

**Losing my religion: the media's role in the decline of religion
and rise of secularism in Ireland**

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism and Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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Abstract

This research focuses on changing religious values in Ireland. It examines the rise in secularism and the rapid decrease in church participation. The role that media may have played in the decline of religious belief in Ireland is the focus of this study.

In the early twentieth century, religious belief played a much greater role in Irish society than it does today. The 1901 Census showed that the majority of Irish people were professed Roman Catholics. However, the 2016 Census showed a marked decline. The percentage of the population who identified as Catholic in the Census has fallen from 84.2 % in 2011 to 78.3 % in 2016. The 'no religion' group rose up from 5.9 in 2011 to almost 10 per cent in 2016. This makes 'no religion' the second largest group in this category, behind Roman Catholics.

Also noted in this research is that in Ireland, there have been numerous reports of the abuse of children by clerical perpetrators, which the media reported on regularly. These played a major role in undermining Roman Catholic Church authority. It tended to push people away from religious belief.

The media in Ireland, by doing some documentaries and investigative reporting, had played a crucial role in raising awareness of clerical child abuse, thus putting a lot of pressure on the Irish government to take action on this issue.

It changed the public's opinion on the matter of trust and loyalty to the Catholic Church. The research shows how media played a crucial role in public perception of religion, in part by the way in which the news was framed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Belief in God has been a mainstay of life in Ireland (as in most societies) since early times. Some research suggests that, today, Ireland has the highest percentage of practicing Christians in Western Europe. A common perception of southern Ireland is one where faith and religion was unquestioned and going to Mass and praying was the norm. Religion was dominant in society for centuries and since the 19th Century, the Roman Catholic Church has been a huge influence.

The last data of the European Values Study (2008) has shown that the proportion of Irish people who believe in God decreased from 97% in 1981 and 1990, to 95.5% in 1999, and to 91.8% in 2008. Some core Christian beliefs (for example: life after death, heaven, hell and sin) had similar declines of about ten percentage points in each. Very significant is data about Church attendance, which shows a severe church-oriented decline: weekly attendance (or more regularly) approximately halving from 82% in 1981 to 44% in 2008. This change principally occurred between the 1990 and 1999 surveys. Furthermore, 14% of the population never attended church in 2008, from 4.5% in 1981.

The Roman Catholic Church was the most important institution in the Republic of Ireland for most of the 20th century. Its power was omnipresent. However, recent data from the Central Statistics Office (2016) shows that while Republic of Ireland remains a predominantly Catholic church, the percentage of the population who identified as Catholic on Census has fallen from 84.2 % in 2011 to 78.3 % in 2016. On the other hand, there has been a huge rise in the number with 'no religion', which grew by 73.6 %. Thus, those with no religion account now for almost 10 % of the population. It rose up from 5.9 in 2011 to almost 10 per cent in 2016. The Census revealed also 2000 devotees of the Jedi (Star Wars)

religion and some other spaghetti worshipers. Clearly, the southern Irish no longer accept religion without question. To what extent do Irish media reflect this questioning attitude?

The aim of this study is to analyze the relationship between the media and the dominant church in Ireland and also how the relationship between these two has changed over the last number of decades.

The research questions I pose are:

- a. The last Census 2016 indicates that religious belief in the Republic of Ireland is in continuing decline. How do we explain this decline and what appears to be a rise of secularism?
- b. What role did media in Ireland play in a decline of religious belief here, if any?
- c. Was the media a bridge between the church and the state?
- d. How important were newspaper articles or TV and radio programs about sexual abuse scandals in this process?
- e. What events, if any, were pivotal in changing that relationship?
- f. Is there a gap in the research or is the relationship between religion and media in Ireland studied sufficiently?
- g. What is the future of religious belief in this country?

Chapter one gives an introduction to the subject, explaining the research aim, objectives and questions, including a short outline of every chapter.

In the second chapter, I examined Irish and international literature available on the aforementioned subject and provided a picture of major questions investigated in this research. Most of them focused on explaining the historic, cultural and social background that pushed people away from the churches in Ireland. I pictured religion in the Irish context, analysed what is the core of people's belief and that during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Catholic Church had a monopoly position in the religious field in Ireland. The second chapter also analysed other researches position (O'Doherty, Kenny, Donnelly, Inglis) in relation to the link between the media and the loss of religion in Ireland. In conclusion of the second chapter, I explained that the linkage is not studied sufficiently and the crucial role that media has played in this process has yet to be investigated.

Chapter three focuses on the research methodology. I used a mix of content analyses, both qualitative and quantitative, including case studies and interviews with journalists and experts to probe the current state of religion in Ireland. One to one interviews were conducted with:

- a. Michael Nugent, *Atheist Ireland*
- b. Brian Whiteside, *Humanist Association of Ireland*
- c. David Quinn, *The IONA Institute*
- d. Joe Armstrong, *author, editor and journalist*

In the third chapter, I did a quantitative analysis of the last 16 years of Census, starting with 2006 and ending with 2016. The data shows a dramatic decline of people's belief and the increase in secularism, agnosticism, atheism and people with 'no religion'.

Chapter number four contains my analysis and findings. A book of a great importance I mention in this chapter is *Twin Pupils: The church and media in*

modern Ireland. It discusses the role of the media and the Churches in Ireland and contains clerical representative's statements. One to one interviews conclusions are analyzed in this chapter, along with Fr Oliver's O'Grady sexual abuse case. He became notorious and is constant eyes of the Irish press and overseas due to the publication of a stunning documentary, in which he luxuriously describes his abuses (2005). I analyse how tradition media reported on him versus scandal media.

In the last chapter, I concluded some key aspects that led to the rise of secularism in Ireland and what role did media play in this process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Short overview

There are few studies and publications that delve into the matter of religious belief and the rise of secularism in the Republic of Ireland. Such research is focused more on explaining the historic, cultural and social background that pushed people away from churches. The link between religion and the media and, specifically, the role that media may have played in the decline of religious belief in Ireland is the focus of this study.

There are not enough studies and materials that would explain the rise of secularism and fall of religion in Ireland. However, the most important research on the market is by Inglis (1987), Kenny (1997), Hornsby-Smith (1987), O'Doherty (2008), Donnelly (2000). I will analyze this work in this chapter.

The aim of this chapter is to examine Irish and other international literature available and to indicate the questions posed in this research. In the conclusion of this literature review, I will demonstrate unique features of the research and how it differs from previous studies.

2.2. The core of people's belief

To understand why it seems that a country has 'lost its religion', we have to begin by asking ourselves why do people believe and what is the core of belief systems? Emile Durkheim, who is considered the father of sociology, established that religion is not divinely inspired but is a product of society. He sought to identify what effects religious beliefs had within a society.

Durkheim (1973) argued that religion was a primarily source of solidarity for people living within a community. It provided authority figures, and established

morals and social norms held collectively by all. Religion provides social control, cohesion, and a purpose for people, as well as another means of communication and gathering point for individuals to interact and reaffirm social norms. His book 'The Elementary forms of the Religious Life' (1912) stands as one of the classics in the sociology of religion and within sociology itself. For him, religion is not only a social institution amongst other; it is of great significance in explaining society and other phenomena.

Sacred things are simply collective ideals that have fixed themselves on material objects. This system of conceptions is not purely imaginary and hallucinatory, for the moral forces that these things awaken in us are quite real - as real as the ideas that words recall to us after they have served to form the ideas. (1973:159)

Durkheim shows how religion gathers people together in the form of religious services. He is saying that by doing so, religion is able to reaffirm collective morals and beliefs in the minds of all members of a collectivity. He also noted that religion divides the world into sacred and profane. Therefore, people's tendency would be to become and remain a part of society, to be appreciated and valued.

In 'The Division of Labour' (1893), he emphasized that religion acts like a strong force among individuals, making them believe certain things or behave in particular ways. He explains that there has yet to be a definition of god, but any attempt to give one would not make god the main element since other religious practices make no references to any gods. In his early works, he emphasized the link between the society and religion, but later on he comes back to this theory by introducing the concept of social control. This is reflected in his later work, 'Suicide' (1897).

Durkheim's theories on the sociology of religion cover vast topics and give significant insights. He did not raise the question of the origin of the religion but devoted his labour in finding an answer in society.

2.3. Religion in the Irish context

Following Durkheim's theories on the sociology of religion, Malachi O'Doherty (2008) argues that in Ireland, religion was predominantly social. If one attended Church, it was a great expression of membership of a society. Ireland is losing its faith later but much more rapidly than any most European countries. O'Doherty considered that it is due to the fact that 'we had more religions to start with'. (2008:27)

O'Doherty argues that other countries around Ireland had gone through a similar process, but the secularization in Ireland was delayed.

In his book 'Empty pulpits', he noted that years ago, if somebody – say a tourist - drove on a Sunday morning through the Irish countryside, he or she would have been shocked by vast crowds of people entering or leaving Roman Catholic churches, attending mass at least once a week.

Placing his study in a historical context, he explained that in Ireland, religion was a declaration of belonging, a belonging to a family, a community, a social group. In the 1950s, nearly all southern Irish people were practising Roman Catholics and the mass was not only a religious rite. It played the role of bonding the whole community together (links to Durkheim's theory of social role of religion).

Everyone wanted to be seen and appreciated. On top of all, the priest was the leader and the spiritual guru in the community and had a terrific influence over everyone. His power was apparent in political, economic and cultural spheres of society. But people in Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s experienced a collapse of tradition, not faith, suggests O'Doherty.

It is important here to understand the role the priest played in the Republic of Ireland. The most important decisions about the ordering of society were taken by clergy – people went to priest for advice and counselling services. A saintly circle surrounded the priest and clergy and all their advice was followed with reverence. Secularisation, on the other hand, has brought a shift away from church and its spiritual leaders towards other social institutions, one of which is press, radio and television.

O'Doherty (2008) bases his insights on Durkheim's theories on the sociology of religion, emphasizing the important link between religion and community. In his view, in the Republic of Ireland, religion played the basic human need for socialisation and bonded communities together. An agricultural economy encouraged conservative stability. Poverty and emigration after the great Famine (1845-1850) discouraged non-conformity.

