, 1922) cited in Laffan, *Judging W. T. Cosgrave*, p. 122; Morrissey, *Edward J. Byrne*, p. 103.

⁹¹ Murray, *Oracles of God*, p. 87.

⁹² *Weekly Freeman's Journal*, 17 Feb. 1923.

⁹³ *Tipperary Star*, 17 Feb. 1923.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

demoralisation of youth, both young men and young women. But he took solace that the great majority of the people were 'determined not to yield a jot or tittle of the advantages which they have secured to support the legitimate Government, which is all that now stands between us and absolute anarchy'.⁹⁵ Logue's brother prelates were not as trenchant. Byrne referred to how successive pontiffs had pronounced sentence of excommunication against secret societies and those who promote them, whereas Harty appealed to the young men of his archdiocese to take heed of the teaching of the hierarchy.⁹⁶ Gilmartin revisited the necessity for stable government and constitutional political action: 'for the gun, the revolver, the bomb and the mine, substitute argument. For terrorism substitute an appeal to the dignity and intelligence of the voter'.⁹⁷ Bishop Fogarty declared that the 'national will, the tribunal which all should reverence, was treated with contempt' and denounced the republican campaign 'to wreck Ireland' as 'fanaticism and not patriotism'.⁹⁸

Bishop Hackett referred to an 'unscrupulous and vindictive propaganda' that attempted to 'place a political complexion upon the teaching of those divinely appointed to rule the Church of God'.⁹⁹ He defended the bishops' right to pronounce on Catholic moral doctrine. So too did Bishop Patrick Finegan of Kilmore because a bishop who did not speak out would be 'guilty by negative co-operation, of the crimes uncondemned by him'.¹⁰⁰ Bishop Patrick Morrisroe of Achonry underlined that the teaching set out in the October pastoral was unanimous and he dismissed the republican appeal to Rome as 'mere pretence' and asked: 'Do the appellants give an undertaking that they will abide by the advice of the Pope? By no means'.¹⁰¹ In Limerick, 7,500 members of the Arch-Confraternity of the Holy Family presented an address to Bishop Hallinan assuring him of their fidelity to the teaching of the church, disassociating themselves from hostile criticism of the moral teaching and motives of the bishops, and praying for peace, unity and charity. In his reply, Hallinan stated that allegations that the bishops were political partisans rather than pastors was calumny and unjust, and that the hierarchy condemned immoral principles.¹⁰²

Bishop Laurence Gaughran of Meath was one of the few prelates not to address the civil war directly. Instead, his pastoral was devoted to the issue of unlawful gain and the need for restitution.¹⁰³ Similarly, the pastoral of Bishop Thomas O'Dea of Galway emphasised that the prevailing disorder did not make it permissible to break the commandments with impunity. He was 'ashamed and astonished beyond measure at the frequency of open robbery' in parts of his diocese and urged that constitutional action replace guns.¹⁰⁴ Concerns about the seventh commandment, in particular, were frequently raised throughout the remainder of the civil war. For example, at a confirmation ceremony in St Finbarr's church on 21 May, Bishop Cohalan expressed sorrow and bewilderment at the estimated £100,000 taken from the Cork Custom House, at the widespread thefts from banks, business houses

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ *ICD 1924*, pp. 554-5.

⁹⁷ *Connaught Telegraph*, 17 Feb. 1923.

⁹⁸ *Tipperary Star*, 17 Feb. 1923.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ *Anglo-Celt*, 17 Feb. 1923.

¹⁰¹ *Connaught Telegraph*, 17 Feb. 1923.

¹⁰² *Freeman's Journal*, 26 Feb. 1923.

¹⁰³ *Meath Chronicle*, 17 Feb. 1923.

