

Faith and Fatherland

A.P.Caomhánach

"Faith and Fatherland" is the name of a new book by an Australian Br. Barry M. Coldrey M.A., M.E., Ph.D. It is about the Christian Brothers, and the development of Irish Nationalism between the years 1838 and 1921.

The subject is treated under five main headings, Christian Brother's Education, the Patriotic Challenge; The Education of the Revolutionary Elite; Ideology of Resistance; Language Revival and Irish Nationalism and The Christian Brothers and Political Questions.

The manner in which the Brothers fitted into educational, cultural, and political history of nineteenth century Ireland is objectively assessed. If proof were needed the author shows that they were both "Irish and Christian" contrary to the resolution passed at the I.N.T.O. congress in Waterford in 1929.

The copious references and bibliography indicate the amount of meticulous research that went into the work. Readers of the article "The Christian Brothers and the Irish Language Revival" in the Educational Records for 1986 and 1987 will be acquainted with the easy flowing and attractive style of writing with which the author, who has already produced twelve other books, is gifted.

The writer concludes that the Christian Brothers' role in the development of Irish nationalism has played a more significant part than most professional historians have acknowledged. Most Brothers will agree with him when he says that "the Brothers themselves, with only rare exceptions, did not involve themselves in any way in political questions outside the confines of their monasteries. Both the norms of contemporary religious life and the consistent exhortations of conservative superiors made this impossible"

Future historians will be indebted to Barry Coldrey for the excellent work he has done in opening up a section of nineteenth century Ireland that has scarcely as yet been touched upon. Both "Faith and Fatherland" and "Nuns in the Nineteenth Century Ireland" are seminal productions that should incite others to research the many facets of an Ireland emerging from centuries of persecution and oppression.

The book is published by Gill and Macmillan and priced at £25