O'Doherty argues that Ireland did not start to give up on religion on account of the wave of sex abuse disclosures from 1990s that implicated supposedly celibate clergy. It was a process already underway. O'Doherty cites here Gemma Hussey's book 'Ireland today: anatomy of a changing state' (1995). She explained that between 1970 and 1990, the proportion of teachers who belonged to religious orders in Ireland had dropped from a third to a tenth. Hussey pointed out that sexual repression was at the heart of people's scepticism about the church. Same sex sexual activity was decriminalized in the Republic of Ireland in 1993.

Another reason invoked by O'Doherty, apart from changing the view of sex, is migration from villages to big cities. People started moving from small cities and villages to towns to obtain better employment opportunities. This put a start on the process of secularisation in the early 1950s, in his view. People began to distance themselves from religious authorities and found social fulfilment in other activities like going to the cinema, going out, visiting restaurants etc.

It is believed that the turning point in Ireland with reference to losing religious belief is in the 1960s and it is linked to the Roman Catholic ban in artificial contraception. The reiteration of a law on contraception by the Pope in 1968 began a drift away from the Church. Legislation to relax the legal ban on contraception was introduced in 1979. It was further relaxed in 1985 and in 1991.

Humanae Vitae is a document on the regulation of births and also prohibition of artificial contraception. The document stated that artificial contraception was wrong and that sexual contact is a necessity only of so called 'the procreation of human life'. This document, released by Pope Paul VI, is considered to be blamed for a fall in people's attendance of mass, particularly among young people.

In an article for the Guardian in October 2003, Steve Bradshaw mentioned that the Catholic Church told people in countries stricken by Aids not to use condoms 'because they have tiny holes in them, through which HIV can pass - potentially exposing thousands of people to risk.' (Bradshaw, 2003)

The president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Family, Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, launched himself in controversial scientific arguments against The World Health Organisation. 'The Aids virus is roughly 450 times smaller than the spermatozoon. The spermatozoon can easily pass through the 'net' that is formed by the condom.' (Bradshaw, 2003) The World Health Organisation has condemned the Vatican's statements.

On Sunday 29th July 2018, was the 50th anniversary of the publication of this document by Pope Paul. Journalist Joe Little, a Religious and Social Affairs Correspondent for RTE, writes for the online version that in Ireland, the reactions to the document were mixed (2018).

It was not until 1979 that Charles Haughey steered legislation through the Oireachtas allowing for the sale of contraceptives for 'bona fide' family planning. This meant that contraceptives could be provided to married couples only and on prescription from a medical practitioner. It was dubbed 'an Irish solution to an Irish problem'. (Little, 2018)

Little mentioned, based on the Central Statistics Office data, that in 1971, eight years before the first papal visit in the Republic of Ireland, a quarter of women in the 25-29 age group gave birth. But by 1998 that had fallen to one-tenth. Same figures shows that in 1962, there were over 2,000 births to mothers who had 10 or more previous children. There were only 55 such births in 1998. 'While the overall birth rate remained relatively stable from 1949 until the early 1980s, there was a dramatic fall after that', he explained (Little, 2018).

In an article published in *The Irish Times* on the fifty years ban on artificial contraception (28th July 2018), author Patsy McGarry noted that *Humanae Vitae* provoked the greatest challenge to papal authority since the Reformation, generating 'a ferocious reaction among millions of practising Catholics'. It was so intense that it 'led to Pope Paul not publishing another encyclical in the remaining 10 years of his pontificate'. (McGarry, 2018).

O'Doherty considers that as part of collapse of interest in religion in Ireland,

'it was now okay to say plainly not only that there is no god but that those who think there is one insulted the intelligence of the rest of us and demean themselves.'

The promoters of his argument would be the New Atheists Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett and others.

Another significant study providing historical context is Mary's Kenny 'Goodbye to Catholic Ireland' (1997). As Kenny says, 'in Ireland, the faith came first, then came land'. (1997:13)

From historical point of view, Kenny says that once, Irish people might have used Catholicism as a cultural badge, to distinguish themselves from the English. 'Now they would say they don't need that kind of fig-leaf any more. They have more confidence in themselves.' (1997:13)

An important chapter in Kenny's book analysed the influence of scandals of different priests. Kenny says it is hard to know what aspect of these scandals upset the public more: the sexual conduct itself, particularly with regard to minors, the way in which the Church authorities had sought to keep such problems under cover, by shunting priests around or sending them for psychoanalysis, or the money issue itself. But for Kenny the consequence were very clear: 'one began to look on priests with different eyes'. (1997:45)

Between 2005 and 2010 for instance, discussion of child abuse in the Republic of Ireland focused on abuse perpetrated by priests and members of religious orders. This attention is largely a consequence of three different and complex reports, as Inglis later explained:

- a 2005 report examining abuse in the Roman Catholic diocese of Ferns in County Wexford
- the Ryan Commission's mammoth report on institutional abuse which, published in 2009, received coverage throughout the world
- a report that was produced the same year and examined the handling of complaints of child sexual abuse by a "representative sample" of priests in the Dublin diocese during 1975 to 2004.

Kenny saw a direct connection between revelation of sex scandals by media organisations and the loss of trust in the Church.

'In the wake of the priestly scandals, all surveys showed a decline in trust of the Church's credibility and in the practice of faith in Ireland. The outside

world too, likes Ireland all the better for no longer being a 'backward' and 'priest-ridden' place.' (1997:64)

Kenny also highlighted that along with religion, the Irish language has failed. 'English is our language – Irish is a charming ornament' and

'we are all fond of it in a sentimental way, and it is used on radio and television, and sounds more endearing and we would remove none of it from the street signs, but it is a fiction that it is the real language of the country, for it is not'. (1997:75)

In conclusion, Kenny wrote that Catholicism in Ireland, as it was once, is dead now, and the future of it is unclear. But of course, the author thinks spirituality remains, 'as indeed it does in all Celtic people: the annual pilgrimages, the visitation to the holy places, and the funeral rites according to Mother Church remain'. (1997:86)

2.3. The Church and the 'Moral Monopoly'

Some researchers have written on the matter in the last decade. One important author is professor Tom Inglis. In his book 'Moral Monopoly' he emphasised that the Church was not just a voluntary body to which people subscribe on the basis of their beliefs. It is a bureaucratic institution which is interested in maintaining its power and influence in society. The main message transmitted is that during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Catholic Church developed a monopoly position in the religious field in southern Ireland.

Inglis demonstrates that it has been the media that has undermined the power of the Church in recent years in the Republic of Ireland. He argues that Irish people now spend more time watching television, listening to the radio, and reading newspapers than they do engaging in religious rituals and participating in those traditional practices that sustained a commitment to Church, family and community. He wrote,

It was the media, and in particular television, that brought a constant advocacy for an individualist, consumerist, sexualized, urban lifestyle that broke the unquestioning 'respect for the cloth' and has forced the Church into giving a public account of itself. It has been the State and the media that have shattered the long nineteenth-century dominance of the Catholic Church in modern Ireland', says Inglis. (1987:34)

To understand how that dominance originated in the first place, it is necessary to retrace some of the major social transformations in Irish society in the last two hundred years.

Inglis explained why Irish Catholics adhere to the Church in the first place. It is because it helps people attain and maintain power, particularly economic possessions, occupational possessions and social prestige. He suggested that there are three main types of ethical religious behaviour in Irish society – magical practices, adherence to Church rules and regulations and individual moral responsibility.

'The power of the Church has derived from a maintenance of magical practices, both formally and informally within the Church, together with an ability to confine the definition of what is right and wrong to its own teachings, rules and regulations.' (1987:98)

Therefore, one of the reasons for the persistence of the Catholic Church in modern Ireland is its ability to reconcile the three types of religious behaviour and to avoid the rational systematization of ethics that occurs in certain forms of Protestantism.

The difference between Irish Catholics and Catholics in other Western European societies is, in his opinion, 'the persistence of many magical and devotional practices and the general acceptance of the Church as the legislator and arbiter of morality'. (1987:98)

He also examined other reasons Irish remained committed to the Church and the Church's moral power upon political and economic life in Ireland. and how the Church's power has been gradually undermined by the media. 'Being Irish and being Catholic had become synonymous'. (1987:98)

Inglis explained the ethos of the Catholic Church, which in his opinion is to make people surrender to the institution and its rules and regulations. 'The basis of social prestige is engagement in social practices which make one the same as everyone else'. (1987:102)

Later in the book, Inglis examined how the Church became so powerful over the years and the mechanism by which the power was constantly maintained. The Church first emerged as a power during the 19th century when the English State sought to pacify and control the Irish population by attending Anti Catholic penal laws. This involved encouraging and supporting the Roman Catholic Church.

After a series of conflicts and compromises with Rome and the Irish hierarchy, it gradually handed the task of social control over to the Church, whose organizational strength had increased rapidly during the later half of the nineteenth century.

The growth of the Church was also based on an interest among upper and middle class Irish Catholics in becoming as civilised and morally respectable as others across Europe.

In the process of importing the civilizing process in Ireland, the Church gained control of many of the buildings. The development of the Church's power was related to the adoption of a new sexual morality which helped develop a system of stem-family practices, linked to an economic interest. (1987:95)

Explaining how this process happened and how it was maintained, Inglis puts an important accent on women in particular.

Having become dependent on the Church for power in the home, it was the mother who instilled the moral discipline necessary to sustain a new form of family life, who transformed houses into respectable homes. (1987:99)

The fact that Ireland was a rural society promoted conservatism. Urbanisation and industrialisation, combined with communication (TV in particular) started a process of modernisation.

Understanding the mother's role is crucial. We have to understand that the mother is a vital link in the Catholic formation of each new generation. Most often because of the mother, the children (small or adolescents) maintain their adherence to the Church in later life. Historically, in Ireland, the mother is held responsible for the social and religion promotion of her children.