¹⁰⁴ *Irish Independent*, 12 Feb. 1923.

and private individuals. He paid tribute to the government's efforts to 'compel the dishonest to remember the Divine Commandment: 'Thou shalt not steal'.¹⁰⁵

The Lenten pastorals of several bishops raised fears that the widespread disorder had weakened the social fabric. Intemperance was condemned by Logue, Byrne and Finegan; illegal distillation and disregard for parental authority were criticised by Morrisroe and Logue; Archbishop Byrne thundered against foreign dances 'on the borderline of Christian modesty' which had become 'a grave danger to the morals of their young people'.¹⁰⁶

In the final months of the civil war individual bishops were exercised by a desire for a cessation of armed hostilities, a concern to see the commandments observed, and hopes for peace without rancour. In February 1923 Harty and Father Thomas Duggan, a former British army chaplain, secretary to Bishop Cohalan from July 1919 until August 1920, and a close friend of anti-treaty IRA leader Tom Barry, developed peace proposals.¹⁰⁷ They involved the immediate calling off of all IRA operations, the dumping of all arms and ammunition by the republican forces, and the holding of a general election after which the munitions would be handed over to the elected government.¹⁰⁸ Increasingly of the view that the republican position was lost, Barry agreed to convey the proposal to Liam Lynch, the chief of staff, and the IRA executive. In the event, Kevin O'Higgins on behalf of the government publicly rejected the compromise on 12 March.¹⁰⁹ By this stage the republican position had been utterly demoralised by fatalities and the imprisonment of about 12,000. The end of the conflict came into view quickly after the death of Liam Lynch on 10 April.¹¹⁰ His successor, Frank Aiken, ordered all units to suspend 'all offensive operations' from noon on Monday 30 April.¹¹¹ There was no formal truce and the Irish Free State remained on a war footing. Speaking in Tipperary in May, Archbishop Harty gave thanks that an 'end of the campaign against the lawful Government of the country, which has brought such terrible havoc and destruction in its train' was finally in sight. He prayed for a peace that would ensure that the law of God shall be observed, a peace that would bring a return to settled conditions where questions could be settled in the ordinary constitutional way, a peace that would recognise the legitimate authority of a government elected by the people, and a peace that would leave no seeds of bitterness behind.¹¹² Such hopes were only partially realised.

It is hardly surprising that the hierarchy assiduously upheld church teaching and regarded the treaty question after the June 1922 general election as a question, at its most fundamental level, of whether the lawfully expressed will of the Irish people was to prevail or not. Preaching at the consecration of Edward Doorley as coadjutor bishop of Elphin in June 1923, Bishop O'Doherty made reference to episcopal motivations behind the October pastoral: 'unless the Divinely appointed interpreters of God's law were to betray their trust, and remain as dumb dogs when wolves were threatening the sheepfold, they were bound to

¹⁰⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 22 May 1923.

¹⁰⁶ *ICD 1924*, p. 556.

¹⁰⁷ James Quinn, 'Duggan, Thomas Francis ('Tom')', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.009770.v1>; Murray, *Oracles of God*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁸ *ICD 1924*, p. 562.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 566.

¹¹⁰ On Lynch see William Murphy, 'Lynch, William Fanaghan (Liam)', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.004949.v1>

¹¹¹ Suspension of Offensive Order from Aiken to Officers Commanding Commands and Independent Brigades, 27 Apr. 1923. Copy published in *Irish Times*, 28 Apr. 1923.

¹¹² *Derry Journal*, 11 May 1923.

make clear the law of God'.¹¹³ The bishop hoped that as passions cooled in the aftermath of the civil war that the Catholic faithful would hearken to the advice of St Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews: obey your prelates. In independent Ireland this was observed far more in the realm of faith and morals than in politics.

Editorial Note

As stated above, an initial version of the October 1922 pastoral of the Irish Roman Catholic hierarchy was published in the press on 11 October. A refined version, produced in pamphlet form, was read at all Masses throughout the country on 22 October 1922. It contains some significant alterations. Differences with the earlier press version have been indicated in explanatory footnotes. In the custom of the time, the bishops signed using only their Christian names. Their full name, dates of birth, death and episcopal consecration(s), and, where available, links to the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* are provided in footnotes. The copy of the pastoral produced below is in the care of the Tuam archdiocesan archives.

