

HISTORIES OF THE SACRED AND SECULAR

REPRESENTING IRISH RELIGIOUS HISTORIES

HISTORIOGRAPHY, IDEOLOGY
AND PRACTICE

JACQUELINE HILL &
MARY ANN LYONS



Histories of the Sacred and Secular, 1700–2000

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David Nash
Department of History
Oxford Brookes University
Oxford, UK

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Jacqueline Hill • Mary Ann Lyons
Editors

Representing Irish Religious Histories

Historiography, Ideology and Practice

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Jacqueline Hill
National University of Ireland Maynooth
Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland

Mary Ann Lyons
National University of Ireland Maynooth
Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland

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In memory of
Patrick J. Corish
Finlay Holmes
George Otto Simms

FOREWORD

The richness of this collection shows the current liveliness of Irish religious history. Its buoyancy comes from historians writing from Church of Ireland, Catholic, Presbyterian, and avowedly secular positions. Also, there are more generalised reflections on Irish religious history, specifically in relation to ‘reconciliation’. Furthermore, a broader view of what constitutes religious thinking and practice encourages the re-use of the familiar, engagement with different materials, and the posing of fresh questions. In this light, classics like those by Richard Stanihurst, James Ussher and O’Sullivan Beare can be re-examined, while the ephemeral and frankly partisan such as those by George Stokes, G.V. Jourdan and W.D. Killen, and indeed the hitherto overlooked, attract attention. A collection of unpublished sermons in mid-eighteenth-century Belfast is analysed to reveal differences in the approaches between Protestant dissenters and conformists. Pioneering, too, are investigations of the twentieth-century manuscript sermons of Reverend Ernest Bateman preserved in the Representative Church Body Library in Dublin.

In large measure, the variety and interest of these essays are a tribute to the complex sources from which they have been constructed. In some instances, ambitious and discrete publications, such as John Lanigan, *An ecclesiastical history of Ireland* and Killen’s *Ecclesiastical history of Ireland* are the focus; in others – for example, the poet and novelist Tom Moore – a miscellany, sometimes anonymous, is explored. To these printed works other types of documentation have been added. Newspapers are quarried frequently, charting varying reactions to celebrations and festivals. Also, data generated by recent enquiries, sometimes officially sanctioned and

funded, have been utilized. The new accessibility of the massive – although incomplete and confusing – documentation concerning what was alleged to have happened in parts of Ireland early in the 1640s prompts reflections on how this resource, when made available selectively in schools since 2010, can affect and alter attitudes. The hope that rigid, intolerant and dangerous stances, linked with those visible in the more recent ‘Troubles’, will be re-examined feeds into an aim of reconciliation which – either explicitly or implicitly – animates other offerings. The work of a consultative group on the past in the north of Ireland, connecting with fellowships looking at comparable situations outside Ireland, throws light on what is and is not remembered. Joseph Liechty reminds of the efforts under way already in 1988 when Alan Falconer’s *Reconciling memories* was published. Similar motives explain research into responses to the events of the past forty years in the north of Ireland. Respondents, often active in various religious congregations, have been interviewed in order to assess the importance that they attach to specific events. Surprisingly few of those events still thought to exercise influence today occurred in the seventeenth century. Indeed, 1641 had to be added to the list as a possible source of lasting divisions and resentment, although the initial Ulster plantation itself and the siege of Derry were perceived as grievances. Much of the intention behind these interventions, openly stated, was to reduce the power of remembered or (more often) misremembered events to divide and enrage. Yet, it is acknowledged that gains from a less fiercely contested past can be offset by the loss of any sense as to why such questions should ever have embittered and inflamed.

The sheer volume of new research and thinking can be traced to the availability and popularity of courses which take a broader view of ethical, moral and social issues. The era in which religion was approached primarily through institutions, run typically by the clergy and defined through their writings and commentaries, has given way – although not completely – to one in which the laity is more conspicuous and the informal, social and cultural implications of belief and observance are probed more imaginatively. Faced with the widespread assumption that adamant religious attitudes lie behind the tensions and violence which have often characterised Irish history, there has been an understandable desire to discard such attitudes and also to demonstrate that they have never enjoyed a monopoly. Making amends for past errors has both encouraged admission that they occurred, and insistence that they did not necessarily represent the entire story. Instead it can be shown that a wary coexistence

and day-to-day accommodations between separate confessional communities were possible. An awareness of the damage that resulted from intransigence has strengthened the wish to avoid it in the future. Yet, a salutary reminder of the depth of inherited memories comes from reports on how the teaching based on the 1641 depositions has been received in the north of Ireland. The events have been judged as too remote to have had much contemporary relevance. Indeed, this hints that the strength of religious traditions varies across the island, particularly between the independent south and Northern Ireland, echoes findings as to how the Patrician festival of 1932 and in more recent times St Patrick's Day have been celebrated. The north, more confident thanks to larger numbers of Protestants, needed Patrick less.

The urge towards reconciliation existed alongside resilient notions of orthodoxy. Attachment to traditions of belief and practice, including the sacraments, remained fundamentals over which there could be no compromise with those who treated them simply as indifferent or non-essential. Even in the question of the extent to which the vernacular languages were to be used in instruction, one contribution, considering the Hibernian Bible Society collection at Maynooth, tends to show a generally hesitant attitude within the Catholic church persisting into the twentieth century.

As has been long recognised, what was demanded of lax clergy and wayward laity was an ideal. Dwelling on the failures may too often convey an impression of disquiet and disillusion. Compromises were hardly likely to be advertised in the briefs to clergy and lay-people, nor indeed did they occasion self-congratulation. Nevertheless it is necessary to try to move beyond the official prescripts to what was occurring in and between communities across the island. In any such quest, it is premature to jettison the materials once favoured for the writing of religious history: succession lists of bishops and parochial clergy, records of baptism, marriage and death; fawning requests for clerical advancement. One diocesan bishop – O'Beirne of Meath early in the nineteenth century – attached practical as well as symbolical importance to building churches (preferably on pre-Reformation sites) and fitting houses for the clergy. The moment at which it was deemed too expensive or inappropriate for dignitaries to live, if not in palaces, then in big houses, has yet to be identified precisely. So, too, for whatever motives, the disposal of the accommodation purpose-built for clerics and religious orders, and their dispersal more inconspicuously into their communities. Indeed, even such matters as the abandonment of elaborate or specific clerical attire await a thorough treatment, to ascertain

whether it did – as critics alleged – reveal a loss of nerve, economy or a conscious adoption of reticence. Interiors were purged of furnishings and adornments, which sometimes reappeared in themed bars and restaurants; spaces reordered and accoutrements declared redundant. The shocks and sometimes the destruction resembled that occasioned by earlier iconoclasm, yet remain to be evaluated as factors in lay estrangement from official religion.

As well as embracing unfamiliar kinds of documentation, frequently arising from the recent enquiries, many contributors return to the traditional. Predictable differences of outlook and method can be detected in the treatment of the sixteenth-century Reformations by G. V. Jourdan and R. D. Edwards, although there are no full explanations as to why these learned enquirers did not modify them in the face of evidence. Presbyterian historians are brought out of the shadows, often combative and hopeful of the eventual triumph of their interpretations. The purposes for which religious histories were written and published are considered in the cases of James Kirkpatrick and John McBride. The Presbyterian church, subjected to virulent printed attack early in the eighteenth century, wished to vindicate itself. In some ways, thanks to a shorter and more concentrated story, the distillation of a history was an easier task than for the conformist Protestants or Catholics of Ireland, with a greater abundance of materials. Inevitably, Kirkpatrick and McBride indulged their own prejudices. But their productions represent a vital stage in the history-making.

Direct comparison is made between two Belfast preachers of the mid-eighteenth century, with a suggestion that those of the Church of Ireland concerned themselves less with immediate historical contexts. Writers, when discussed individually, risk being dismissed as idiosyncratic and individualistic unless they can be connected with wider theological and historiographical movements. Sometimes, the circumstances in which the works were composed and published could be revealing. In most instances, they fitted into careers as salaried ministers or academics. Studies were written in order to obtain, or as part of the expected duties of, the post. With what amounted to a public platform, there was an expectation that it would be used to promote rather than to challenge a known view. Divergences and dissent could occur, and were occasionally means to attract notice. But it took the bold or those of independent means to circulate unconventional opinions. Maybe it was not unknown for controversy to be stirred deliberately to increase sales. Whether or not a publication had institutional or even official backing, the extent to which it had been subsidised, and even

the formats and price at which it was sold, deserve some notice if impact is to be assessed. Even so, as several contributors suggest, long and abstruse texts (such as Lanigan's) might be digested and popularised, or simply acquire a totemic reputation notwithstanding their rebarbative nature.

Unpublished sermons are mined for a second time: those of Ernest Bateman, incumbent in the prosperous Dublin suburb of Booterstown (among those who lived in the parish – but obviously did not worship there – was de Valera). Bateman was not shy in sharing his opinions from the pulpit and in letters to the newspapers, but how far he was regarded as anything more than another awkward customer like Hubert Butler is unclear. As always, and in all denominations, the fluent and opinionated catch attention, overshadowing the more conventional but representative.