Eamon Maher writes in 'The Church and its Spire' (2011) that the State and the Catholic Church worked together to control the population with violence not only in the industrial schools, but the home as well. Maher considers the father of the home was the unquestionable authority supported by the Church and state.

Maher quotes journalist Fintan O'Toole of the Irish Times:

The words "Irish Catholic" did not denote merely a person of specific faith born in a specific country. They also had come to stand for a country, a culture, a politics. Catholicism in Ireland has been a matter of public identity more than of private faith. For most of its history, the Republic of Ireland was essentially a Catholic State, one in which the limits of law and of behavior were set by Church orthodoxy and the beliefs of Catholic bishops. (2011:26)

2.4. The link between the media and the loss of religion

O'Doherty and Inglis argued that Church played a major role in all fields, like education, health and social welfare. The media's message was often in direct opposition to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Inglis in particular has argued

that the development of mass communications has eroded the power of Church. He also observed:

It was the introduction of a national television service at the beginning of 1960s and the wide dissemination of American and English programmes which did more than anything else to break through the iron case of censorship (Censorship of Films Act in 1923 and Censorship of Publications Act in 1929). (1987:57)

The media portrayed lifestyles in which religion had little or no importance. Families started to watch TV together instead on kneeling down for prayer. Television brought the sophisticated glossy image of urban life into the heartland of rural Ireland. Modern media shattered the myth that it is bad luck to criticize a priest or the Church. It has shown there is freedom outside of the rules of the Church.

An important paper in this subject is an article from 2000 by Susie Donnelly and Tom Inglis, 'The Media and the Catholic Church in Ireland: Reporting clerical child sex abuse' (in *Journal of Contemporary Religion*: 2010).

Donnelly and Inglis (2010) examined the relation between the Catholic Church and media, arguing that the media played two significant roles in the secularization of Ireland. In an article for the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, the authors say that the roles of domination have been swept away. During the latter half of the twentieth century, it was the media which played the major role in shaping morality.

An important step was made from early 1980s, when the state began to pass legislation in opposition to Church teachings, such as making contraceptives available. The media became more influential during the 1960s, with the advent of television.

The link between religion and the media and specifically the role of the media in the decline of people's belief was not studied sufficiently, they say. 'The absence of research is linked to an absence of a theoretical model within which macro long-term processes of structural transformations can be linked to changes at the micro level in pattern of religious belief and practice.' (2010:6)

Donnelly and Inglis suggest that secularization in Ireland is directly linked to the growth of the media and the way in which it has reported and challenged religious teachings. Media particularly is now open to criticize and investigate Church's activities and not see it as a sacred institution. It has the courage to write investigations and documentaries that expose a hideous reality of abuse once well hidden.

Donnelly and Inglis (2000) argue that a previous domination of the Church in the field of media operated in several ways. Based on their arguments, the Church:

- Was able to ensure that the media transmitted content that was in accordance with the Church teachings. Writing anything critical about the Church was almost taboo, as a very strict censorship of books and films operated up to the mid-1960s
- Dominated the media and saw it as a servant of its needs
- Was able to secure ample coverage of its events in the media
- Has seen itself as the social conscience of Irish society though its leaders rarely engaged in discussions and debates in the media

The authors pointed out that the more the media infiltrated Irish homes, the more journalists began to influence what people did and said. Women's magazines influenced the way people understood and appreciated sexuality. Donnelly and

Inglis (2000) refer to the state's 'Stay Safe' programme implemented in primary schools in 1980s with the intent to prevent child abuse. The media had a major role in promoting the message and in raising awareness of child sex abuse. According to the researchers, it is not possible to make a direct link between cases of clerical sex abuse and the way they were presented in the media and secularisation. However, they think 'it is possible to document some dramatic changes in the nature of Irish Catholic religiosity and the decline in trust and support for the Church'. (2010:8)

For instance, they argue, in 1999, RTE broadcast a series of documentaries named 'States of Fear', investigations of institutional abuse in Ireland. The journalist's work shocked the public. Following the broadcast, the government issued a public apology to victims of child abuse. A Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse and the Residential Institution Redress Board were established. Subsequent, investigation lead to revelations of priests involved in child sex abuse.

2.4. Conclusion

As other researches has shown (O'Doherty, Kenny, Donnelly, Inglis), the Catholic Church has lost its ability to influence and control media. Until the 1990s, the Catholic Church prevented the media from honestly reporting Church affairs.

Therefore, once the sacred Temple was entered, media started to report on different priests and covered court cases involving child sex abuse. However, the linkage is an ongoing process that is not studied sufficiently. 'The absence of research is linked to an absence of a theoretical model within which macro long-term processes of structural transformations can be linked to changes at the micro level in pattern of religious belief and practice', say Donnelly and Inglis (2010:30)

I consider that the crucial role that media has played in this process has yet to be studied.

Chapter 3: Methodology

For this research, I have used a mix of content analysis, case studies and interviews with journalists and experts to probe the current state of religion in Ireland. There are several methods of researching media effects on religion, both qualitative and quantitative, including content analysis, archival research and one-to-one interviews.

3.1. Content Analysis

This research method has been used widely in different studies, applied in mixed research frameworks and employs a very wide range of techniques. Content analysis serves the purposes of quantitative and also qualitative research. This rigorous method is a suitable way to analyse documents obtained during my research course.

Merten (cited by Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter, 2000) argues that the range of procedures in content analysis is enormous, 'in terms of both analytical goals and the means or processes developed to pursue them' (p. 55). He explains that the analysis goes far beyond content, up to discourse analysis, rhetorical and narrative semiotics.

There are numerous definitions of content analysis, all reflecting the way this research method has changed during recent decades. In the light of this research, I will go with the definition provided in recent studies by Krippendorff (2004) and Neuendorf (2002). In his book 'Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology', Krippendorff refers to content analysis as both quantitative and qualitative. 'Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful matter to the contexts of their use. (2004:18)

Later in his book, he explains that the analytical constructs can be derived from:

- existing theories or practices
- the experience or knowledge of experts
- previous research (2004:173)

In an article analysing content analysis as a flexible research method, White and Marsh (2006) concluded that content analysis involves specialized procedures that allow for replication.

The findings of a good study using quantitative content analysis, therefore, do not rely solely on the authority of the researchers doing the content analysis for their acceptability' (White and Marsh, 2006, page 27).

Hence they can be subjected to independent tests and techniques for judging their validity and reliability.

Referring to qualitative content analysis, Krippendorff points out some key elements one should follow:

- a. sample text, select what is relevant
- b. unitize text, distinguish words or propositions / use quotes as examples
- c. contextualize the reading in light of what one knows about the circumstances surrounding the text
- d. have specific research questions in mind

3.2. One to one interviews

Generally, qualitative research is very broad and it includes a wide range of methods found within different disciplines. Flick (2009) writes that qualitative research is often described as a naturalistic, interpretative approach, concerned with exploring phenomena from the interior. Other authors (Denzin and Lincoln,

2011) have focused on key features such as the quality of the study, including the main questions 'why?', 'how?', 'what?' rather than the question 'how many?', that focuses solely on numbers and the processes (qualitative versus quantitative).

As part of qualitative research, we have to mention some methods (for instance semi-structured interviews or focus groups) and also the process of analysis of the data (images, graphs, surveys etc.).

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) mentioned the importance of face-to-face interviews for media research. 'They have long been claimed to provide a stronger basis for the establishment of a good rapport between the researcher and the participant.' (2003:187)

They also mentioned the disadvantages of online and telephone interviews as distinct from communicating face to face with your subjects. They quote Irvine (2010), who mentions that telephone interviews should only be an additional option for qualitative researchers, because it's different from face-to-face interviews in terms of in-depth knowledge. For my research, I have conducted two face to face interviews and two telephone interviews.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) underline some core features of the in-depth interview such as combining structure with flexibility, interaction, getting below the surface and the fact that interviews can be generative. During the conversations, new knowledge is likely to be created, which is the case of this research.

There are three types of research interviews to be mentioned in this regards: structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Bryman, 2001). For this research, I selected the semi-structured format, as it allowed me to diverge from my key questions and pursue a response in more details.

In my study, I have interviewed several experts in religion in Ireland. I asked them questions to collect their thoughts and opinions on the role of media and religion in the Republic of Ireland and the decline of religious belief.

The first expert I interviewed is journalist Joe Armstrong, who studied for the Roman Catholic priesthood, but left before ordination. Joe Armstrong is an author, editor and journalist who have spent several years writing as a columnist for the Irish Times. Armstrong is now a humanist celebrant, chaplain and writer. He reveals his experience and the path from a believer to a non-believer.

Michael Nugent of *Atheist Ireland* is the second person interviewed for this research. He is the chairperson of the advocacy group *Atheist Ireland*, a group which promotes atheism and secularism in Ireland. His approach is that the process of secularization in Ireland is quite fast at the moment and it speeded up considerably. He says the society has become more democratic and more free. People don't have to rely on religious faith for comfort.

My third interview is with Brian Whiteside of Humanist Ireland and a celebrant since 2006. He considers that the media did not play a significant role in the decline of religious belief. Whiteside explains that it's all down to education and Irish people learning to think for themselves and being more honest and more confident.

I also interviewed David Quinn of IONA Institute. In his views, we are moving towards a more individualistic model of religion, where the community of belief and the requirements of being in the community are less important to people. He also emphasizes that people who work in the media would be more secular in their mentality than the average population, and they would see religion as an obstacle to the progress.

Several other invitations for interviews were sent to different clerical representatives but all were ignored.

It's important to mention here that other researches (Silverman, 2011) emphasises that qualitative research is just a simplistic reading and interpretation of quantitative research. I used both of them to determine a theoretical framework and to do media analysis.

3.4. Quantitative analysis: Census 2006-2016

According to Central Statistics Office of Ireland, in 1961, almost 95 % of the population were Catholic, the highest recorded. In 2016, 78.3 % declared themselves Catholic. This represents the lowest recorded.

Census 2016 also revealed that persons indicating they have no religion rose to almost 10 % compared to almost 6 % in 2011. Thus, 'No religion' became the second largest group in 2016.