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge The Most Reverend Francis Duffy, archbishop of Tuam, and the Tuam archdiocesan archives for permission to reproduce the pamphlet of the October 1922 pamphlet in its care.

¹¹³ Ibid., 27 June 1923.

PASTORAL LETTER

OF

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE, THE
ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF
IRELAND TO THE PRIESTS
AND PEOPLE OF
IRELAND

DUBLIN

BROWNE AND NOLAN, LIMITED

PRINTERS & PUBLISHERS

Branches – BELFAST CORK WATERFORD

Pastoral Letter

*Of His Eminence Cardinal Logue, the Archbishops
and Bishops of Ireland, to the priests and
people of Ireland.*

*To be read in all Churches and public oratories at
the principal Masses, on Sunday, October 22, 1922.*

DEAR REV. FATHER AND BELOVED BRETHERN: –

THE present state of Ireland is a sorrow and a humiliation¹ to its friends all over the world. To us, Irish Bishops, because² of the moral and religious issues at stake, it is³ a source of the most painful anxiety.

Our country, that but yesterday was so glorious,⁴ is now a byword before the nations for a domestic strife, as disgraceful as it is criminal and suicidal. A section of the community, refusing to acknowledge the Government set up by the nation, have chosen to attack their own country as if she were a foreign Power. Forgetting, apparently, that a dead nation cannot be free, they have deliberately set out to make our Motherland, as far as they could, a heap of ruins.

They have wrecked Ireland from end to end, burning and destroying national property of enormous value, breaking roads, bridges and railways, seeking by an insensate⁵ blockade to starve the people, or bury them in social stagnation. They have caused more damage to Ireland in three months than could be laid to the charge of British rule in so many decades.

They carry on what they call a war, but which, in the absence of any legitimate authority to justify it, is morally only a system of murder and assassination of the National forces – for it must not be forgotten that killing in an unjust war is as much murder before God as if there were no war. They ambush military lorries in the crowded streets, thereby killing and wounding not only the soldiers of the Nation, but peaceful citizens. They have, to our horror, shot bands of these troops on their way to Mass on Sunday; and set mine traps in the public road,⁶ and blown to fragments some of the bravest Irishmen that ever lived.

¹ Insertion of 'a'.

² Deletion of 'it is' before 'because'.

³ Insertion of 'it is'.

⁴ Insertion of parenthetical commas.

⁵ Insertion of 'an' before 'insensate'.

⁶ Insertion of comma.

Side by side with this woeful destruction of life and property there is running a campaign of plunder, raiding banks and private houses, seizing the lands and property of others, burning mansions and country houses, destroying demesnes and slaying cattle.

But even worse and sadder than this physical ruin is the general demoralisation created by this unhappy revolt – demoralisation especially of the young, whose minds are being poisoned by false principles, and their young lives utterly spoiled by early association with cruelty, robbery, falsehood and crime.

Religion itself is not spared.⁷ We observe with deepest sorrow that a certain section is engaged in a campaign against the Bishops, whose pastoral office they would silence by calumny and intimidation; and they have done the priesthood of Ireland, whose services and sacrifices for their country will be historic, the insult of suggesting a cabal amongst them to browbeat their Bishops and revolt against their authority.

And, in spite of all this sin and crime⁸, they claim to be good Catholics, and demand at the hands of the Church her most sacred privileges, like the Sacraments, reserved for worthy members alone.⁹ When we think of what these young men were only a few months ago, so many of them generous, kind-hearted and good, and see them now involved in this network of crime, our hearts are filled with bitterest anguish.

It is almost inconceivable how decent Irish boys could degenerate so tragically, and reconcile such a mass of criminality with their duties to God and to Ireland. The strain on our country for the last few years will account for much of it. Vanity, and perhaps¹⁰ self-conceit, may have blinded some who think that they, and not the nation, must dictate the national policy. Greed for land, love of loot and anarchy have affected others, and they, we regret to say, are not a few. But the main cause of this demoralisation is to be found in false notions on social morality.¹¹

The long struggle of centuries against foreign rule and misrule has weakened respect for civil authority in the national conscience. This is a great misfortune, a great drawback and a great peril for a¹² young Government. For no nation can live where the civic sense of obedience to authority and law is not firmly and religiously maintained. And if Ireland is ever to realise anything but a miserable record¹³ of anarchy, all classes of her citizens must cultivate respect for and obedience to the Government set up by the nation, whatever¹⁴ shape it takes, while acting within the law of God.

