

The mother and baby homes commission report highlights the cruel consequences of unchecked religious authority. The Irish state clearly failed to uphold its duty of care to vulnerable women and children in these publicly funded institutions.

A careful reading of the report shows that the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1935 “was arguably the legislation that came closest to enforcing Catholic moral teaching”. “No country complied with Catholic teaching on birth control in as dedicated a fashion as Ireland ... but this rearguard action to preserve Ireland’s distinct moral and legislative culture coincided with a steady rise in the number of unmarried mothers.”

Also: “There was a considerable lack of knowledge regarding contraception, menstrual cycle and sex education in general.”

This shameful episode demonstrates the necessity of a clear separation between church and state.

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