As Central Statistics Office data shows, in 1981, 93.1% of people were Roman Catholics, compared to 2016, when the numbers dropped to 78.3 %.

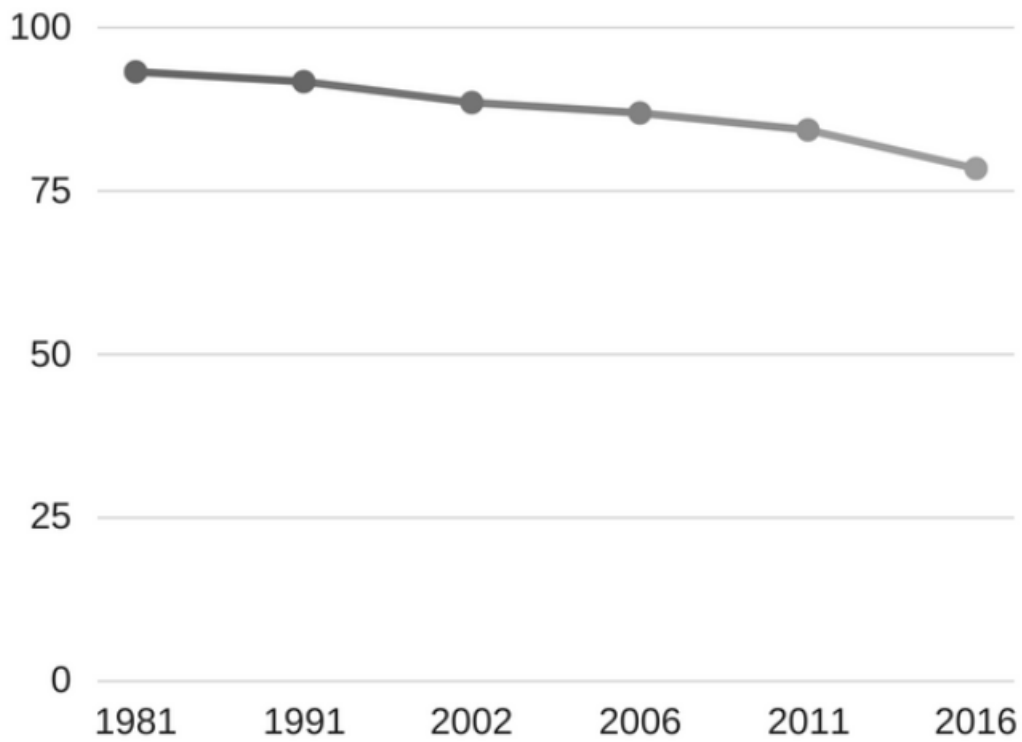


Figure 1. The number of Roman Catholics, data from Census 1981-2016. Data source: Central Statistics Office

Central Statistics Office shows a rise in the number with those with 'no religion', which grew by 73.6 %. Those with no religion now account for just fewer than 10 per cent of the population (9.8%).

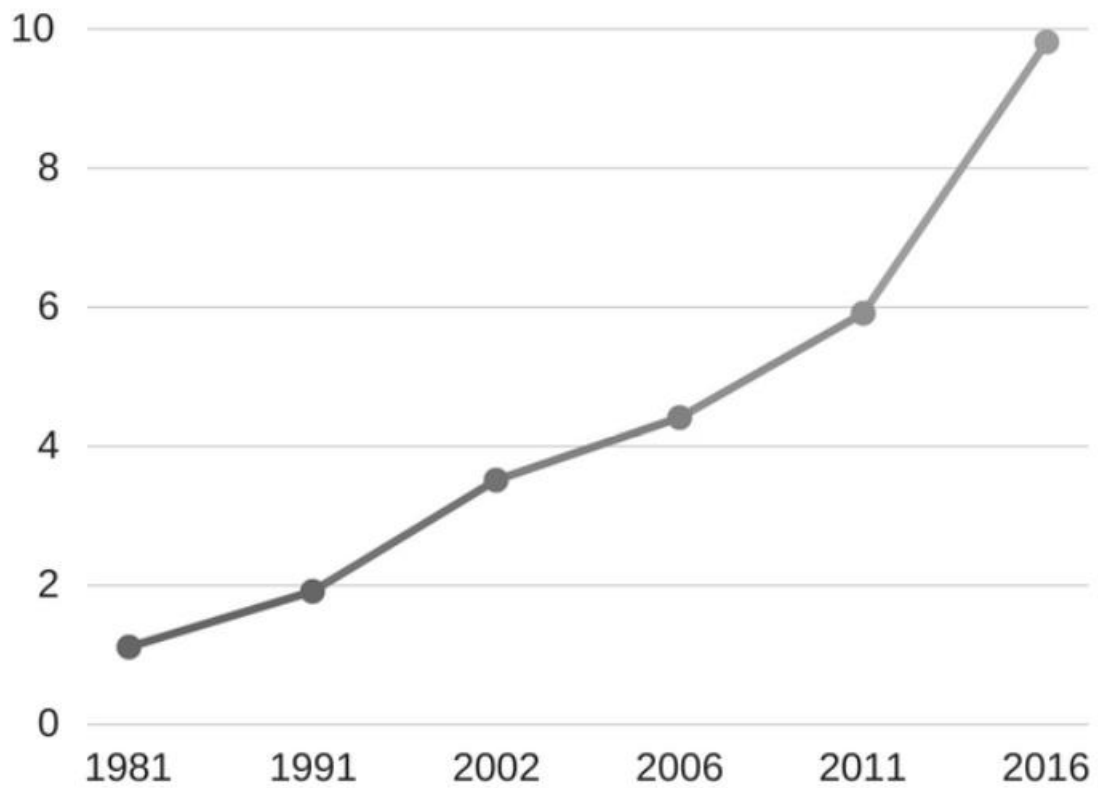


Figure 2. The number of 'No religion' group. Census 1981-2016. Data: Central Statistics Office

In Census 2016, persons indicating 'No Religion' accounted for 9.8 per cent of the population up from 5.9 per in 2011. This was an increase of 198,610 persons over the five years, bringing the total to 468,421 and making 'No Religion' the second largest group in 2016.

13 What is your religion?
 ✓ one box only.

1 Roman Catholic

2 Church of Ireland

3 Presbyterian

4 Methodist

5 Islam

6 Other, write in your RELIGION

7 No religion

Figure 3. The box asking ‘What is your religion?’ in the last Census 2016. Photo source: Atheist Ireland

3.5. The case of Fr Oliver O’Grady

I will analyze how the scandal involving Fr Oliver O’Grady was covered in the media and what impact it had. This method was introduced as a method to research in 1927 by Harold Lasswell, with initial purpose to study propaganda.

I chose this case as an example because it was and still is in the spotlight of both the Irish and international media. O’Grady was born in Ireland but immigrated to the US to work as a priest. He was deported to the Republic of Ireland in 2001, where he still resides. I will do a qualitative analysis of the documentary ‘Deliver us from Devil’, where O’Grady is one of the main characters. Later I will do a quantitative analysis of how the media reported on his case and I will demonstrate how the scandal press has emphasized strong words that attract or shock the audience.

3.6. Limitations and ethical considerations

The main limitation of this study is its small number of participants. The position of some Church representatives is missing. The research was conducted from May until July 2018 and during this time, potential interviews were either away for holidays or indicated other reasons. Besides this, here are some other limitations:

- The formulation of research aims and objectives may be too broad or a subject for a PHD thesis. It may also require a narrower approach.
- In the absence of the research approach, it is hard to demonstrate that media has a specific role in decline of religion in Ireland. The analysis will show the way media covered certain topics, but there is not a solid theoretical grounding.
- The one-to-one interviews are time consuming. Half of the respondents refused to take part in the research or ignored the request to do so.
- Being a non-native English speaker made it difficult for me to decipher some interviews and understand some accents. Being a resident in Ireland for only three years made it hard and time-consuming to understand better the social and cultural background. Raised up in Republic of Moldova, an Orthodox country and living in a Protestant family left me with a very poor knowledge of the Catholic religion. However, my interest in Ireland and its main religion and the desire to understand the media influence has motivated me to continue with the research.

Informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity along with other ethical principals were applied. I followed the ethical codes such as honesty, objectivity, carefulness, confidentiality etc.

Chapter 4: Analysis and findings

4.1. The Church and the media

A book of particular importance to this research is 'Twin Pulpits: The church and media in modern Ireland', edited by Eamonn Conway and Colm Kilcoyne, published in July 1997. The book came as a result of a unique event, gathering journalists and Churches representative at a seminar. The aim was to discuss the role of the media and the Churches in Ireland. A special accent was placed by several speakers on the tense relationship between those two and how to smooth out the ongoing debate. Some clerical representatives spoke at the conference, including bishop Thomas Flynn. In an article entitled 'The Church and the media' Flynn, who was a bishop of Achonry for almost 31 years, has said:

The media are oriented to the here and now rather than the eternal, the visible rather than the invisible, the superficial rather than the profound, conflict rather than what unites and for these reasons they tend to marginalize what principally concerns the Church. (1997:24)

Flynn explains that modern media has little space for deep reasoning. 'This is the nature of the mass media, while the church has to preach a Gospel', said the bishop. (1997:25) He mentioned he was pleased by the way media has covered big events such as papal visit or some highlights in the Church's year. 'The fourteenth centenary of Colum Cille's death is a prime example of how the media can focus on religious themes'. (1997:26)

Flynn writes that the pressures under which the media operate does not allow for in-depth analysis and research. He explained that this is the key reason why the Catholic Press Office was set up about twenty years ago. He suggested that in the future, the journalists should have 'a high level of competence' and have specific qualifications if they want to write on religion topics.

I would appeal to professionals in the media to help make what is important equally interesting and audience-friendly. (1997:28)

Gibson-Harries (1997), a Church of Ireland Press Officer at that time, mentioned the importance of RTE, especially journalist Gay Byrne, for highlighting some of the more taboo sexual subjects like contraception, incest and abortion.