This defect¹⁵ is now being cruelly exploited for the ruin, as we see, of Ireland. The claim is now made that a minority are entitled, when they think it right, to take up arms and destroy the National Government. Last April, foreseeing the danger, we raised our voices in the most solemn manner against this disruptive and immoral principle. We pointed out to our young men the conscientious difficulties in which it would involve them, and warned them against

⁷ This sentence begins a new paragraph in the pamphlet.

⁸ This sentence begins a new paragraph in the pamphlet.

⁹ For greater emphasis, the word 'her' was omitted before 'worthy' and the word 'alone' was added after 'members'.

¹⁰ Insertion of 'and' before 'perhaps'.

¹¹ The semi-colon before 'but' was replaced with a full stop.

¹² 'A' replaced 'our'.

¹³ 'Record' replaced 'destiny'.

¹⁴ 'in' was omitted.

¹⁵ 'defect' replaced 'difficulty'.

it. Disregard of¹⁶ the Divine Law then laid down by the Bishops is the chief cause of all our present sorrows and calamities.

We now again authoritatively renew that teaching; and warn our Catholic people that they are conscientiously bound to abide by it, subject, of course, to an appeal to the Holy See.

No one is justified in rebelling against the legitimate Government, whatever it is, set up by the nation and acting within its rights.¹⁷ The opposite doctrine is false, contrary to Christian morals, and opposed to the constant teaching of the Church. "Let every soul," says St. Paul, "be subject to the higher powers" – that is, to the legitimate authority of the State. From St. Paul downwards the Church has inculcated obedience to authority as a divine duty as well as a social necessity; and has reprobated unauthorised rebellion as sinful in itself and destructive of social stability: as it manifestly is.¹⁸ For if one section of the community has that right, so have other sections the same right, until we end in general anarchy. No one¹⁹ can evade this teaching in our present case²⁰ by asserting that the legitimate authority in Ireland just now²¹ is not the Dáil²² or Provisional Government. That Government has been elected by the nation, and is supported by the vast majority of public opinion.²³ There is no other Government²⁴, and cannot be, outside the body of the people. A Republic without popular recognition behind it is a contradiction in terms.

Such being the divine²⁵ Law, the guerilla [sic.] warfare now being carried on by the Irregulars is without moral sanction;²⁶ and therefore the killing of National soldiers in the course of it is murder before God;²⁷ the seizing of public or private property is robbery;²⁸ the breaking of roads, bridges, and railways is criminal destruction;²⁹ the invasion of homes and the molestation of citizens a³⁰ grievous crime.

All those who, in contravention of this teaching, participate in such crimes, are guilty of the gravest³¹ sins, and may not be absolved in Confession, nor admitted to Holy Communion, if they purpose to persevere³² in such evil courses.

It is said that there are some priests³³ who approve of this Irregular Insurrection. If there be any such, they are false to their sacred office, and are guilty of the gravest³⁴ scandal, and will not be allowed to retain the faculties they hold from us. Furthermore we,

¹⁶ 'of' replaced 'for'.

¹⁷ These paragraphs are emboldened in the pamphlet.

¹⁸ A full stop replaced a semi-colon.

¹⁹ The words 'no one' replaced 'Republican'.

²⁰ Insertion of 'in our present case'.

²¹ Insertion of 'just now'.

²² Omission of the word 'present' before 'Dáil'.

²³ This entire sentence was added to the pamphlet.

²⁴ Insertion of 'Government' after 'other'.

²⁵ Insertion of 'the' before 'divine'.

²⁶ Semi-colon instead of comma.

²⁷ Semi-colon instead of full stop.

²⁸ Semi-colon instead of full stop.

²⁹ Semi-colon instead of full stop.

