

Introduction

A historical understanding of the relationship between economics and religion is crucial to comprehend how and why modern societies developed the way they did. Policymakers and economists frame economic progress through growth and productivity measurements,(1) while overlooking the moral influences that shape such trends. This project will revise these assumptions and show how the objectives aimed at by those who seek to direct economic progress are not, and have not been, simply aimed at growth.

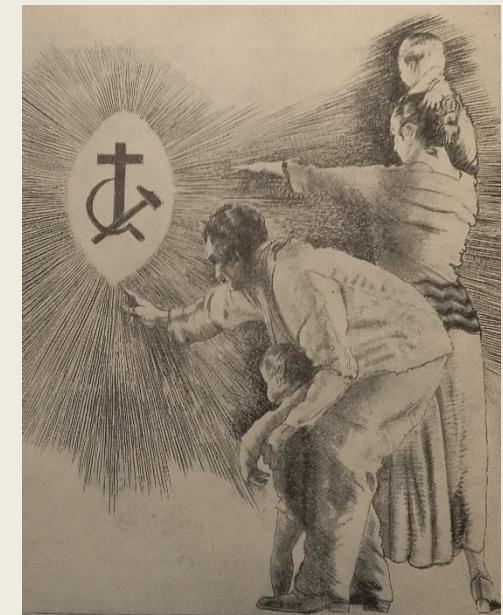
Despite the identification of cultural Catholicism as an explanatory factor behind weak economic performances in countries on Europe's periphery,(2) historians and economists have failed to conceptualise a political economy of Catholicism. Using Ireland during 1850-1937 as a case study, and building upon my study reframing Irish economic history,(3) this project addresses this omission by examining an overlooked model of Catholic economic progress – corporatism.

Corporatism emerged across mid-nineteenth century Catholic Europe as a socio-political response to a sense of crisis brought about by rapid industrialisation, emigration, and changing family structures. While historians and sociologists note the dominance of the Irish Church's moral authority, they have failed to ask how this authority was grounded in the economic sphere. The project will refocus the historical analysis of Catholic authority by exploring its influence upon the complex interplay of mentalités and activities that formed the corporatist economy. Therefore, a wide array of case-studies will be analysed. For example, the work of female religious orders that established local factories will be considered alongside the clergy's role within university economics departments. Such an all-encompassing approach is necessary as it allows for a conceptualisation of corporatism that exists throughout Irish society while shedding light upon shifting structures of Irish class and gender during this period.

Research Questions

I will answer several fundamental questions about how a corporatist economy coalesced in Ireland whilst I set out to achieve the above:

- How central were the ideals and values espoused by religious institutions and communities in shaping public debates on the nature of the economy in Ireland?
- To what extent did corporatism become embedded within Irish culture and in what ways was it normalised and reproduced?
- What types of socioeconomic institutions and welfare services were created by those organisations and individuals who laid the foundations for corporatism?
- How did these institutions shape and influence the structure of the modern Irish state and the type of economic policies promoted?

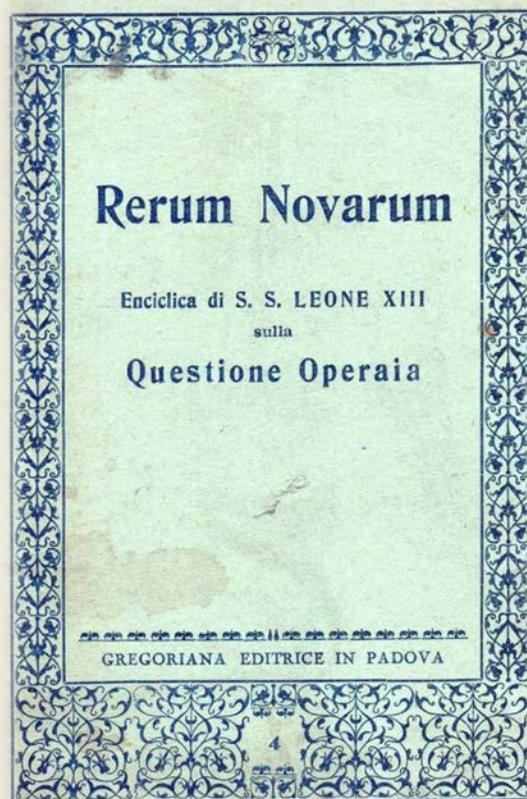


Front cover of Joseph Hanly's *The National Ideal* (1931) by Séan Keating

Objectives and Outputs

In this project I aim to identify and map the sources of corporatist knowledge and activity and understand how they became embedded in Ireland. Corporatism's roots are discernible in the impact of Catholic social teaching upon economic thought, but also in the role played by religious orders in founding local industries and welfare services; the proliferation of co-operative businesses and financial institutions; and the spread of expertise via the diaspora.

- Produce a database of the corporatist economy in Ireland. 'Measuring Corporatism', will provide a statistical basis for the conceptualisation of corporatism.
- Two articles during the Fellowship. The first will focus upon intersections between Catholic social teaching and economic progress in late-nineteenth century Ireland. A second article will consider how corporatist enterprises framed gender roles in Ireland.
- A proposal for my second monograph to be submitted, entitled *The Emergence of a Catholic Economy in Ireland, 1850-1937*.
- In the final year I will organise an interdisciplinary conference, 'The Legacies of Corporatism'.



Pope Leo XIII's Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) issued at height of Industrial revolution offered a Catholic social commentary on the capitalism and socialism, relations between workers and employers, and the importance of private property and its relationship to the family.