The fact that people could express their feelings without being identified was an enormous service to the community. The news media is a hungry animal. Another unfortunate thing I have learned by bitter experience is that nothing is really as black as it looks. (1997:33)

Gibson-Harries, as well as bishop Flynn, considered that many journalists have no specific knowledge of a religious dimension.

I realize the media have a job to do, but I have a duty to protect the Church of Ireland from the scenes inside the church that would send the wrong signals to the public (1997:37)

Matt Cooper, a journalist at that time from The Sunday Tribune, considered that the Church cannot complain when the media 'finally starts doing its duty'.

Once the floodgates open, many other people come forward with tales to tell. It most definitely should not suppress such reports just because it may cause image problems for the Catholic Church. (1997:44)

Cooper (1997) thinks people who complain about media coverage of child sex abuse scandals often refuse to believe the evidence presented or just wish that it would go away.

What they require of media is suppression of the facts, and no newspaper can do that. That, I believe, is what critics of the media often want. (1997:45)

Cooper has said he is not aware of any anti-Church campaign in the media or parts of it. He considered it has been difficult for the Church in this decade, with

the controversies regarding Bishop Eamon Casey's son and Bishop Brendan Comiskey, alcohol problem, Father Michael Cleary's two children and various other child sex abuse cases.

Some of Bishop Comiskey coverage was lurid, grossly intrusive and repetitive. Whether the space given to these scandals in the newspapers was disproportionate or not is a matter of opinion. I do not believe that it was, although there may have been times, because of the lack of corroboration offered by the authorities, when newspapers and other media went too far. (1997:47)

During the conference, Cooper had come to the conclusion that many high-ranking clerics believe the media 'are not only a godless lot, with no morals or sense of right or wrong, but are also engaged in a conspiracy to undermine the belief of people in the Catholic Church in Ireland'. (1997:48) However, he said, there is no fault of the media on that score.

Sister Helena O'Donoghue (1997) on the other side, has said that it became now fashionable and acceptable to be anti-church. We will later see in this Chapter the same idea explained by David Quinn of IONA Institute. It often seems as if Church is presented as the archaic, out-of-date, lost-cause body, while the media are the modern, ultra-bright, young institution.

Media play a valid and important role in questioning and searching the Church's word and in fact have done us a service in highlighting abuses of trust. Our failures do not free us from the obligation to do better the next time, nor does a damaged credibility negate our right to speak the word of hope tomorrow (1997:55)

Talking about the relationship between the Irish media and the church, O'Donoghue said that there are two factors. First, the Church is suspicious of media because the methods media uses are 'fast-track, overly simplistic, selective, intrusive or basically anti-Church' (1997:56). On the other hand, media seems suspicious of Church as never telling the truth, 'being overly protective, secretive and a massive monolithic power controlling people's lives'. (1997:55)

She concluded that it seems that basic common sense and judgment go out the window when anything to do with Church is on the agenda. O'Donoghue writes that both media and religion can work together

'so that our dialogue leads to communion. You could say that the Church is already in the media and the media in the Church. Nowadays, many clerical and religious people have acquired the skills of journalism. The Church spoke without fear of contradiction from the pulpit. But the media are now moving in that direction, nearing the pulpit! There is a great responsibility on the media to handle it better than we did! (1997:68)

Up until early 1960s, the media in Ireland generally 'met the demands of public service, broadcasting and dealing with the Churches', considers journalist Joe Little (1997).

Continuing Little's argument, Fr Dermot McCarthy has said that the Church and media are mutually suspicious of each other and have contrasting perceptions of the world around them. 'They speak different languages' (1997:78).

McCarthy explained that the Catholic Church has always had an ambivalent attitude to the media. On atheist journalists, he said that it's difficult or almost impossible for them to be familiar with the way believers see faith. Therefore it's the Church responsibilities to educate the media on how to report. McCarthy stressed out that 'the Church must try to be accessible to media and has no reason to be afraid of media. Sadly this is not yet happening'. (1997:83)

Going back to the historical context, Pat Henegan, another speaker at the conference, has said that during the 1940s-1960s, the Church enjoyed a special immunity. The media treated church with respect and this has maintained throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Toward the end of the 1980s the dams burst and the power of the Church was flushed away. At the end of 1990s, it has dried up completely. (1997:87)

The support for the Church has crumbled away to nothing. Occasionally, one can see media coverage which reflects well on church. (1997:88)

Continuing this idea, Fr Colm Kilcoyne explained that some media people abuse their power when it comes to covering church matters.

A church scandal or embarrassment is pounced on with such relish that you suspect the energy of the reporting owes more to old scores being settled than to the demands of objective reporting (1997:115)

In his view, the Catholic Church essentially has been bad in developing the professional understanding of the media. He thinks the Church's job is to collaborate. 'The media in all its forms is a huge colouring-box from which to create and landscape that will bring us to the age of the mystery' (1997:120)

Journalist Andy Pollak considers that the media has been eager to report on clerical sex abuse scandals.

I have to say that I have detected an increase in media anti-clericalism in recent years. I first felt it strongly after the Brendan Smyth child sex abuse scandal broke three years ago. The Church's slowness to respond and the defensive nature of its statements when it did respond did not help. (1997:122)

Pollak made some suggestions about how the Irish Catholic Church may improve its message to the media and how it can use the media in the process of delivering these messages. First of all, he says, the Church has to accept that the media is a growing power in the contemporary world and learn how to use it, rather than constantly bemoaning its faults. Pollak says it's going to be very difficult for a Church which has wielded such enormous power and influence in

this country over the past 150 years. 'Power is the ability to make people afraid', he concluded. (1997:127)

He explained that as recently as thirty years ago, Catholic Irish people were afraid of the power of bishop or the parish priest. It was unthinkable to criticize either of them in public let alone in print. 'Now people are far less afraid of the Catholic Church. You don't lose your job if you criticize the Church, you don't lose your friends or your community'. (1997:127)

Journalists now interrogate bishops on behalf of a public which has the right to know and this is in itself a clear sign of the waning powers of religious authority figures. Following this idea, Journalist Vincent Browne explained that the Catholic Church does exercise an enormous power in society - political and cultural role. The Catholic Church is also a very powerful financial institution and in addition to this, it has great power in the educational sphere. 'So inevitably and unavoidably, a tension will be there between the media in this hugely powerful institution in society'. (1997:135)

If there weren't a tension between the media and the Catholic Church, there would be something wrong with the media, concluded Browne.

4.2. Sex and abuse scandals

Sex scandals in the Catholic Church involved both paternity cases and the sexual and physical abuse of children. Starting with 1990s onwards, media organizations have been frequently reporting clerical scandals. The most notorious pedophile priest in Ireland was Fr Brendan Smyth. He had pleaded guilty to 74 charges of sexual and indecent assault involving children and was sentenced to 12 years in prison, where he died. (The Irish Times, 22 June 2015)

The sexual abuse of children by clergy in the Catholic Church has occurred around the world, and not only in Ireland. Brian Conway of Maynooth University Ireland wrote in a comparative study of religious institutions and sexual scandals that the sexual scandals are related not just to the abuse by clergy but also to the response, or lack thereof, of church elites (bishops and religious superiors), to the behaviour of some religious personnel. (Conway, 2014). 'This abuse took place in individual parishes, as well as in a society-wide network of church-run institutions such as schools, orphanages, and hospitals, in which Catholic clergy operated as day-to-day managers of the everyday lives of large numbers of children.' (2014:319)

Writing about sexual scandals in Ireland, Conway examined how important was the media's role in exposing the truth. He states that central to the disclosure of many of these scandals was the work of investigative journalists (Bruce, 2011; D'Antonio et al., 2013; Keenan, 2012), resulting in a large number of media exposés of abusive clerics.

Beyond the print media, often journalists 'door step' Catholic bishops (Jenkins, 1996), as in the BBC's 2001 'This World: The Shame of the Catholic Church' documentary on clerical abuse in the Irish church, when Cardinal Seán Brady was confronted by an investigative reporter while entering a church building. In addition, the media template tends to give significant attention to the voice of victims (Jenkins, 1996).

Joe Little (1997), a religious correspondent for RTE, said in the book 'Twin Puplits: The church and media in modern Ireland', that during his thirty months as RTE religious and social affairs correspondent, he recalls sexual abuse to be the single most controversial issue he has ever dealt with. He cited Catholic Cardinal Cahal Daly, who in March 1996 has said:

The media have discharged their rightful function in reporting these scandals. The space given...can well be said to be disproportionate, but this reflects the place held by Catholic clergy in public esteem and trust in Ireland, and the particular horror evoked by the abuse of that esteem and trust. I believe

the media have done a service to the Church in this regards. The truth can be painful, but it is also healing and liberating...humbled and penitent bishops and priests can be better bearers of Christ's message or repentance humility and service. (1997:71)

Daly (Little, 1997) has mentioned that the allegations of scandal have been reported in the media with 'scant regard for the pain and the rights of the subjects of these allegations' (1997:72).

Little considers that RTE News treatment of sex abuse scandals was truthful and served the public interest. He explained that he had reported on sexual abuse, covering social affairs. 'I have no doubt from these experiences that victims and the wider society need more support and resources to come to terms with perpetrators who, in many cases may not be reformable'. (1997:72)

He suggests that from media point of view, there has to be a way of treating both victims and the perpetrators of sexual abuse. 'If there was any ebbing away, it was slow and almost unnoticed', he concluded (1997:87).

4.3. The decline of religious belief in Ireland

The experts interviewed for this research have different opinions with regards to what lead to a decline in the religious belief.

Brian Whiteside considers the decline is most of all down to education and Irish people being better educated then they were in the past and learning to think for themselves and people being more honest and more confident.

We think everybody was religious in Ireland in the old days, but I would ask the question were they really religious, or were they just pretending? In the old days, everybody was religious or they pretended to be religious, and it was assumed you were religious. You were born into a family and they were probably Roman Catholic and you were baptized and you did all the

sacraments and you were in the Church, because there was very little option. It was just the default. (Whiteside, 2018)

However, he said, over the last couple of years, people were thinking more for themselves and they were exposed to trends in other countries. There are also media influences coming in.