³⁰ Omission of 'is' before 'a'.

³¹ 'Grievous' replaced by 'the gravest'.

³² 'persist' replaced by 'purpose to persevere'.

³³ Insertion of 'some' before 'priests'.

³⁴ 'Grievous' replaced by 'the gravest'.

each for his own diocese, hereby forbid³⁵, under pain of suspension, *ipso facto*, reserved³⁶ to the Ordinary, any priest to advocate or encourage this revolt,³⁷ publicly or privately.

Our people will observe that in all this there is no question of mere politics, but of what is morally right or wrong according to the Divine Law, in certain principles and in a certain series of acts, whether carried out for political purposes or otherwise. What we condemn is the armed campaign now being carried on against the Government set up by the nation. If any section in the community have a grievance, or disapprove of the National Government, they have the elections to fall back upon, and such constitutional action as is recognised by God and civilised society. If their political views are founded on wisdom they will succeed sooner or later; but one thing is certain, the Hand of Providence will not be forced nor their cause advanced by irreligion and crime.

It may perhaps be said that in this our teaching we wound the strong feelings of many of our people. That we know, and the thought is an agony³⁸ to us. But we must teach the Truth³⁹ in this⁴⁰ grave crisis, no matter what the consequences. It is not for want of sympathy with any part of our flock that we interfere, but from a deep and painful sense of our duty to God, to our people, and out of true charity to the young men themselves specially concerned. Let it not be said that this our teaching is due to political bias, and a desire to help one political party.⁴¹ If that⁴² were true, we were unworthy of our sacred office. Our religion, in such a supposition,⁴³ were⁴⁴ a mockery and a sham. We issue this Pastoral Letter under the gravest⁴⁵ sense of our responsibility, mindful of the charge⁴⁶ laid upon us by our Divine Master to preach His doctrine and safeguard His sacred rule of faith and morals at any cost. We must, in the words of St. Peter, “Obey God rather than men⁴⁷”.

With all earnestness we appeal to the leaders of⁴⁸ this saddest revolt to rise above their own feelings, to remember the claims of God and the sufferings of the people on⁴⁹ their conscience, and to abandon methods which they now know, beyond the shadow of doubt⁵⁰, are un-Catholic and immoral, and look to the realisation of their ideals along lines sanctioned by Divine Law and the usages of well-ordered⁵¹ society. Let them not think that⁵² we are insensible to their feelings.⁵³ We think of them with compassion, carrying as they do on their shoulders the⁵⁴ heavy responsibility for what is now happening in Ireland. Once more we beg

³⁵ Insertion of ‘each for his own diocese, hereby’ before ‘forbid’.

³⁶ ‘Reserved’ instead of ‘reserve’.

³⁷ ‘to advocate or encourage this revolt’ replaced ‘who advocates such doctrine’.

³⁸ Insertion of ‘an’ before ‘agony’.

³⁹ Insertion of ‘the’ before ‘Truth’.

⁴⁰ ‘This’ replaced ‘in such a’.

⁴¹ This sentence began a new paragraph in the press version but not in the pamphlet.

⁴² ‘that’ instead of ‘it’.

⁴³ Insertion of parenthetical commas.

⁴⁴ ‘were’ instead of ‘was’.

⁴⁵ ‘the gravest’ replaced ‘grievous’.

⁴⁶ ‘charge’ replaced ‘charges’.

⁴⁷ ‘men’ instead of ‘man’.

⁴⁸ ‘of’ instead of ‘in’.

⁴⁹ ‘on’ instead of ‘in’.

⁵⁰ ‘a’ before ‘doubt’ omitted.

⁵¹ Insertion of ‘the usages of well-ordered’ before ‘society’.

⁵² Insertion of ‘that’.

⁵³ This sentence began a new paragraph in the press version but not in the pamphlet.

⁵⁴ ‘a’ replaced ‘the’.

and implore⁵⁵ the young men of⁵⁶ this movement, in the name of God, to return to their innocent homes and make, if necessary, the big sacrifice of their own⁵⁷ feelings for the common good. And surely it is no humiliation, having done their best, to abide by the verdict of Ireland.