Attention is usefully directed onto Tom Moore. Thanks to his prestige and popularity as a writer, Moore's backing (albeit passive) of the United Irishmen and defence of moderate Catholicism were likely to attract interest. However, some of his contributions were published anonymously, making their impact hard to gauge. At a time of increased sectarian polarisation, Moore's bid to find and exploit common ground is notable. Unusually among the contributions, that on Moore contrasts the situation in nineteenth-century Ireland with the more relaxed one in Holland, where the different denominations co-operated on moral and social matters. Comparisons can obviously supplement the individual studies. With the proliferation of contextual and comparative accounts of confessional violence in the sixteenth- and seventeenth- centuries, Irish experience has gained. The lesions left in western and central European countries by civil war, occupation, collaboration, vendetta and rival ideologies over the past century resemble – and may often be more severe than – those that disfigure Ireland. The strategies of reconciliation, staged and selective remembrance and individual, inadvertent and collective forgetfulness are recommended responses. Particularly suggestive and wide-ranging is the one chapter by Irene Whelan which brings in north America. There, an Illinois bishop, John Lancaster Spalding, encouraged the settlement of Irish Catholics in frontier areas after the Civil War. He did so because he believed that the Irish had demonstrated an admirable steadfastness and fidelity. Much in this behaviour could be attributed to the 'devotional revolution', engineered earlier in nineteenth-century Ireland. Professor Whelan is alert to the ironies in Spalding's attitude: urban modernism not agrarian regression would characterise émigré Catholicism in America. Yet there was an aptness in a meeting during 1920 in the backwoods between

the temporarily exiled de Valera and the former president of Maynooth College, now a forceful archbishop in Australia, Daniel Mannix. The case is made that under Mannix's tutelage, de Valera came to promote many of the ideals also admired by Bishop Spalding and traceable to the devotional revolution.

Running rather against the schemes to dull painful memories, much of the evidence analysed in the chapters shows the persistence of inconvenient and unyielding beliefs. Behaviour, which, in some interpretations, endangered immortal souls and the salvation of a community, might escape public condemnation, but was neither unnoticed nor condoned. Only by examining more individual and individualistic reactions, stimulated by the work offered here, can full justice be done to the often unexpected and sometimes contradictory religious lives of Ireland.

Toby Barnard

University of Oxford, UK

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, heightened interest in the relationship between religion and historical scholarship has given rise to a growing corpus of secondary literature exploring subjects as diverse as identity, ideology, intellectual life, propaganda, commemoration, religious and civil liberties, and the nature of secularization. Several of these themes are explored in depth in other volumes in the series ‘Histories of the Sacred and Secular, 1700–2000’, of which this collection forms part. In an Irish context, too, this lively scholarly interest is reflected in a range of publications, including John Wolffe’s edited volume *Irish religious conflict in comparative perspective* (2014; also in this series); in numerous journal articles, and in a forthcoming volume on the Church of Ireland and its histories (Four Courts Press, 2017).

This collection starts from the premise that until very recently, religion has been particularly influential in Ireland in forming a sense of identity, and in creating and supporting specific versions of reality. History has been a key component in that process, and the historical evolution of Christianity has been appropriated and publicised by the main religious denominations throughout the country – Catholic, Church of Ireland, and Presbyterian – with a view to reinforcing their own particular identities. A desire to explore some of the many and varied ways in which this came about, through the writing of religious history, and some of the manifestations of that process, underpins this collection. Also included are chapters that discuss current and recent attempts to examine the legacy of collective religious memory, notably in Northern Ireland, based on projects designed to encourage self-conscious reflection about the religious past, among both adults and school children.

The collection is intended mainly for readers who are interested in the contribution of history writing and interpretations of the past to the process of identity-formation and religious polarisation in Ireland. It aims to inform both those who approach the subject from an academic viewpoint, and those who are interested in how the historiography of religion and the investigation of collective memory can contribute to the process of reconciliation.

There are three parts to this collection. During the seventeenth century the basis was laid for distinct denominational interpretations of Irish religious history. Part 1, therefore, begins by examining some of the key figures who in different ways were at the cutting edge of writing about Irish religious history at that time, including Catholic émigré scholars, and Protestants who contributed an Irish historical dimension to the practice of the eucharist. The penal laws of the following century were not conducive to religious historiography; but tensions between the established church and dissenters did have historiographical dimensions. Meanwhile, in the nineteenth century relations between Protestants and Catholics again became polarised, with the Church of Ireland increasingly anxious to act on its perceived mission to become the church of the people (as well as of the state), and Catholics resisting this. The growing importance of ultramontanism in the Catholic church also played a part, and Irish religious history was drawn into a new phase of confessional rivalry. As the century went on, Catholic historians (increasingly attracted to sources indicating that Ireland's strong ties with Rome dated back to the origins of Christianity), built on the work of their seventeenth-century antecedents; while Protestant historians, equally looking back to seventeenth-century scholarship, preferred sources suggesting that the early Irish church was effectively or entirely independent of Rome. The often obscure and inconclusive nature of the records for early Irish Christianity offered scope for such polarised attitudes, which persisted into and even beyond the era, especially from about the 1930s onwards, when Irish historiography was beginning to become more self-consciously 'scientific' and objective in its values. Before that development – as was commonplace throughout Europe before the emergence of the historical profession at the end of the nineteenth century – writers of religious history were for the most part ordained members of their respective churches, Catholic, Protestant, and Presbyterian. Chief among the contested topics under discussion by the writers considered in Part 1 were the legacy of St Patrick, the nature of

early Irish Christianity, and the nature and impact of the Reformation in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland.

Part 2 considers perceptions of church history held in broader Catholic, Church of Ireland, and Presbyterian circles during this period, and identifies some of the various ways in which they were expressed. Attitudes are considered in contexts including the parochial, architectural, literary, linguistic, commemorative, and in Irish-America. The early chapters in Part 2 reflect the fact that during the eighteenth century there was some diminution in the overt Catholic–Protestant polarisation that had been so characteristic of the previous century. However, in the nineteenth and for much of the twentieth century such polarised versions of Irish history once again became the norm, not alone for church historians but for Irish people more generally.

Part 3 focuses on twentieth-century developments, and particularly on the period from the 1980s onwards. This period witnessed a willingness to take a fresh look at religious polarisation across the entire island, and to examine the role of religious history in that polarisation. It includes discussion of some case studies of attempts, past and current, to foster a more critical approach to collective memory in the sphere of Irish religious history, and also some reflections on the role of historians in the process of reconciliation.

Jacqueline Hill
Mary Ann Lyons

NUI Maynooth

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Jacqueline Hill
Mary Ann Lyons
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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Armstrong FTCD, is Associate Professor of History at Trinity College, Dublin. His main areas of study are Protestant religious dissent, peace-making efforts in England and Ireland during the seventeenth-century conflicts, and the reign of James II. He is a Principal Investigator on the Irish Research Council-sponsored Insular Christianity Project, and co-editor of *Irish Historical Studies*. His publications include *Protestant war: the British of Ireland and the wars of the three kingdoms* (Manchester, 2005); *Intelligence, statecraft and international power*, co-edited with Eunan O’Halpin and Jane Ohlmeyer (Dublin, 2006) and *Community in early modern Ireland*, co-edited with Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin (Dublin, 2006).

Toby Barnard FBA, FRHistS, is Emeritus Fellow in History at Hertford College, University of Oxford. A specialist in the political, social and cultural histories of Ireland and England, c.1600–1800, his principal publications include *Cromwellian Ireland: English government and reform in Ireland, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 1975); *A new anatomy of Ireland: the Irish Protestants, 1649–1770* (New Haven and London, 2003); *Irish Protestant ascents and descents, 1641–1770* (Dublin, 2004); *Making the grand figure: lives and possessions in Ireland, 1641–1770* (New Haven and London, 2004), and *Improving Ireland? Projectors, prophets and profiteers, 1641–1786* (Dublin, 2008).

Eugenio Biagini is Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge. His research interests include Italy in the age of the Risorgimento, and democracy, liberalism

and republicanism in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain and Ireland. He is currently writing on religious minorities and civil rights in the making of independent Ireland, 1900–59. His publications include *Liberty, entrenchment and reform: popular liberalism in the age of Gladstone, 1860–1880* (Cambridge, 1992), *Gladstone* (Basingstoke, 2000), *British democracy and Irish nationalism, 1876–1906* (Cambridge, 2007), *Storia dell'Irlanda dal 1845 a oggi* (Bologna, 2014).

Elizabeth Boyle is Head of the Early Irish Department, NUI Maynooth. Having completed her doctorate at the University of Cambridge, she was a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Cambridge, and a Marie Curie Fellow at University College, Cork. Her research interests include the religious and intellectual culture of medieval Britain and Ireland, and the history of scholarship. A member of the Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe series editorial board, she has published (with Paul Russell) *The tripartite life of Whitley Stokes, 1830–1909* (Dublin, 2011) and (with Deborah Hayden) *Authorities and adaptations: the reworking and transmission of textual sources in medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2014).