They've also just started to challenge the authority of the Church. In the 1960s, there was a sexual revolution. People started to live their lives differently and not in accordance with the teaching of the Church and they felt like 'Why should the Church tell us how to do everything?' It has happened like this and it has been evolution. There is a sort of snowball effect, it gathers momentum, and as more people come out and say 'we are not religious', it gives more people permission to behave like this.

Michael Nugent, on the other side, considers that the decline is much more pronounced than the Census suggests.

I think there are a lot more non-religious people than the Census suggests. The Census question is 'What is your religion?', so it seems like you have a religion. A lot of people would put down their childhood religion, but they probably don't believe most of things. The Census people themselves acknowledged that the question is a leading question and if people are asked 'Are you religious?' as opposed to 'What is your religion?' they will get a higher figure for non-religion in 'Are you religious?' I suspected that figure is much higher. (Nugent, 2018)

Nugent suggested that the process is quite fast at the moment and it speeded up considerably. The society has become more democratic and free, and people don't have to rely on religious faith for comfort. He explained that historically, from the foundation of the Irish State in the 1920s, there was a lot of censorship of media and it was related to Catholic values.

In 1926 there was a committee set up called the committee of evil literature and it listed all various periodicals, books and magazines that they felt should be banned. It was a huge list, a very strong censorship. That was the atmosphere in which, from the start of the State, the State was facilitating

Catholic Church to clamp down on people seeing anything that was anti-Catholic. Then in 1937, we have the Constitution that was very conservative. That has a clause on it made on blasphemy as an offence, which is still causing problems. That was, essentially, a Catholic constitution.

Journalist Joe Armstrong considers that people are growing up, they're becoming adults, they are thinking for themselves. 'My own journey from belief to unbelief was a gradual process of erosion', he had said.

Belonging is one good thing that religion does. Religion gives a sense of belonging to people and walking away from it is psychologically hard. It's the hardest thing I've ever done; it was leaving, leaving my priestly path. When you're involved in religion, it does involve everything. It is not like just a job or university. You could be in a job or marriage and walk away, but when you are walking away from a religion, that has been a core of what you felt life is about, it's your whole identity, your purpose in life and your philosophy of life. You are walking away from all of that. (Armstrong, 2018)

Contrary to the opinions above, David Quinn of IONA Institute considers that compared with where Ireland was that form of religious belief is in decline, because 'we become a more typical Western secular society. It's a very obvious explanation' (Quinn, 2018).

He said that the secular trends were in place before the scandals even. 'There was a rapid decline in 1980s and the scandals did not come to life until 1990s' (Quinn, 2018).

Compared with our past, we become less religious, but compare with other western countries (France or Britain), we are still one of the most religious countries in the western world. We are moving towards a more individualistic model of religion, where the community of belief and the requirements of being in the community are less important to people.

Quinn said in Ireland, it happened later because of the historical development.

Countries like Sweden and Britain and France were never colonies. They have been independent nations that have gone through all kind of changes themselves. Ireland has only been independent since 1922 and that greatly affected our development to a typical western nation. It's very hard to judge

us by other Western countries, because who was a colony in recent times? Who of the Western countries was a colony in recent times? Not Spain, not Italy, not Switzerland, not France, not the Netherlands, not Germany.

Hence, that made Ireland development extremely unusual and this is an important part of the story, said Quinn. That is one of the characteristics that makes Ireland different and must be taken into account.

However, I consider that the media in Ireland, by doing some documentaries and investigative reporting, had played a crucial role in raising awareness of clerical child abuse, thus putting a lot of pressure on the Irish government to take action on this issue. It changed public's opinion on the matter of trust and loyalty to the Catholic Church.

The most important media pieces on this matter I consider to be:

1. ***Suing the Pope***. The program reported the allegations of abuse against Fr Sean Fortune. It was first broadcasted on the BBC in March 2002, but later shown on Ireland's national broadcaster RTE. The controversy around Fr Fortune, who committed suicide, led to the resignation of Bishop Comiskey, and the initiation of a preliminary investigation into allegations of child abuse in the diocese of Ferns, which in turn led to the setting up of the Ferns Inquiry. The Irish government decided to take action after the broadcast (which showed shocking details of Fortune's victims). Fortune committed suicide before his trial in 1999. The documentary also won an award from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

Patsy McGarry, religious affairs correspondent with the Irish Times, wrote after the screening:

Printed words cannot compete with impact of victims on camera. Years of excellent investigative print journalism on paedophile priests in Ferns was unable to achieve the same impact as 50 minutes of victims and their families telling their stories to camera (The Irish Times, 3 April 2002, p. 5)

2. **States of Fear.** The series were produced by RTE and played a crucial role in showing the issue of institutional abuse and the State was under pressure to respond to the questions raised by journalists. On the day on which the final *States of Fear* programme was broadcast, the government issued a public apology to victims of child abuse and announced the establishment of the *Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010) which later reported its findings in the land-mark Ryan Report (2009). Donnelly and Inglis (2010) argue that 'the government was predominantly motivated to investigate the inadequacies of Church and state facilities for children in response to media pressure'. (2010:23) Documentary-maker Mary Raftery challenged the Irish state and the Roman Catholic Church.

3. Another key programme was Primetime: **Cardinal Secrets**. This included allegations of sexual abuse within the Dublin archdiocese. The Archbishop of Dublin, Cardinal Desmond Connell, was in the spotlight. The programme contained testimonies from the survivors of clerical abuse, as well as their families. Victims recounted their ordeals against the backdrop of Archbishop Connell performing mass, dressed in all his Episcopal regalia and blessing celebrants as he leaves: the pomp and ceremony of the church contrasts with the harsh reality experienced by some of its youngest members. Following this major journalist work, a major investigation into clerical child sex abuse started. It included those allegations relating to clerics in the Archdiocese of Dublin (Dublin Report, 2009: 84). The controversy surrounding the allegations of abuse in this programme also paved the way for the setting up of the Dublin Archdiocese Commission of Investigation.

The overall impact of the media in the public exposure of child abuse has been major.

4.3. The role of the media in the process

There are different opinions when it comes to what role, if any, media has played in this process. Armstrong considers that media has played a significant role, because the role of the media is to question, to reveal that the king has no clothes. That is the purpose.

Certainly, the media reports were hugely important because they were documenting the reality. All of them served to provide a reality check against those who thoughtlessly, unthinkingly believed or accepted everything that the priest told them. Of course, few of them would go on to actually question their faith, but ultimately that is what it comes down to. You reach certain points, like I did with the priesthood thing, celibacy or ordination. It jolted me into thinking: what are they actually about? Could it possibly be that it's all a con? And yes, it is all a con. It is a really hard realization to come to. (Armstrong, 2018)

Nugent (2018) said that more recently, the rise of Internet has made a huge difference not just in Ireland, but everywhere. He thinks that Father Ted – the Irish comedy, had psychologically a big impact. Father Ted (1995) is a television comedy directed by Declan Lowney. Father Ted Crilly is constantly providing stability to both the parish house and the fictitious Craggy Island residents. He shares the parish house with the passionately tea-pouring Mrs. Doyle and two other priests: Father Dougal McGuire and Father Jack Hackett.

It made it okay for official Ireland to laugh at the Catholic Church and it was quite a gentle humor, but it just made the church look silly. And there were these three priests, Father Ted, who was an absolute egotist, Dougal, who was an idiot and Jack, who was a drunkard. That was the Catholic Church summed up (Nugent, 2018).

Father Ted can be summarized in this example of an exchange between Father Ted and Father Dougal:

Father Ted: It's not as if everyone is going to go off and join some mad religious cult, just because we go off for a picnic for a couple of hours.

Father Dougal: God, Ted, I heard about those cults. Everyone is dressing in black and saying our Lord's gonna come back and judge us all!

Father Ted: No... No, Dougal, that's us! That's Catholicism! (Father Series 1)

Nugent also mentioned the comedian Dave Allen, who back in the 60s and 70s was doing funny satirical stand ups about the Catholic Church. 'He was on BBC, but this was shown in Ireland', said Nugent.

The Daily Telegraph quoted Allen in an obituary in March 2005, saying that he had no grudge against God. 'Not God, no, because I don't believe in Him, but a grudge against all the evil things that are done in His name, certainly, and a grudge against the way they tried to get inside my head when I was a child'. (The Daily Telegraph, 2005) The same publication wrote a review of a documentary about his life in which the author, Martin Chilton, says that Allen was known for ending shows with the words 'Goodnight, thank you and may your God go with you'. (Chilton, 2014)

Quinn thinks that media had a huge influence. When we talk about media, we want to talk about entertainment, he said.

We take soap operas, for example, we see people lead very secular lives. These characters influence people and they would be highly individualistic and secular. You take a comedy like 'Friends', they would be very individualistic even though they are all friends, and very secular.

Quinn also considers that what we read in newspapers, hear on radio and television in terms of cover of current affairs would come from a very

overwhelmingly liberal, secular, individualistic perspective and religion would be regarded generally as backward.

If you look at the cover of various referendums down the years, cover of things like divorce or abortion or same sex marriage, every single time the media would rely on one side, so against the Catholic or traditional position. They all line up on the liberal side. A constant motif in media coverage of the Church would be church in crisis. They like covering decline in inattendance or liberal priests and their criticism (Quinn, 2018)

Quinn's position is that media people, in general, would be far more secular in their mentality than the average population at large. Therefore, they would see religion as an obstacle to the progress.

Whiteside however, considers that in Ireland, the catholic religion was extraordinary dominant and strong and it 'really gripped a vast majority of population for some time and when the grip went, it was a dramatic fall'. (Whiteside, 2008)

He said that back about 20 years ago, 96 % of all couples who got married in Ireland got married in the Roman Catholic Church. Last year, Whiteside said it was only 50 %. 'That is a dramatic change and that pattern is accelerating', he concluded.