We know that some of them are troubled and held back by the oath they took. A lawful oath is indeed a sacred bond between God and man; but no oath can bind any man to carry on a warfare against his own country in circumstances forbidden by the law of God. It would be an offence to God and to the very nature of an oath to say so.

We, therefore, hope and pray that they will take advantage of the Government's present offer, and make peace with their own country, a peace which will bring both happiness and honour to themselves and joy to Ireland generally, and to the friends of Ireland all over the world.

In this lamentable upheaval the moral sense of the people has, we fear, been badly shaken. We read with horror of the many murders⁵⁸ recorded in the Press. With feelings of shame we observe that when country houses and public buildings were destroyed, the furniture and other fittings were seized and carried away by people in the neighbourhood. We remind them that all such property belongs in justice to the original owners, and now must be preserved for and restored to them by those who hold it⁵⁹.

We desire to impress on the people the duty of supporting the national Government, whatever it is, to set their faces resolutely against disorder, to pay their taxes, rents, and annuities, and to assist the Government in every possible way to restore order and establish peace. Unless they learn to do so they can have no Government, and if they have no Government, they can have no nation.

As human effort is fruitless without God's blessing, we exhort our priests and people to continue the prayers already ordered, and we direct that the remaining October devotions be offered up for peace. We also direct that a Novena to the Irish Saints, for the same end, be said in all public churches and oratories, and in semi-public oratories, to begin on the 28th of October and end on November the 5th, in preparation for the Feast of all the Irish Saints. These Novena devotions, in addition to the Rosary and Benediction, may include a special prayer for Ireland and the Litany of the Irish Saints.

- ✠ MICHAEL CARDINAL LOGUE⁶⁰, Archbishop of Armagh.
- ✠ EDWARD⁶¹, Archbishop of Dublin.
- ✠ JOHN⁶², Archbishop of Cashel.
- ✠ THOMAS⁶³, Archbishop of Tuam.

⁵⁵ 'beg and implore' replaced 'wish to appeal to'.

⁵⁶ 'of' replaced 'in'.

⁵⁷ Insertion of 'own'.

⁵⁸ Omission of 'unauthorised' before 'murders'.

⁵⁹ 'It' instead of 'them'.

⁶⁰ Michael Logue (1840-1924); bishop of Raphoe 1879; archbishop of Armagh 1887; cardinal 1893: see Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Logue, Michael', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.004875.v1>.

⁶¹ Edward Joseph Byrne (1872-1940); auxiliary bishop of Dublin 1920; archbishop of Dublin 1921: see Anne Dolan, 'Byrne, Edward Joseph', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.001326.v1>.

⁶² John Harty (1867-1946); archbishop of Cashel 1914: see Bridget Hourican, 'Harty, John', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.003842.v1>.

⁶³ Thomas Patrick Gilmartin (1861-1939); bishop of Clonfert 1909; archbishop of Tuam 1918: see Kieran Waldron, *The archbishops of Tuam, 1700-2000* (Tuam, 2008), pp 100-30.

- ✕ PATRICK⁶⁴, Coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh.
- ✕ ABRAHAM⁶⁵, Bishop of Ossory.
- ✕ ROBERT⁶⁶, Bishop of Cloyne.
- ✕ JOSEPH⁶⁷, Bishop of Ardagh.
- ✕ PATRICK⁶⁸, Bishop of Kildare.
- ✕ DENIS⁶⁹, Bishop of Ross.
- ✕ THOMAS⁷⁰, Bishop of Galway.
- ✕ MICHAEL⁷¹, Bishop of Killaloe.
- ✕ LAURENCE⁷², Bishop of Meath
- ✕ CHARLES⁷³, Bishop of Derry.
- ✕ PATRICK⁷⁴, Bishop of Clogher.
- ✕ PATRICK⁷⁵, Bishop of Kilmore.
- ✕ PATRICK⁷⁶, Bishop of Achonry.
- ✕ JAMES⁷⁷, Bishop of Killala.
- ✕ BERNARD⁷⁸, Bishop of Elphin.
- ✕ DANIEL⁷⁹, Bishop of Cork.
- ✕ JOSEPH⁸⁰, Bishop of Down and Connor.
- ✕ BERNARD⁸¹, Bishop of Waterford.
- ✕ EDWARD⁸², Bishop of Dromore.
- ✕ CHARLES⁸³, Bishop of Kerry.