Ian d'Alton FRHistS, FRNS, has been researching southern Irish Protestantism for over forty years and is author of *Protestant society and politics in Cork, 1812–1844* (Cork, 1980). Since retiring from his position in the state-run sector in Ireland in 2012, he has delivered and published many research papers. He has also held visiting research fellowships at the University of Liverpool; Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and Trinity College, Dublin. He is currently researching for a book on the Royal Historical Society's Alexander Prize (of which he was a recipient in 1972) and its impact on historiography, 1897–2005.

Eamon Darcy teaches in the history department at NUI Maynooth. Author of *The Irish rebellion of 1641 and the wars of the three kingdoms* published by the Royal Historical Society and Boydell and Brewer (Woodbridge, 2013; 2015 pbk), he has also worked on a number of Digital Humanities projects, including the 1641 Depositions Project and the Down Survey Project, and has developed online educational resources for second level students in Ireland and the UK. During 2013–15 he held an IRC postdoctoral research fellowship at Maynooth, focusing on the circulation of news and the spoken word in early modern Ireland.

Caroline Gallagher who died in March 2016, had a PhD from NUI Maynooth where she taught local history. Her primary academic interest

lay in Church of Ireland history and ecclesiastical architecture, with a particular enthusiasm for First Fruits churches of the early nineteenth century. She also lectured in Ireland and abroad.

Raymond Gillespie MRIA, is Associate Professor of History at NUI Maynooth. A specialist in seventeenth-century Irish social, cultural, political and economic history, his publications include *Colonial Ulster* (Cork, 1985), *Devoted people* (Manchester, 1997), *Reading Ireland* (Manchester, 2005), *Seventeenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), and *Early Belfast* (Belfast, 2007). He is joint editor (with Andrew Hadfield) of the *Oxford history of the Irish book, iii: The Irish book in English, 1550–1800* (Oxford, 2006); joint editor of the History of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin series; editor of the Maynooth Studies in Local History series, and honorary editor of the *Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society*.

Jacqueline Hill FRHistSoc, MRIA, is Professor Emerita at NUI Maynooth. She specialises in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Irish political and religious history. Among her publications are *From patriots to unionists: Dublin civic politics and Irish Protestant patriotism* (Oxford, 1997), and (as editor) *A new history of Ireland vii: Ireland, 1921–84* (Oxford, 2003; pbk edn, 2010). Her essay ‘The Church of Ireland and perceptions of Irish church history, c.1790–1869’ appeared in Terence Dooley (ed.), *Ireland’s polemical past: views of Irish history in honour of R. V. Comerford* (Dublin, 2010).

Laurence Kirkpatrick FRHistSoc, is Professor of Church History at Union Theological College, Belfast. He also chairs the Systematic Theology, Practical Theology, and Church History Subject Board of the Queen’s University Belfast Institute of Theology. His research interests include Irish Presbyterian history, and he has conducted fieldwork research on Presbyterian missionary work in India and China. Among his recent publications are ‘Irish Presbyterians and the Ulster Covenant’ in Gabriel Doherty (ed.), *The home rule crisis, 1912–14* (Cork, 2014), and ‘Poor dark Connaught – an Irish Presbyterian case study’ in *Bulletin of the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland* (2015).

Joseph Liechty is Plowshares Professor of Peace, Justice and Conflict Studies at Goshen College, Indiana. His PhD on the mission of the Church of Ireland in the late eighteenth century is from St Patrick’s College, Maynooth. He has worked in the field of reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and contributed to the work of the Institute for Justice

and Reconciliation in Cape Town. Among his publications are (as editor, with David Tombs) *Explorations in reconciliation: new directions for theology* (Aldershot, 2006) and (with Cecelia Clegg) *Moving beyond sectarianism: religion, conflict, and reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Blackrock, 2001).

Mary Ann Lyons FRHistSoc, is Professor of History at NUI Maynooth. Her research interests include the Irish in early modern Europe, particularly France; religion, aristocratic life and socio-cultural change in Tudor and Stuart Ireland; and the professionalisation of medicine in seventeenth-century Ireland. Her publications include *France and Ireland, 1500–1610: politics, migration and trade* (London, 2003; 2015 pbk edn); *Church and Society in County Kildare, c.1470–1547* (Dublin, 2000); (with Thomas O’Connor) *Strangers to citizens: the Irish in Europe, 1600–1800* (Dublin, 2008), and with James Kelly, *The proclamations of Ireland 1660–1820* (5 vols, IMC, Dublin, 2014).

Barbara McCormack is a librarian who has worked in a range of public and private institutions including The British Library, Trinity College Library, the Irish Taxation Institute, and Fáilte Ireland. She has studied medieval books, letterpress printing, and historic bindings at the London Rare Books School. Barbara is a volunteer at the National Print Museum and teaches on the MA Historical Archives programme at NUI Maynooth. She currently works in Special Collections where she manages historic collections including rare books, manuscripts, and archives in the Russell Library and John Paul II Library at Maynooth.

Miriam Moffitt has a PhD in History from NUI Maynooth, and is currently teaching in St Patrick’s College, Maynooth; St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra; and St Patrick’s College, Thurles. Her research interests include the intersection of religion, politics, and associational culture in Ireland. Among her publications are *Soupers and jumpers: the Protestant missions in Connemara 1848–1937* (Dublin, 2008); *The Society for Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics, 1846–1950* (Manchester, 2010), and *Clanricarde’s planters: land agitation in east Galway, 1886–1916* (Maynooth Series in Local History, Dublin, 2011).

Evie Monaghan is a research assistant with the Discovery Programme – Centre for Archaeology and Innovation Ireland. She has a PhD in History from NUI Maynooth. Her doctoral thesis focused on eucharistic belief and practice in Ireland, 1660–1740 and her current research interests

encompass religious and cultural practices in early modern Ireland. Her publications include an essay on early modern churchwardens' accounts in Ireland, in Andrew Foster and Valerie Hitchman (eds), *Early modern churchwardens' accounts: uses and abuses* (Cambridge, 2015) and contributions to the Treasures of Irish Christianity series, edited by Salvador Ryan and Brendan Leahy.

John Roney is Professor of History at Sacred Heart University, Connecticut, where he teaches the history of Western Europe. His main research interests are the historiography of religion and society in Ireland and Europe, and the life and career of Thomas Moore. Among his publications are *Culture and customs of the Netherlands* (Westport, Conn., 2006, and Santa Barbara, Ca., 2009) and (with Martin Klauber) *The identity of Geneva: the Christian commonwealth, 1564–1864* (Westport, Conn., 1998).

Brian M. Walker FRSA, is Professor Emeritus at the Centre for Irish Politics at Queen's University, Belfast. He is a general editor of the 5-volume Oxford University Press series *History of the Irish Book*. Among his research interests are the links between religion and politics, and the history of commemorations. His publications include *A political history of the two Irelands: from partition to peace* (Basingstoke, 2012) and *Dancing to history's tune: history, myth and politics in Ireland* (Institute of Irish Studies, Belfast, 1996).

Irene Whelan, a native of Clifden, County Galway, is Professor of History and Director of Irish Studies at Manhattanville College, Purchase, New York. Among her publications is *The bible war in Ireland: the 'Second Reformation' and the polarisation of Protestant–Catholic relations, 1780–1840* (Dublin, 2005). She is currently engaged as co-editor of a study of culture and identity in the west of Ireland, 1830–1930, and is working on a study of the concept of an Irish 'spiritual empire' in the 1800s and 1900s.

John Wolffe is Professor of Religious History at the Open University. A specialist in British religious history since the late eighteenth century, specifically anti-Catholicism, evangelicalism, responses to prominent deaths and other interfaces between religion and nationalism/national identity, he has led several major research projects including 'Protestant–Catholic conflict: historical perspectives and contemporary realities', funded by the RCUK Global Uncertainties programme. His recent publications include

(with Mark Hutchinson) *A short history of global evangelicalism* (New York, 2012); (edited) *Protestant–Catholic conflict from the Reformation to the twenty-first century* (Basingstoke, 2013) and (edited) *Irish religious conflict in comparative perspective: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims* (Basingstoke, 2014).

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ABBREVIATIONS

AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society
<i>Cal. S.P. Ire.</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers Ireland</i>
CoI	Church of Ireland
<i>DIB</i>	<i>Dictionary of Irish Biography</i>
HBS	Hibernian Bible Society
HC	House of Commons
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
IBM	International Business Machines
IMC	Irish Manuscripts Commission
ICM	Society for the Irish Church Missions
MP	Member of Parliament
MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
NICIE	Northern Irish Council for Integrated Education
N.T.	New Testament
NUI Maynooth	National University of Ireland Maynooth
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RC	Roman Catholic
RCB Library	Representative Church Body Library
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
TCD	Trinity College, Dublin
TD	Teachta Dála (Member of Dáil Éireann)
UCD	University College Dublin

CONVENTIONS

There is no wholly straightforward terminology available for the three main religious denominations discussed in this collection. During the seventeenth century, members of the established Church of Ireland were inclined to use the term ‘Protestant’ for themselves, referring to members of other reformed churches as ‘non-conformists’, or ‘dissenters’ (and see Robert Armstrong’s chapter below for early use of the term ‘Presbyterian’ in the Irish context). From the nineteenth century onwards the term ‘Anglican’ also entered into common usage for the established church. In this collection the term ‘Protestant’ refers to members of the Church of Ireland; in the (rare) cases where it includes members of other reformed churches this will be clear from the context.