Media – I am not so sure it played a huge role in this process. Journalist Mary Raftery really lifted the lid on some of the awful things that happened in the Church. Her documentaries and journalism was a huge influence in Ireland (Whiteside, 2018).

Asked about the role of the sex scandals in the process of secularization and decline of religious belief in Ireland, the interviewees saw them differently.

Quinn considers that sex scandals were extremely important because they 'naturally created lots of revulsion towards the institutional Church and clergy,

although the public grossly overestimated the numbers of priest guilty of child abuse' (Quinn, 2018). Whiteside explained that they were 'all contributors' (Whiteside, 2018) and Nugent suggested that sex scandals are less significant than most people think.

They were definitely useful, but the changes would have happened anyway. They have probably speeded things up and it made the church less able to defend itself against what would have happening away. I think the treatment of the pregnant women in Magdalene's laundries probably got a bigger expose then the child sex abuses. (Nugent, 2018)

He also emphasizes that a lot of the people didn't even read most of those sex abuse reports, 'because they were too distressing. I read the whole Ferns sexual abuse report and I just found it very difficult to read', Nugent said.

4.4. The future of religious belief in the Republic of Ireland

Michael Nugent considers that people are becoming less religious and this is not happening only in this country, but in world in general.

The Catholic Church is actually growing, but it's growing in the developing world. There are more Catholics now then there were ten years ago, but they are increasingly in the developed world and there is where the current Pope is. The Catholic Church can't hold the attention of people in the developed world, because it's becoming increasingly silly; it is going to lose the influence that it had. There will be an increase in Islam (Nugent, 2018).

Armstrong considers education is a huge part of the future.

The things that are worth keeping are the values: the truth, compassion and honesty. The virtues. Unfortunately, what religious do is they claim those as if they are their own and as if you won't have any of these things if you don't have religion. A day will come when Jesus and Mohammed and Joseph will be in the same light as Oden and Jupiter.

David Quinn stressed that in the near future, we are going to become more secular and religious belief it is going to continue to decline. 'What's left of us is going to become more individualistic. What may happen and what should happen – there will be a separation of cultural Catholicism and serious Catholicism (really practicing Catholicism). Those who remain will become more serious about their faith', he concluded.

Case study: Fr Oliver O'Grady

The context

I chose Irish born priest Fr Oliver O'Grady as an illustrative example of how local and international media reported a sex abuse scandal case (or cases, as we will later see). There was a local interest from the Irish media, as O'Grady reportedly lives now in Dublin City, and also from the international media due to his US connections. O'Grady is a former Roman Catholic priest who was convicted in 1993 on four counts of lewd and lascivious acts on minors.

O'Grady was convicted of raping and continuously molesting more than 25 children in the States, starting in 1973, while working as a priest. His youngest victim was a nine month old infant.

After the publication of a stunning documentary in 2005, in which he luxuriated in describing his abuses, he became notorious. He is regularly reported in Irish and overseas media. I will do a content analysis of 'Deliver us from Evil' (2006) and will see how different media reported on the documentary.

Time magazine called O'Grady 'the most prolific paedophile in the entire history of the Catholic church'. (Schickel, 13 October 2006) After his conviction in 1993

and spending seven years in prison, O'Grady was defrocked and deported to the Republic of Ireland in the year 2001.

Since his deportation to Ireland, he has been reported as living in Waterford city. The Irish Examiner and The Tribune reported that in 2007, O'Grady registered voluntarily with the local Gardai. In March 2010, he flew from Ireland and was reported living in Rotterdam, Netherlands. There, it is said, he volunteered at a Catholic parish, assuming a different identity, calling himself 'Brother Francis'. (The Irish Times, 31 January 2012)

Four years after he participated in the documentary, he was arrested in Dublin city for possession of child pornography. O'Grady was reported in the Irish press in 2012, when he was sentenced to three years in prison in Ireland for possession of child pornography (The Irish Times, 31 January 2012).

As he appears constantly in the media, O'Grady is seeking to be removed from online search engines. The last media reports date from January 2018. We will have a look at them later in the chapter, when I will do a quantitative analysis.

Qualitative analysis: Deliver us from Evil

'Deliver us from Evil' is a line from the Lord's Prayer and features Fr Oliver O'Grady admitting molesting and raping several children while living in the US. It gives a unique detailed look into the mind of a paedophile priest. He himself said in the documentary that this is the most honest confession of his life.

Controversially, O'Grady is one of the main characters interviewed in the documentary. The uniqueness of this material compared to many other documentaries is that it puts the perpetrator of the crime in the spotlight – his thoughts, his views, and his part of the story. O'Grady claims the Church officials knew about his abuses but protected him by moving him from parish to parish.

Filmed and directed in 2006 by Amy Berg, the documentary won the *Best Documentary Award* at the Los Angeles Film Festival the same year, and was nominated for various other film awards. Berg is a journalist herself, former writer and producer at CNN. The documentary suggests that the Catholic Church officials were aware of the crimes, but took steps to protect O'Grady and the Church, subsequently.

In the documentary, O'Grady is filmed in Dublin city, at a playground where he expresses his feelings towards children. The material is both horrifying yet powerful. The viewers are left speechless by the honesty and frankness of what's said.

If they said to me: do you feel aroused when you see women? I'd say no. Do you feel aroused when you see men? I'd say no. Do you feel aroused when you see children? Well, maybe. How about children who are in swimsuits? I'd say yes. How about children in underwear? I would say yes. How about if you saw or touch children naked? I would say yes (*nodding and smiling*).
(Deliver us from Evil, 2006)

The documentary reveals that at a very earlier age (around 10 years old), Fr O'Grady was himself abused and molested by his oldest brother and by two other priests when he was an altar boy. Then, he participated and was the witness of different abuses that took place in his house.

- When you were a boy, were you ever touched sexually by a priest? - Yes. - What was that priest's name? - I can't remember. My older brother did abuse me. I did not consider that to be an abuse at that time. My older brother initiated that with me.

In the documentary, O'Grady confessed that later his brother abused his sister as well. In the movie, O'Grady goes so far as to explain in meticulous details how some molestation and abuse incidents took place, from the beginning to the end. The affection with which some details are described is utterly revolting. The viewer is left under the impression that the fact of recollecting some past events brings some sort of a joy.

O'Grady appears with an intriguing smile on his face, playing with the camera as if describing fine holidays and not actually rape cases of both little boys and girls. He said he started with hugs. He also explained kissing a little girl (who was five at that time) and getting inside her underwear, which he described as just 'showing affection to her'. His youngest victim is allegedly a nine months baby. O'Grady also had several relationships with adult women as a pretext to get closer to their children.

The hugging starts off and then I might just drop my hands, all the time looking for permission. If I wasn't getting a resistance, that was allowing me to go further and further. If children were dressing or undressing after having a swim or something like that, there might be indications that I might interpret as a sort of flirtatious action. (Deliver us from Evil, 2006)

In a commentary for the RTE, Brendan Cole writes:

For Irish viewers it will undoubtedly prove strange and unsettling to see O'Grady being interviewed in and around the St Stephen's Green area, having returned to Ireland after serving several years in prison in the US. A Dublin bus trundles past at one point, and at another we see him leaning on a fence, watching children in a playground. These scenes have been digitally altered to obscure the children's faces. (Cole, 5 April 2007)

The New York Times wrote that this is a very 'hard to watch' documentary and also that 'the film is clear-sighted, tough-minded and devastating, a portrait of individual criminality and institutional indifference, a study in the betrayal of trust and the irresponsibility of authority'. (Scott, 13 October 2006)

When recalling his crimes, he sometimes chuckles, not spitefully but almost warmly, as if what he had done were silly rather than unspeakably sordid. Although he does not deny anything, he takes refuge in euphemism, explaining that he was often 'overly affectionate' with his young parishioners and apologizing for having 'offended' them. (Scott, 13 October 2006)

The Wall Street Journal mentioned that this is a stunning documentary. Yet O'Grady did not comprehend that he shattered his victims' lives. In the movie, he said: 'I guess I was overly affectionate. I guess I went a little too far.' Asked if he

had ever been diagnosed with a dissociative disorder, he replies: 'I'm sure I've been diagnosed with lots of disorders' and smiled. (Deliver us from Evil, 2006)

Confession may have been good for his soul, but for no one else's. The spectacle of Mr O'Grady's obtuseness is horrifying in the context the film provides - two decades of compulsive, systematic and pitiless predations that went unchecked, though not unnoticed by the church, during his priesthood in Northern California. (Morgenstern, 13 October 2006)

Los Angeles Times journalist Jean Guccione (2005) reports, reported a 15-hour videotape deposition by O'Grady, in which he testified he always went to a priest to confess his sins after he committed the abuses. He also expressed his regrets that nobody from his superiors took any actions to stop him.

I would have liked somebody in the diocese or somebody to have intervened as early as possible in helping me confront this situation as a very, very serious one and help to educate me to the very serious nature of the problem that I had and was causing. (Guccione, 11 May 2005).

O'Grady also said, in the deposition, that every time he committed an abuse, he knew his conduct was wrong, 'definitely a sin. Another part of me was saying: I can't seem to control these desires, thoughts, feelings when they come.'
(Guccione, 11 May 2005).

Amy Berg told CNN (2006) that her film was an honest portrayal of an abusive priest and that, 'this is the first time we have heard it from the mouth of a pedophile. It just shows how deep the level of corruption was and how sick it was to get inside the mind of a pedophile.' (Griffin, Johnston, 28 June 2006)

In an interview with the Seattle Times, Berg mentioned that during her eight days of interviewing O'Grady in the Republic of Ireland, she remembered

'pinching myself almost to the point of blood while I was listening, just sitting there. It was so crazy, but I had to stop myself from saying something. It was so hard to go to work every day [in Ireland], even if it was just downstairs in the lobby. (Macdonald, 7 November 2006)

Griffin and Johnston quoted Archdiocese of Los Angeles spokesman Tod Tamberg who said O’Grady is a ‘master manipulator’ and the documentary is, basically, an anti-Church piece.