⁶⁴ Patrick O'Donnell (1856–1927); bishop of Raphoe 1888; co-adjutor archbishop of Armagh 1922 with succession 1924; cardinal 1925: see Patrick Maume, 'O'Donnell, Patrick', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006698.v1>. William MacNeely succeeded O'Donnell in Raphoe in 1923.

⁶⁵ Abraham Brownrigg (1836–1928): bishop of Ossory 1884: see C. J. Woods, 'Brownrigg, Abraham', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.001064.v1>.

⁶⁶ Robert Browne (1844–1935); bishop of Cloyne 1894: see Helen Andrews, 'Browne, Robert', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.001046.v1>.

⁶⁷ Joseph Hoare (1842–1927); auxiliary bishop of Sydney 1888; bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise 1895.

⁶⁸ Patrick Foley (1858–1926); coadjutor of Kildare and Leighlin 1896 with succession in the same year.

⁶⁹ Denis Kelly (1852–1924); bishop of Ross 1897: see Patrick Maume, 'Kelly, Denis', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.000156.v1>.

⁷⁰ Thomas O'Dea (1858–1923); bishop of Clonfert 1903; bishop of Galway & Kilmacduagh and apostolic administrator of Kilfenora 1909.

⁷¹ Michael Fogarty (1859–1955); bishop of Killaloe 1904: see Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Fogarty, Michael', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.003307.v1>.

⁷² Laurence Gaughran (1842–1928); bishop of Meath 1906.

⁷³ Charles McHugh (1856–1926); bishop of Derry 1907: see Patrick H. Arkinson, 'McHugh, Charles', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.005221.v1>.

⁷⁴ Patrick McKenna (1868–1942); bishop of Clogher 1909.

⁷⁵ Patrick Finegan (1858–1937); bishop of Kilmore 1910.

⁷⁶ Patrick Morrisroe (1869–1946); bishop of Achonry 1911.

⁷⁷ James Naughton (1865–1950); bishop of Kilalla 1912.

⁷⁸ Bernard Coyne (1854–1926); bishop of Elphin 1913.

⁷⁹ Daniel Cohalan (1858–1952); auxiliary bishop of Cork 1914 with succession 1916: see C. J. Woods, 'Cohalan (Coghlan), Daniel', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.001812.v1>.

⁸⁰ Joseph MacRory (1861–1945); bishop of Down and Connor 1915; archbishop of Armagh 1928; cardinal 1929: see Brendan Lynn, 'MacRory, Joseph', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.005291.v1>.

⁸¹ Bernard Hackett (1863–1932); bishop of Waterford and Lismore 1916.

⁸² Edward Mulhern (1863–1943); bishop of Dromore 1916.

⁸³ Charles O'Sullivan (1858–1927); bishop of Kerry 1918.

- ✘ WILLIAM⁸⁴, Bishop of Ferns.
- ✘ DENIS⁸⁵, Bishop of Limerick.
- ✘ THOMAS⁸⁶, Bishop of Clonfert.
- ✘ JAMES⁸⁷, Coadjutor Bishop of Ossory.

DRAFT

⁸⁴ William Codd (1864-1938); bishop of Ferns 1918.

⁸⁵ Denis Hallinan (1849-1923); bishop of Limerick 1918.

⁸⁶ Thomas O'Doherty (1877–1936); bishop of Clonfert 1919; bishop of Galway & Kilmacduagh and apostolic administrator of Kilfenora 1923: see Patrick Maume, 'O'Doherty, Thomas', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006682.v1>.

⁸⁷ James Downey (1874-1927); coadjutor bishop of Ossory 1922.