As for the term ‘Catholic’, during the seventeenth century Protestants of all denominations often used terms such as ‘papist’ or ‘Romanist’ to denote their main rivals. It should be noted that ‘high’ church members of the Church of Ireland were apt to describe their own faith as ‘Catholic’ (‘universal’), and (particularly once the penal laws began to be relaxed) to refer to their rivals as ‘Roman Catholics’. In this collection, the term ‘Catholic’ will be applied to members of the church that looked to the pope as its head; where there is any danger of confusion, the term ‘Roman Catholic’ is used.

PART I

Historiography and Religious
Polarisation, *c.*1600–*c.*1938

Towards a Catholic History for a Catholic Nation: The Contribution of Irish Émigré Scholars in Europe, c.1580–c.1630

Mary Ann Lyons

Modern Irish Catholic history blossomed in continental Europe from the 1610s down to the 1680s, especially from the mid-1630s when the ‘Annals of the kingdom of Ireland’, a cornerstone in the Louvain Irish Franciscan enterprise to produce a ‘New History of Ireland’, was completed, providing ‘an orthodox historical underpinning for a version of the Irish past which conformed to the ideals of the Counter Reformation’.¹ The Louvain scholars’

programme of history, genealogy, saints’ lives, devotional works and catechisms had an intellectual coherence ... [that] emphasised the continuity of the faith in a way that contributed to a new sense of the Irish past and subsequently to the development of a sense of national consciousness ... [predicated on] the idea that Catholicism, even in the face of persecution, was ‘the fact that makes an Irishman’.²

M.A. Lyons (✉)

National University of Ireland Maynooth, Maynooth, Ireland

In this, the Franciscans embraced three fundamental strands that defined Counter-Reformation persuasive strategies then being deployed to achieve the (re-)Catholicisation of European states: scholars wrote histories that showed how their ancestors and contemporaries adhered to Catholicism and withstood the threat of heresy in whatever guise; they researched and publicised the lives of indigenous saints, and they made the core tenets of Catholicism available in the vernacular.

Inevitably less coherent (though largely complementary) were the contributions of a handful of Ireland's Catholic émigré scholars who, during the fifty years prior to the completion of the Franciscan 'Annals', produced a tiny corpus of manuscript and printed works on Ireland's history and indigenous saints that highlighted their Christian (and more specifically Catholic) heritage with the same intent. From the 1580s to the late 1610s, it was émigré Old English scholars, notably Richard Stanihurst of Dublin, Peter Lombard of Waterford, Henry Fitzsimon of Dublin, David Rothe of Kilkenny, and Thomas Messingham of Meath who led the way. During the 1620s, this still very small scale endeavour gained significant momentum and greater coherence when Rothe, Messingham and Gaelic historian, Philip O'Sullivan Beare from Cork, produced seminal, and in the case of the latter, controversial, texts. The totality of their work laid the foundations for a modern Catholic historical scholarship defined by a simple message that the Irish had a proud record of adherence to the old faith, from the time of St Patrick down to the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, for which they endured persecution and martyrdom. To complement the substantial scholarship on the historical *oeuvre* of the Louvain Franciscans, and drawing together recent studies of individual writers, this chapter reviews these scholars' contribution towards fashioning a history and identity for a distinct, modern Irish Catholic *Natio*.³

CHALLENGES

The period *c.*1580–*c.*1640 heralded profound changes for Catholics in Ireland, and a radical shift in Ireland's relationship with continental Europe arising from the unprecedented departure of thousands of Catholic migrants of various ranks, ethnicities and occupations for Spain, Spanish Flanders, and France. In reaction to the arrival of a wave of new, mainly Protestant settlers in Ireland from the 1550s, the Gaelic Irish and their Anglo-Norman (Old English) co-religionists found common ground in their increasing alienation from the Tudor government and sought

historical legitimisation for their defensive stance.⁴ The first mass exodus of Irish military followed the Desmond wars in Munster (1569–73 and 1579–83) and led to the formation of a cohesive, permanent Irish émigré military community in Spanish Flanders which became intimately connected with the Franciscan College of St Anthony, established in Louvain by Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire in 1607. From the 1580s, growing numbers of both Gaelic and Old English Catholic secular clergy and religious were obliged to travel to Europe where they gradually established distinct Irish communities and later colleges, chiefly for the education and vocational formation of students imbued with Counter-Reformation ideology who were destined for ministry in Ireland. Their progress was most dramatic in Spain, Spanish Flanders, and Portugal, but they also established communities throughout France, the Holy Roman Empire and the Italian States. It was from these that several pioneering writers of modern Irish Catholic history emerged: the Old English, Douai-educated clerics Rothe and Messingham, the Franciscans at Louvain (principally Ó Maolchonaire, Giolla Bhrigde Ó hEódhasa, Aodh Mac Aingil, Hugh Mac an Bhaird, Patrick Fleming, Robert Rochford, Seán Mac Colgan and Mícheál Ó Cléirigh), and Cork-born layman, Philip O’Sullivan Beare (Santiago de Compostela). The latter was part of the single largest exodus from Ireland which began in the later stages of the Nine Years War (1594–1603) and continued immediately after the Kinsale débâcle when boatloads of dispossessed Gaelic aristocrats from Munster, redundant service men, dependants, and many ‘plain people’ emigrated, the majority destined for Spanish territory. The Ulster earls and their followers departed in 1607.

All Irish Catholic émigrés faced a common challenge – to convince the authorities in their host countries that, having been persecuted for their faith, they deserved the support of Europe’s Catholic rulers. In an intensely competitive environment in which they vied for patronage, influential Gaelic Irish and Old English laymen and clergy, particularly at the Spanish court in Madrid, represented themselves as a single nation, an Irish people who, on the strength of their shared Catholic heritage, steadfast adherence to Catholicism, persecution for adherence to their religion, and commitment to propagating Counter-Reformation Catholicism in Ireland, were united in soliciting support from the king of Spain and the pope. However, rival factions within the Catholic émigré population simultaneously lobbied the Spanish monarch and his councillors in polemical tracts which highlighted cultural and ideological differences among the Irish in the hope of persuading the king of *their* group’s greater antiquity and

adhesion to Catholicism as grounds for preferential treatment in the contest for positions and pensions, or for dominance in the Irish regiment in Spanish Flanders, or in the nascent Irish colleges, or in directing the Irish mission. Inevitably that tension is reflected in the histories penned by émigré scholars, all of whom addressed two fundamental issues – the origins of the Catholic church in Ireland, and (more contentiously), who were the Irish Catholics?⁵ In the case of the first, a particular challenge when emphasising the constant purity of the Irish church was the papal bull *Laudabiliter*, issued by Pope Adrian IV to Henry II of England, granting him the lordship of Ireland and thereby legitimating the Anglo-Norman conquest (1169–71) as *necessary to reform the Irish church*. The Anglo-Norman monk Giraldus Cambrensis's *Expugnatio Hibernica* (c.1188) was influential in framing and popularising this narrative. For these émigré scholars, the alleged papal sponsorship of the Anglo-Norman conquest was problematic. In constructing their narrative which denied Cambrensis's and later Protestant claims that the medieval Irish church was in dire need of reform, they also had to avoid questioning the legitimacy of a papal bull. A second, related challenge concerned the place in Irish history of the Old English Catholics whose ancestors arrived in Ireland following Henry II's conquest. Again, questioning the legitimacy of *Laudabiliter* would undermine the conquest itself and, by extension, the Old English community's position, thereby perpetuating divisions between Irish Catholics at home and abroad at a time when they needed to present a united front. Thus, polemic representations of Ireland's history by Stanihurst, who asserted the superiority of the Old English, and O'Sullivan Beare, who claimed the Gaelic Irish had special affinity with Spanish Catholics as descendants of King Milesius, in particular sparked often bitter disputes among émigré scholars and with others in Ireland, notably Ireland's leading Protestant scholar, James Ussher, archbishop of Armagh.

WRITING ABROAD

It took the stimulus of exile and the example of continental scholars to spur the Irish into writing a modern history of Irish Catholicism.⁶ Before the 'Annals of the kingdom of Ireland' were completed, thanks to the efforts of these Irish émigré scholars (some working in association with the Louvain Franciscans, others independently) strides had been made towards outlining a narrative of the history of Irish Catholicism imbued with Counter-Reformation spirit. That narrative must be interpreted in

terms both of its peculiar composition and the norms of contemporary scholarship. Progress was piecemeal, uncoordinated and often contentious: elements of the evolving dominant narrative were composed, challenged, corrected and nuanced across a diverse range of Renaissance-style histories, hagiographical, martyrological, controversial, catechetical and political texts, all produced for propaganda reasons by Irish émigré and continental authors.⁷ Furthermore, Renaissance history cannot be equated with modern historical research since it ‘was not always about discovery and investigation of new sources, more often than not it was the careful uncovering and selective deployment of already known materials. It was more about argument than analysis, more about the present than the past, more about politics than history’,⁸ though the Waterford Jesuit Stephen White in his works displayed a ‘keen awareness of historical evidence’.⁹ Thus, while Stanihurst regarded himself as a humanist historian, his *De rebus in Hibernia gestis* (Leiden, 1584) should be read as an elaborate rhetorical exercise. Furthermore, the work of these scholars represents ‘primarily the values of Irishmen in Europe, but not necessarily those of Irishmen in Ireland’.¹⁰ Immersed in Counter-Reformation spirituality, connected with influential intellectual circles notably the Bollandists,¹¹ and enjoying unfettered access to a burgeoning literature on the history, theology, and philosophy of the universal Catholic church, several of these Irish scholars internationalised the cause and history of Irish Catholics through their novel application of Catholic natural-law resistance theories or a continental theology of persecution to the Irish Catholic historical experience. Irish hagiography in particular blossomed as a result of intellectual ecumenism and yielded works that were useful to all denominations.