O’Grady manipulated his victims, he manipulated his superiors in the Church, he manipulated his counselors and now, with his sly, feline grins and winks, he has manipulated the filmmakers. (Griffin, Johnston, 28 June 2006)

A lot of questions remained unanswered after the revelation of these details. One is probably most controversial: why the Church officials allowed O’Grady to abuse children for almost two decades by moving him from parish to parish, instead of removing him from the ministry in the first place? It is still a mystery, why did O’Grady agree to confess publically? The Time magazine article mentioned that the movie leaves its viewers ‘moved, shattered and outraged’. (Schickel, 13 October 2006)

Quantitative analysis: Lexis-Nexis

Lexis-Nexis gives 1057 results for the keyword ‘Oliver O’Grady’. It does not necessarily mean that all the results refer to this priest. However, the first 5 pages results are all related to him. From these results, most are published in newspapers.

Source type	Numbers
Newspapers	654
News Transcripts	183
Press Releases	178
Web-based publications	32
Industry Trade Press	24

The last reports appearing in the media are dated January 2018 and are about a letter written by Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan and addressed to the parishioners in which he warns about O’Grady living near six schools and a Montessori facility in Waterford city.

Here are the top 10 headlines, sorted from newest to oldest by Lexis Nexis:

Headline	Publication	Date
Evil former priest lives near schools	The Daily Mirror	6 January 2018
Bishop's letter to schools warns of 'dangerous paedophile priest'	Irish Independent	6 January 2018
Bishop warns of paedophile priest living near schools	Irish Daily Mail	6 January 2018
Perv priest 'actively seeking new victims'; BISHOP WARNS SCHOOLS	The Sun (England)	6 January 2018
Bishop warns parishioners about 'extremely dangerous' paedophile ex priest living 150 yards from primary school	www.irishmirror.ie	5 January 2018
'I am trying to find a place that would suit me and lessen any danger for people.' PAEDO PRIEST LIVING BESIDE PLAYGROUND AND CRECHE; schools. don't bother me - they immediately contacted the police	The Sun (England)	3 October 2016
SHAME OF THE FATHER; EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW ; Paedo O'Grady: I'm sorry for what I did	The Sun (England)	3 October 2016
THE IRISH Sun SAYS Move perv priest	The Sun (England)	3 October 2016
Victims' Attorneys Manly, Stewart & Finaldi File Sexual Abuse And Harassment Suit Against Stockton	PR Newswire	12 August 2018

Priest And Parish		
Falkland's royal deer-hunting heritage set to be unearthed	Fife Today	27 May 2016

As the above mentioned press reported, O’Grady apologized by saying he has to live somewhere.

Well I have to live somewhere and I’ve been here for quite a while and there have been no problems. I do feel I might be better off in a more isolated area if I could find a place. It’s not easy to find a place like that. I am, believe it or not, trying to find someplace that would suit me and would lessen any danger for people. Of course people are fearful for their children and their safety and that is understandable. But my main goal is to get to a place where I would be safe but also safe for other people’s benefit. (The Sun, 2018)

Here are the most common adjectives used to describe O’Grady:

The description	The source
Extremely dangerous	Irish Independent
Child sex beast	The Sun
Beast	The Sun
Convicted serial child rapist	Irish Mirror
Paedo	Daily Mirror, The Sun
Evil	Daily Mirror
Sick priest	Irish Mirror

As we see in the example above, some adjectives are quotes from different sources (for example, other people calling O’Grady ‘extremely dangerous’ and media quoting them), but others are just qualifying words given by the media (‘beast’, ‘paedo’), mostly the tabloid media (The Sun, The Daily Mirror, The Telegraph). Research has shown (Clemente, 2016) that tabloid newspapers from different media outlets portray a scandal by taking the side of the party with which they are ‘entangled’ - the social and economic proximity to the actors involved in the scandal. (Clemente, 2016)

Revelations of some O'Grady's activities by press can be due to the audience-building strategies of these media. Tabloid media seeks strong audience ratings. Traditional media reported objectively on O'Grady, mostly quoting him from the documentary 'Deliver us from Evil'. The citations are strong, but it is what he himself has said in the movie.

What was the impact of media coverage of sexual abuses case on public opinion? It is difficult to assess this impact on general public. However, as several researchers (Inglis 1987, 2010) demonstrated, exposure of the abuse cases affected people's confidence in the Church. Media played a crucial role in public perception of religion, in part by the way in which news are framed.

In the article 'The media and child abuse' published online on Discover Society page (30 September 2014), Powell and Scanlon of University College Cork mentioned that child abuse has been covered across news programmes, TV drama, films, soap operas etc. It thus reaches a very wide audience range. Powell and Scanlon said that in Ireland, some of the most shocking and influential media coverage concerned clerical child abuse. The first major clerical child sex abuse case of Brendan Smyth 'opened the floodgates for further revelations'. (Powell and Scanlon, 30 September 2014).

The authors also referred to other documentaries, mentioned above in this research: *Dear Daughter* (RTE, 1996), *States of Fear* (RTE, 1999), *Cardinal Secrets* (RTE, 2002) and *Suing the Pope* (BBC, 2002 – broadcast in Ireland).

These landmark programmes lead to the setting up of the first inquiries into the church's handling of allegations of abuse. Moreover media coverage of child abuse prompted some survivors to come forward and provide testimony to the inquiry teams (Ferns Report 2005, Dublin Report 2009). The media also provided opportunities for survivors themselves to raise public awareness of the issue and campaign for change. (Powell and Scanlon, 30 September 2014).

However, even considering positive changes the media has made in exposing abuses, it has sometimes been sensational. In his book 'Social work, the media and public relations', Franklin and Parton (1991) consider that the media reporting of child abuse has been sensational, simplistic and often factually inaccurate. The British tabloid press has been particularly criticised (Franklin and Parton 1991).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

For centuries, religious beliefs and religious practices have been expressed through the Christian churches in the Republic of Ireland. Religion bonded the community and endorsed a traditional agricultural way of life. Urbanization however, turned people increasingly towards their own needs instead of traditional community needs. As we saw in previous chapters, religion belief began to decline in the 1960s with the *Humanae Vitae* papal encyclical.

It goes without saying that in early twentieth century, religion played a much greater role in Irish society than it does in 2018. The 1901 census showed that the majority of Irish people were professed Roman Catholics. The 2016 Census showed a marked decline. Education was one of the areas where each church wished to keep control. The church was the centre of the community. Everyone gathered together on a weekly basis. Going to Mass or other retreats was a form of entertainment and was also a means of meeting friends, neighbours, and people from the community.

We also noted in this research that In Ireland, there have been numerous reports of the abuse of children. These played a major role in undermining Roman Catholic Church authority. The most prominent were cases of Fr Brendan Smyth, the 2005 Ferns Report and the covering more than hundred cases in one diocese and the 2006 Dublin scandal over more than 350 allegations involving other hundred priests (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010).

Ireland has contained, traditionally, a very strong Catholic presence, but religious belief is in continuing decline. As Inglis (2010) demonstrated, Irish Catholicism is undergoing a process of de-institutionalisation. The media began to investigate and to ask religious personnel questions. Since the 1990s, clerical sexual abuse has been instrumental in the power shift. (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010)

Catholicism in Ireland, as it was, is dead, but of course spirituality remains, as indeed it does in all Celtic people: the annual pilgrimages, the visitation to the holy places, and the funeral rites according to Mother Church remain. There are also theories that Catholicism in Ireland never truly recedes, that it falls away in one form and is reborn in another. As history tends to show repeated patterns, what is in the culture remains like a collective DNA within the culture. Kenny (1997:192)

Gemma Hussey said in *Ireland Today* that Irish society has changed more in the two decades leading up to the 1990s than in the whole of the previous one hundred years.

An inward-looking, rural, deeply conservative, nearly 100 per cent Roman Catholic and impoverished country has become urbanized, industrialized, and Europeanized. And still the hunger for change is there. (1993:245)

Inglis (1987) considers that in Ireland, there is still obedience to the rules and regulations of the Church and recognition of the Church's authority and decision making ability on what is right or wrong. It should be noted that Inglis published his book in 1987, almost 31 years ago, prior to the Celtic Tiger period and then, the child abuse investigation reports.

Inglis (1987), Donnelly (2010), Kerry (1997) consider that in the Republic of Ireland, the power of the Catholic Church lies in social prestige, its political position, economic possessions, and its status.

According to Inglis, the Church has proclaimed that to be poor is God's will and that the poor need to accept their position in life and to follow the example of Christ's life of penance and atonement. (1997:72)

The State exercises its power through laws enforced by such apparatuses as the courts, police and army. The Church maintains its power through rules and regulations enforced by priests, nuns and brothers, as well as by committed members of the laity" (1987:74)

Inglis considers the Church to be a large, bureaucratic organization, which, like any other organization, is primarily interested in maintaining its position and influence in society. The Church has developed this organization over the past century through its control of education, health, and social welfare via a strict observance of its rules and regulations. However, things have changed in recent decades. The Catholic Church has lost its control over the media.

As we saw in previous chapters, the media has played a crucial role in exposing sex abuse cases and raising awareness about the victims and the silence of the Roman Catholic Church. Sex abuse became an issue in the Republic of Ireland in the 1990s, when the media started to report more frequently on this matter. Headline cases included the abuse perpetrated by Fr Brendan Smyth, convicted of multiple counts of sexual abuse of children (he subsequently died in prison), and Fr Sean Fortune, who committed suicide before his trial for abuse. The scandal was the failure of the institutional Roman Catholic Church to respond to these complaints of abuse and, also, to those who experienced abuse.

There has been a decline in mass attendance. For example, there has been a decline from 87 per cent of Catholics to around 65 who attend weekly Mass from 1981 to 1998 (Fahey, 2002). In addition to the secularisation trends will influence other non-Christian groups that immigrated and integrated into Irish society.

Why Ireland lost its religion and was there a role played by the media? *Humanae Vitae* has had a crucial role in changing people's views on religion and the Catholic Church. Religious practice remains strong in Ireland, but we saw that the society has started to move away from institutional religion.

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