KEY FOUNDATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Following an accusation of political unreliability and a series of bereavements in the late 1570s and early 1580s, Richard Stanihurst settled in the community of English Roman Catholic expatriates at Dunkirk. At that time, no Irish College had been established in the Spanish territories, the Irish military community in Flanders was only forming, and the number of Irish émigrés on the Continent was still extremely small. Stanihurst was close to English Catholic activists and as an advocate of Spanish military intervention in England and Ireland to restore Catholicism, emphasised how the Old English ‘deviate not one finger’s breadth from the ancient ways of the English’.¹² Within a decade he was in receipt of a pension from

the Spanish crown, and produced two works that reflected his loyalties to his Old English heritage, the Spanish crown, and Counter Reformation Catholicism, each of which he wholeheartedly embraced during his exile. In several important respects, these set in motion the writing of modern Irish Catholic history on the Continent. The first was *De rebus in Hibernia gestis* ('the best known and most polemical contemporary work about Ireland')¹³; the second, *De vita sancti Patricii libri duo* (Antwerp, 1587). In *De rebus*, Stanihurst presented a 'humanist repackaging' of Cambrensis's account of the Anglo-Norman invasion, settlement and reform of the Irish church in the twelfth century, which he supplemented with 'other smaller, anonymous, histories' to bring Ireland out of 'Cimmerian darkness', making it known to the modern world. His agenda was clear – he wanted to publicise in particular the achievements of the Old English in the hope of impressing foreign nations and inspiring the Catholic Palesmen to stand up for themselves. Stanihurst echoed Cambrensis's praise for the English king Henry II's having 'illumined the failing religion' by convening the synod of Cashel (1172).¹⁴ He claimed a place for Ireland's leading churchmen, martyrs and saints in the pantheon of Catholic Europe. Refuting Cambrensis's disparagement of Irish religious sentiment and his assertion that Ireland had no medieval martyrs, Stanihurst incorporated a list of Irish continental martyrs from the Calendar of Saints¹⁵ and explained that 'it was the will of Divine Providence that they shed their blood among foreign peoples for bearing witness for religion, so that their virtue would not only shine more at home, but would also be admired abroad'.¹⁶ He also led the charge against the misappropriation of many early Irish saints by contemporary Scottish Catholic scholars arising from their refusal to acknowledge that the Irish were formerly called *Scoti* and Ireland, *Scotia*.¹⁷

From the remove of his expatriate English Catholic milieu, Stanihurst moderated both Cambrensis's and his own highly critical views of the Gaelic Irish¹⁸ in his effort to represent them as joint upholders of Catholicism.¹⁹ Nevertheless, his partisan celebration of Old English political and cultural heritage offended the Gaelic Irish. Furthermore, his satirisation of the Irish clergy as unkempt, uneducated careerists at a time when there was a marked increase in Catholic martyrdom in Ireland (including Patrick O'Healy, bishop of Mayo (1579), Margaret Ball (1584), and Dermot O'Hurley, archbishop of Cashel (d. 1584)) lent insult to injury in Irish Catholic circles at home and abroad. In dedicating his later work, *De vita Sancti Patricii*, to Alexander Farnese, governor of the Spanish Netherlands, Stanihurst explicitly associated Farnese's contemporaneous

onslaught against heretics in that territory with St Patrick's evangelism in the face of paganism. Mindful of a continental readership, the Patrick presented by Stanihurst was 'a patriarchal figure, fixed on missionary endeavour, in the mode of a Counter-Reformation saint, whose life conformed to the tradition of holy men established by scripture and the unbroken tradition of the church'.²⁰ Through establishing the antiquity of Irish loyalty to the papacy since Patrician times, he portrayed Ireland as 'a bastion of Catholicism under St Patrick's patronage'.²¹ Furthermore, he presented a pan-insular form of Catholic dedication that included all of Ireland's older populations, with the inspirational message to contemporaries that 'under the protection of Patrick, the Irish could gain confidence and strength in their contention with heretics, in the knowledge that the saint had triumphed over infidels in his time'.²²

Although all leading Irish émigré scholars of the time consulted at least his *De rebus*, none wanted to associate too closely with Stanihurst's work. Both O'Sullivan Beare and Stephen White SJ, gratified that the Inquisition in Portugal banned and burned the book, penned resounding refutations, the former pronouncing that 'such things, as Stanihurst, a writer of things done by scullions & sutlers, has vomited forth, deserve to be exploded from the school of historians'.²³

When in 1600 another Old Englishman, Peter Lombard, professor of theology at the University of Louvain, made his contribution to Irish Catholic history in a substantial memorandum presented to Pope Clement VIII titled 'De Hibernia insula commentarius stromaticus, Romae conscriptus et oblatu Ssmo. Patri et D.N. Clementi Papae octavo' (hereafter 'Commentarius'), he framed it very differently. The most important of Hugh O'Neill's Roman emissaries in the later phase of the Nine Years War, Lombard was persuaded to solicit papal support for his military campaign. Thus, more so than the work of other scholars writing Irish histories and hagiographies, Lombard's was an intensely presentist rendition of Irish history, tailored to achieve two urgent goals, namely to convince the pope that the English monarchs' failure to fulfil the terms of *Laudabiliter* legitimated immediate transfer of sovereignty to another ruler, and to persuade him that O'Neill was a Catholic crusader worthy of papal backing. Like Stanihurst's *De rebus*, Rothe's *Analecta* and others, Lombard's 'Commentarius' exemplified a European genre of historical scholarship that was part humanist and part confessionalist. Although not published until 1632 in Louvain, at least three manuscript copies (two full, one partial) were made in 1600 and 1601. Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin

regards the ‘Commentarius’ as ‘the first foray by an Irish cleric into what was to become a heavily traversed field of Catholic apologetics’, his work serving as ‘a significant source for a variety of later writers’.²⁴

Lombard, like Stanihurst, emphasised three salient features of Ireland’s historical attachment to Catholicism – its antiquity, its Patrician roots, and its missionary impulse which drove holy men and women to counter heresy firstly in Britain, and later in Gaul, Belgium, Germany and Italy. He reflected:

If we recall more ancient times, there are so many great things to be said of Irish religion and learning that they illuminate the memory of the ancient Irish in the eyes of European Christian nations and move them, princes and people to sympathise with the present plight or more accurately, the terrible misfortune of the Irish.²⁵

He credited an Irishman, St Malachy (archbishop of Armagh, 1132–36/7) with leading the medieval Irish church, wrecked by Viking incursions and secularisation, back to universal ecclesiastical custom, and interpreted *Laudabiliter* as the papacy’s attempt to rehabilitate the Irish church by reversing this secularisation and re-affirming the link with Rome. For Lombard, it was the sixteenth-century religious reforms that irrevocably undermined the *Laudabiliter* arrangement. He used the vision and prophecy of Saints Patrick and Malachy respectively to support his constitutional argument for a new papal intervention in 1600. He cited from Jocelin of Furness’s twelfth-century *Life of St Patrick* a vision of Ireland’s future, witnessed by the saint, which appalled him. Afterwards, however, an angel told Patrick to look to the north where he ‘first saw a small light coming forth from Ulster, which fought long with the forces of darkness and, having put them to flight, filled the whole island with its radiance’.²⁶ According to Lombard, the appalling vista was the destruction caused by the royal supremacy over the church, but Pope Clement VIII was set to fulfil Malachy’s prophecy by dispelling ‘the darkness of heresy and schism which for the last sixty years the English governors and oppressors of Ireland have been endeavouring to spread over that land’. Malachy had prophesied that ‘there began to appear that faint light, ... foreshown to St Patrick, the first founder of religion here, nearly 1200 years ago, ... which ... at last dispelled the shadow and illumined this whole island with its own splendour’.²⁷

For Lombard, O'Neill was that light. His blatantly polemic representation of Irish history was intended to impress upon Clement, as Adrian IV's successor, his duty to ensure that *Laudabiliter* was honoured or superseded. Lombard's discourse showed how in the interests of political expediency, 'even a staid, constitutional tradition like *Laudabiliter* was [momentarily at least] capable of radical reinterpretation' when framed within a Catholic historical narrative.²⁸ Equally, when realpolitik demanded, the consummate politician-diplomat Lombard quickly abandoned both O'Neill and this historical legitimisation for papal intervention.

Maintaining the Old English lead in moulding a Catholic history, the Dublin controversialist Henry Fitzsimon made a distinct and influential contribution through his publications whilst in exile in Spanish Flanders and Rome. Among this cohort of writers he was unique since he converted to Protestantism, back to Catholicism, and was professed a Jesuit in 1608. He was also unusual firstly, as he was deported to Spain in 1604 after a very high profile disputation with John Rider, dean of St Patrick's cathedral, on the authority of tradition in the church, and secondly as, once in exile, he continued the disputation in print, publishing his *A Catholic confutation of M. John Rider's claim to antiquity* (Rouen, 1608). Consequently, émigré scholars such as Rothe were very familiar with Fitzsimon's controversial writings and Catholic rendition of Irish history and hagiography.²⁹ In addition, his *Catalogus praecipuorum sanctorum Iberniae*, featuring a list of 288 Irish saints, was first published in 1611 and ran to at least nine editions. It made a pioneering contribution to the creation of a pantheon of indigenous saints and a modern Irish Catholic historiography on three levels. It was used extensively by the Bollandists in campaigns to have some, notably Patrick, included in the Calendar of Saints. It inspired Stephen White SJ and Seán Mac Colgan OFM to progress their ambitious plans for hagiographical and historical research, and it irked Thomas Dempster, who was leading the charge in claiming many of the saints of 'Scotia' (Ireland) for Scotland. In his *Britannomachia* (Douai, 1614), Fitzsimon's historically-based challenge to Protestant claims for the purity of their peculiarly 'British' strain of apostolic Catholicity became 'a precursor to subsequent expressions of interest in the historical roots of the Irish church and, specifically, the lives and missionary endeavours of the early Irish and Scottish saints'.³⁰ A renowned Catholic controversialist, Fitzsimon was well positioned to influence the writing of Irish Catholic history on the Continent. Thanks in part to his input, it became the norm for literary forms, used by apologists, to converge and be presented within

the framework of an historical narrative. This marked a significant methodological departure since, although controversialists ‘violently ... disagreed upon outcomes, ... upon the manner in which they reached their conclusions there was no longer any dispute’.³¹

After the Nine Years War, and more especially following the flight of the Ulster earls to the Continent in 1607 and the deaths of successive Gaelic noblemen, notably Hugh O’Neill, by 1616, a shift towards reaching accommodation between Irish Catholics and James I’s regime became evident in all Irish émigré writers’ activities (scholarly and diplomatic). This also coloured their representations of the place of Irish Catholics among the Catholic nations of Europe, and of their history. From c.1610 Gaelic scholars connected with St Anthony’s College, Louvain endeavoured to forge a sense of collective identity among all Catholics of Ireland by playing down the ethnic rivalry associated with the terms Gael and Gall and substituting the terms Éireannach, naisión, nation.³² Two Old English clerics, David Rothe and Thomas Messingham, through their close scholarly collaborations, made significant contributions towards inventing a history of that Catholic *Natio* during the 1610s and early 1620s. Both were products of the particular environment at the Irish College, Douai, which ‘brought together a significant number of Irish students, lay and clerical from both Gaelic and Old English Catholic communities, and exposed them to the energy of the Counter-Reformation in its Jesuit form’.³³

Before being appointed bishop of Ossory in 1618 and in the early years of his episcopate during which he carried a heavy pastoral responsibility for managing the revival of the Roman Catholic church in Ireland, Rothe made a substantial scholarly contribution to adumbrating this inclusive Irish Catholic identity, drawing upon the experiences of Catholics during the medieval, Tudor and early Stuart eras. Whilst a student and later prefect of studies at the Irish College, Douai, he established an extensive network of contacts across Europe, including a wide circle of Irish clerical scholars, notably Lombard and Luke Wadding OFM in Rome, Messingham in Paris, Ó Cléirigh and the Louvain Franciscans, and in Ireland, Archbishop Ussher of Armagh with whom he corresponded on the subject of the early Irish church. In common with all writers in the field, Rothe had a clearly defined agenda for producing his works. His first and best-known work entitled *Analecta sacra, nova, et mira. De rebus Catholicorum in Hibernia pro fide, et religione gestis*, published in 1616 (Paris or possibly Dublin), was expanded in later Cologne editions (1617, 1619) to include his 1611 exhortatory letter or *paraensis* addressed to all the Irish then suffering for

the faith. Also featured in later editions was his *Processus martyrialis*, an account of anti-Catholic persecution in Ireland since Elizabethan times, written in the early 1610s.³⁴ ‘By revealing the origins and development of their Irish Christian heritage and the sacrifices of their forbears in its defence’, Rothe sought to ‘encourage his contemporaries to bear their sufferings with fortitude.’³⁵

He drew explicit connection between Henry II, the ‘great grandfather of the great grandfather’ of ‘our’ James, who was granted the right of the island by Pope Adrian IV. In emphasising that this grant was conditional on ‘flourishing faith’ being propagated and obedience to Rome being maintained, Rothe, like Lombard before him, stressed how Ireland had been a tributary to the papacy since its first conversion to Christianity. He was politic in devoting little attention to the Normans’ invasion and putative fulfilment of the papal contract.³⁶ Although he relied heavily on Cambrensis for evidence of the state’s transgressions upon the rights and privileges of the church, he was even-handed in citing two archbishops of Dublin, Laurence O’Toole and John Cumin, the former of Gaelic origin, the latter, Norman, who were impacted by those infringements. Like Lombard, Rothe regarded Henry VIII’s split with Rome as an intolerable breach of *Laudabiliter*, a ‘strumpet copulation’ that subverted ‘Our commonwealth [which] from the time of Christ had a twofold form in the exercise of government, one spiritual, the other corporal’.³⁷ He blamed the ‘upstart schism’ for such glaring wrongs as the substitution of Dublin for Armagh (the ‘true nurse and mother of other churches’) as primatial see of Ireland, citing Bernard’s Life of Malachy and Jocelin’s Life of St Patrick to refute reformers’ claims for the Dublin primacy.³⁸ Recounting the treatment of Irish Catholics since the Henrician split, he drew a consoling comparison with the early Christian persecution when the ‘catholique communion’ was strengthened through its shared suffering while the persecutors fell into disunity.³⁹

Rothe also contributed to heightening consciousness of Irish Catholic history and identity through his publication of three works on Irish saints. The first, *Brigida thaumaturga* (Paris, 1620) presented Bridget, the saintly patron of Ireland, as a model of Counter-Reformation spirituality. The other two, *Hibernia, sive, antiquioris Scotiae vindicae* and *Hibernia resurgens*, appeared in 1621 and were important in bolstering the defence against appropriation of early Irish saints by the Scots. Regrettably, Rothe’s most ambitious ecclesiastical history text, his ‘Hierographia sacrae insulae Hiberniae lineamenta’, was lost in the disturbances of the late 1640s and only fragments survive.⁴⁰

Whilst preparing his collection of Irish saints' lives titled *Florilegium insulae sanctorum* (Paris, 1624) for publication, Thomas Messingham, then rector of the Irish College, Paris, is believed to have had his close friend and scholarly collaborator's *Brigida* and *Hibernia resurgens* on his desk.⁴¹ At a time when regulations for canonisation of saints in Rome were tightening, Messingham's pressing concern was to ensure that Irish saints achieved representation in the new Calendar of Saints featured in the Roman Breviary which was undergoing revision. With this urgent goal in mind, he published the Offices of Saints Patrick, Brigid, Columcille, Finian and Canice (1619–20). Messingham was heavily influenced by Caesar Baronius (1538–1607), whose *Annales ecclesiastici* (Rome, 1598–1607) spear-headed the Catholic propaganda counter-offensive against Protestant historical criticism of Catholic practices, including veneration of saints.

Accordingly, in the *Florilegium* he aimed 'to portray Ireland as an ancient, autonomous nation, which from the dawn of time had close links with Europe and from apostolic times was linked to Rome'.⁴² He chauvinistically asserted that God was especially 'honoured by the exceptional quality of the Irish, who with their fasting, vigils and mortifications excelled all other holy people'.⁴³ Pride of place went to Ireland's all-Ireland patrons – Patrick, Columba and Brigid – who had a special role to play in unifying diverse elements within early seventeenth-century Irish Catholicism. Furthermore, joining the crescendo of refutation of Scottish claims to early Irish saints, Messingham was able to mine what was by the early 1620s a significant corpus of literature by Irish émigré scholars including Lombard, Mac Aingil, Fitzsimon, and Stanihurst.⁴⁴ He also drew upon his wide scholarly network and substantial manuscript collection to present continental readers with abundant evidence of Irish evangelical activity in their homelands, and ended with a sermon, attributed to St Patrick, which he took from Stanihurst's *Life of St Patrick*. Messingham made an exceptional contribution to inventing the Irish *Natio* according to the criteria of seventeenth-century Catholic *ancien régimes*, 'presenting Ireland to a European audience as a distinct historical and political entity whose Christian identity could be traced back to apostolic times'.⁴⁵

At the same time as Rothe and Messingham began publishing their works, in Madrid Philip O'Sullivan Beare was part of 'a hawkish group of exiles' gathered around his kinsman, Donal Cam O'Sullivan, and Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire whom Lombard described as 'more eager to sustain the war [against England] than the very officers of the army itself'.⁴⁶ In the

decade that followed, hopeful of securing the backing of the newly crowned Philip IV for a military intervention in Ireland, O'Sullivan penned several influential polemic works. These included the 'Zoilomastix' in which he countered the calumnies of Cambrensis and Stanihurst against Ireland; his *Decas Patritiana* (Madrid, 1629) – a verse life of St Patrick; and another substantial text titled 'Tenebriomastix', written to defend Ireland's saintly heritage against Scottish appropriation: it, like 'Zoilomastix', remained in manuscript.

It was, however, his *Historiae Catholicae Iberniae compendium* (Lisbon, 1621), regarded by many modern historians as the first published history of Catholic Ireland,⁴⁷ that achieved widest circulation and impact. Dedicated to Philip IV, this opportunistic appeal for aid in what O'Sullivan styled a holy crusade against heresy, emphasised Ireland's unswerving adherence to Christianity, to apostolic tradition, and to the papacy.⁴⁸ The narrative comprised four parts. The first detailed Ireland's early Christian heritage and recounted the history of pre-Norman Ireland from the vantage point of its early seventeenth-century state of decline: this was the result of the 'wars ... of the English which for more than four hundred years have reduced the sacred island to a rude and uncultivated place'.⁴⁹ Volume two began the narrative history proper with the arrival of the English in 1168. O'Sullivan refuted the English claim to Ireland as their invasion was predicated on supporting the cause of an Irish adulterer, Dermot of Leinster. This illegitimate intervention in turn led to English abuse, cruelty and fraud towards Catholics, and the terms of the fraudulently obtained *Laudabiliter* had been violated by English heretics. Ireland's history down to 1588 was marked by continued resistance to English intervention. Woven throughout this history are narratives of martyrdom depicting the Irish as both defenders of the faith and victims of English tyranny. Certain details such as the miracle of 'a noble lady being delivered from a wicked devil' following Archbishop Dermot O'Hurley's martyrdom (1584) set the *Compendium* apart as Catholic since such miraculous events were rejected by the Protestant martyrologist John Foxe.⁵⁰ The third volume, 'On the Fifteen Years' War' (1588–1603), embedded O'Neill's war within the grander scheme of Anglo-Spanish hostilities which commenced in the Armada assault. At the start of that period, Irish Catholics were divided (Gaelic Irish against Old English) but by the end they were 'scattered ... among foreign nations, and generously received by Catholics on account of their faith'.⁵¹ O'Sullivan highlighted how the alliance between certain Old English Catholics and the English heretics had

obstructed the Irish–Spanish alliance, but explained that once Old English opposition to Spanish intervention was overcome, increased persecution of both Gaelic Irish and Old English caused Irish Catholics to unite and accept assistance from Spain. The final section covering the period 1603 to 1613 detailed this universal persecution, and the *Compendium* concluded with a depiction of the common religious, economic and political disenfranchisement of all Irish Catholics.⁵² Thus, in ‘a telescopic movement, ... each successive book ... [covered] a shorter span and more recent period of Irish history, designed to explain the need for Spanish aid and to present the plight of the Irish – both in Ireland and as exiles in Spain’.⁵³ Arguably one of O’Sullivan Beare’s most significant contributions to the writing of Irish Catholic history was his sophisticated analysis of the various groups within Irish society, at home and abroad, in terms of their cultural practices, political affiliations and evolving historical circumstances. In essence, his conception of groups of Irish was ‘not a matter of static essential identity but one of historical formation’.⁵⁴ Notwithstanding its merits, however, the *Compendium* quickly drew strong denunciations from both Catholic and Protestant camps: Francis Nugent, head of the Irish Capuchins, complained to Rome while, annoyed at its justification of insurrection in Ireland, James Ussher took advantage of the multiple inaccuracies of dating, place and person names in the *Compendium* to denounce O’Sullivan as ‘the most egregious liar of any in Christendom’.

CONCLUSION

At the close of the ‘Address to the reader’ in his *Compendium*, O’Sullivan quoted Ovid:

Who would ever know of Thebes and the seven leaders, were it not for verse,
of all that went before and after? Even the gods, if it is right to say this, are
created by verse; their mighty majesty needs the bard’s voice.⁵⁵

Like Ovid, this cohort of Irish authors were exiles, conscious of their potent role in creating a memory of history. Individually, collaboratively and cumulatively, they made significant pioneering contributions towards fashioning a history and identity for a distinct, modern Irish Catholic *Natio* which would, they hoped, merit ‘a place on the map of Europe, ... an era in the history of Christianity, ... [and] a position in the heavenly hierarchy’.⁵⁶ In the decades that followed, Ireland’s leading Catholic scholars,

notably Seán Mac Colgan, Geoffrey Keating and John Lynch, would build upon those foundations to advance the historical legitimisation of Irish Catholicism.

NOTES

1. Bernadette Cunningham, 'The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain, 1607–1650' in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Ideology and the historians* (Dublin, 1991), pp 11–30, p. 21.
2. *Ibid.*, pp 27–30.
3. See Edel Bhreathnach et al. (eds), *The Irish Franciscans, 1534–1990* (Dublin, 2009); Salvador Ryan, 'Reconstructing Irish Catholic history after the Reformation' in Katherine van Liere et al. (eds), *Sacred history: uses of the Christian past in the Renaissance world* (Oxford, 2012), pp 186–205, and Raymond Gillespie and Ruairí Ó hUiginn (eds), *Irish Europe, 1600–1650: writing and learning* (Dublin, 2013) for syntheses of recent scholarship.
4. Ryan, 'Reconstructing', p. 186.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
6. Cunningham, 'Franciscan historians', p. 29.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
8. *Great deeds in Ireland. Richard Stanyhurst's De rebus in Hibernia gestis*, ed. John Barry and Hiram Morgan (Cork, 2013), p. 26.
9. Ryan, 'Reconstructing', p. 191.
10. Cunningham, 'Franciscan historians', p. 28.
11. These scholars specialised in hagiography and the cult of saints in Christianity.
12. *De rebus*, p. 107.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
14. *Ibid.*, pp 20, 79, 239.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 319.
17. *Ibid.*, pp 397–403.
18. These were articulated in his 'Description of Ireland' published in Holinshed's *The chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1577).
19. *De rebus*, p. 133.
20. Colm Lennon, 'Richard Stanihurst's "Spanish Catholicism": ideology and diplomacy in Brussels and Madrid, 1586–1601' in Enrique García Hernán et al. (eds), *Irlanda y la monarquía Hispánica: Kinsale 1601–2001* (Madrid, 2002), pp 75–85, p. 77.
21. Colm Lennon, 'Stanihurst, Richard' in *ODNB* (accessed 19 June 2015).

22. Lennon, 'Spanish Catholicism', p. 78.
23. Quoted in 'Introduction', *De rebus*, p. 55; Stephen White, 'Apologia pro Hibernia' (1610s) and 'Apologia pro innocentibus Ibern' (1630s).
24. Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, 'Lombard, Peter' in *DIB* (accessed 19 June 2015).
25. Quoted in Thomas O'Connor, 'A justification for foreign intervention in early modern Ireland: Peter Lombard's *Commentarius* (1600)' in idem and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Irish migrants in Europe after Kinsale, 1602–1820* (Dublin, 2003), pp 14–31, p. 21.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
29. See 'Introduction' in *De rebus*, pp 60–1.
30. Brian Jackson, 'The construction of argument: Henry Fitzsimon, John Rider and religious controversy in Dublin, 1599–1614' in Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds), *British interventions in early modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005), pp 97–115, p. 113; Bernadette Cunningham, 'Fitzsimon, Henry' in *ODNB* (accessed 19 June 2015).
31. Jackson, 'Construction', p. 114.
32. Mary Ann Lyons, 'St Anthony's College, Louvain, Gaelic texts and articulating Irish identity, 1607–40' in Gillespie & Ó hUiginn (eds), *Irish Europe*, pp 21–43, pp 36–8.
33. Thomas O'Connor, 'Towards the invention of the Irish Catholic *Natio*: Thomas Messingham's *Florilegium* (1624)' in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, lxiv, no. 2 (1999), pp 157–77, p. 159.
34. Colm Lennon, 'Rothe, David' in *ODNB* (accessed 19 June 2015); Thomas O'Connor, 'Custom, authority and tolerance in Irish political thought: David Rothe's *Analecta sacra et mira* (1610)' in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, lxv, no. 2 (2000), pp 133–56.
35. Colm Lennon, 'Political thought of Irish Counter-Reformation churchmen: the testimony of the 'Analecta' of Bishop David Rothe' in Hiram Morgan (ed.), *Political ideology in Ireland, 1541–1641* (Dublin, 1999), pp 181–202, p. 201.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
40. *Ibid.*, pp 200–01.
41. O'Connor, 'Invention', p. 163.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

46. Hiram Morgan, 'Un pueblo unido ... : the politics of Philip O'Sullivan Beare' in García Hernan et al. (eds), *Irlanda*, pp 265–82, p. 266; Mícheál Mac Craith, 'Conry, Florence' in *DIB* (accessed 12 June 2015).
47. Clare Carroll, 'Irish and Spanish cultural and political relations in the work of O'Sullivan Beare' in Morgan (ed.), *Political ideology*, pp 228–53, p. 245; eadem, *Circe's cup: cultural transformations in early modern writing about Ireland* (Cork, 2001).
48. Carroll, *Circe's cup*, p. 105.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*, p. 116. These descriptions also feature in the intelligence document entitled 'A Briefe Relation of Ireland and the diversity of the Irish in the same' and attributed to O'Sullivan Beare. It was presented by Ó Maolchonaire to the Spanish Council c.1618; see *ibid.*
55. Latin quotation and translation in Carroll, *Circe's cup*, p. 122.
56. O'Connor, 'Invention', p. 177.

Writing About Eucharistic Belief and Practice Among Historians of Protestantism in Seventeenth-Century Ireland

Evie Monaghan

Historians writing about early modern religion have become increasingly interested in how religious beliefs were adopted and practised by the laity.¹ Until recently, however, the treatment of lay practice by historians of pre-modern Ireland usually only featured as part of general ecclesiastical and political narratives. In this context, lay experiences were used to bolster the ideological positions of church historians. These ecclesiastical histories form the basis for the following analysis of how confessional historians wrote about religious practice in Ireland during the seventeenth century. The chapter examines how Irish Protestant writers approached religious customs of the past in their articulation of a confessional identity. In order to shed light on the nuances of these historians' interpretations, their interest in one particular theme is explored, that is, how they articulated the history of eucharistic practice and belief.

E. Monaghan (✉)

The Discovery Programme, Centre for Archaeology and Innovation Ireland,
Dublin, Ireland

EUCHARISTIC CONTEXT

After the sixteenth-century European Reformation, the eucharist became a powerful symbol of confessional identity. Lutherans, Calvinists and Zwinglians formulated new and diverse eucharistic doctrines, all of which expressly rejected the Catholic belief in transubstantiation, the literal transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass. Protestants favoured a spiritual interpretation of the transformation, and a theological battle ensued between the two sides, as well as among various Protestant groups. The eucharist serves as a useful tool through which to identify distinct confessional groups and offers an opportunity to explore how these groups viewed themselves and others. In documenting their own communities, historians of these confessional groups were confronted with a variety of tasks. In seventeenth-century Ireland, political and religious circumstances would dictate historical interpretations as writers sought to validate their communities either by instilling intellectual and moral confidence in a privileged minority, or by sanctifying their communities through pointing to past sufferings in order to elevate their current persecution.

THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

The term ‘confessional’ history has been used to describe the work of these and later historians who were seen to be advancing a version of history that suited a particular aim, usually the promotion of one confession over another as the ‘true’ church. While it is difficult to deny that these early historians had specific confessional biases, their scholarship was often extensively based on primary materials. This was the case with one of the Church of Ireland’s earliest historians, James Ussher, archbishop of Armagh. Ussher’s scholarship was wide-ranging, and both his familial and intellectual connections ensured that he had access to a vast array of primary sources. Ussher’s *A discourse of the religion anciently professed by the Irish and British* (Dublin, 1622) was intended to promote a vision of the Irish church as part of an unbroken tradition with the early Christians, who were free from the objectionable practices that had entered the Roman church sometime before the end of the first century. Ussher’s thesis left an enduring legacy among subsequent historians who were convinced by his arguments that the Church of Ireland descended from a pristine Patrician ideal, free from the idolatrous and dogmatic

doctrines of the medieval church.² By examining the terminology used in ancient texts for the celebration of the eucharist and concluding that there were ‘diverse rites and manners of celebrations ... observed in divers parts of this kingdom’, Ussher revealed a desire for the accommodation of various forms of churchmanship in the early seventeenth century.³ This was an important aspect of his exposition, as Ussher was associated with low-church principles, especially in his eucharistic practice. In his diocese of Armagh, he was rumoured to have had a communion table placed lengthways in the aisle of St Peter’s church in Drogheda.⁴ This ‘tablewise’ arrangement was reported to have been widespread in Ulster where the nature of the Protestant settlement and Ussher’s personal beliefs resulted in looser liturgical directives. John Bramhall, the high-church bishop of Derry, reported from his diocese in the 1630s that the churches had no altars but ‘a table ten yards long, where they sit and receive the Sacrament like good fellows’.⁵ In 1633 the communion table at Christ Church cathedral in Dublin was reoriented north-south and raised up (like an altar) while in nearby St Patrick’s cathedral, the large funeral monument of the earl of Cork had displaced the east-end altar.⁶

This godly theological perspective was embodied in the 1615 articles of religion, which had been engineered by Ussher. They affirmed the doctrine of predestination and were important as a statement of belief for a church that at the time saw itself as capable of providing its own mode of expression, or at least improvisation, in formulating its beliefs.⁷ Calvinist soteriological teaching was evident in the 1615 articles in the statement on eucharistic reception; in ‘the inward and spiritual part [of communion], the same Body and Blood is really and substantially presented unto all those, who *have Grace* to receive the Son of God, even to all those that believe in his name.’⁸ In the *Discourse* Ussher connected the eucharistic sacrifice to that articulated by St Patrick, ‘the sacrifice of the elder times [which] was not like unto the new Masse of the Romanists, wherein the Priest alone doth all; but unto our Communion, where others also have free liberties given unto them to eat of the altar, as well as they that serve the altar’.⁹ Against the Catholic tradition of receiving the bread and wine in one kind only, Ussher provided historical evidence from the *Life of St Brigid*, written by Cogitosus, that at her church in Kildare the saint ‘with her maidens and widows’ would ‘enjoy the banquet of the body and blood of Jesus Christ’. Ussher found similar evidence for the practice of receiving in both kinds in the case of convents established abroad under the rule of Columbanus.¹⁰ Surprisingly, Ussher cited a miracle associated

with St Brigid which occurred at the moment of her receiving the chalice to drink the consecrated wine. Conscious that such miracles were often used by Catholic writers to testify to the doctrinal truth of transubstantiation, Ussher qualified their inclusion in his text by citing Jesus's use of the phrase 'body and blood' rather than 'bread and wine' at the last supper and warned that a reader who might quibble about the use of such examples 'deserveth not the name of a Christian, that will question the truth of that saying, or refuse to speak in that language, which he hath heard his Lord and Master use before him'.¹¹

Eucharistic miracles were problematic for a Protestant writer to rely on, as Protestants considered the age of miracles to have ended. To offset any doubt about his eucharistic theology, Ussher needed to re-affirm the Protestant view that the eucharist was a spiritual sacrament. He found a precedent for a spiritual understanding of the sacrament in Ireland in the unlikely figure of Henry Crump, a fourteenth-century Cistercian theologian who had signed a condemnation of the eucharistic teachings of John Wyclif in 1381. Crump was later accused of espousing pro-Wyclif sentiments when he returned to Ireland in 1385. The allegation may have stemmed from his disputes with the mendicant orders, and his chief accuser, William Andrew, the Dominican bishop of Meath, was mainly concerned to convict him of heresy on the basis of his anti-mendicant stance. This suggestion of heterodoxy on the subject of the eucharist may have attracted Ussher's attention and he claimed that Crump maintained 'the body of Christ in the sacrament of the altar was only a looking glass to the body of Christ in heaven'.¹² Ussher's source for this statement is unclear, as no texts written by Crump survive, although John Bale, the sixteenth-century bishop of Ossory and bibliographer, recorded that Crump had authored at least three works. Ussher's reference for Crump's eucharistic beliefs suggested a manuscript written by William Andrew, the bishop who had accused Crump of heresy, which may have been in Ussher's possession.¹³ Crump was an unusual source for Ussher, taken from the late fourteenth century and as such far later than the time of the corruption of the Irish church which had been set by Ussher around the turn of the first millennium.¹⁴ It must be assumed therefore that Ussher viewed Crump as a godly beacon in an otherwise dark age, a familiar theme in Ussher's thought which sought to construct an unbroken apostolic succession from the early church to the Protestant reformers.¹⁵

Other Protestant writers followed Ussher's lead. James Ware, the historian and antiquary, was encouraged by Ussher to develop an interest in

history while at Trinity College, and relied heavily on Ussher's account of religious practices in Ireland during the time of St Patrick. Ware regarded the saint as 'a person of ... exemplary piety and virtue' whose biography had been corrupted over time with 'numberless fictions [and] monstrous fables' and contended that those who gave the most accurate account of the saint lived closest to his time and were 'most sparing in recounting his miracles'.¹⁶ Catholic historians writing on the Continent were accused of multiplying the miracles of Patrick, and Ware considered Philip O'Sullivan Beare to have been most culpable, as according to Ware, it was he who first mentioned St Patrick's Purgatory.¹⁷ Ware carefully avoided delving into an extended discussion on the virtue or reality of miracles but focused instead on Patrick's good works, which 'ought to be the subject of every Man's imitation'.¹⁸

In his treatment of the eucharistic beliefs and practices of the early church, Ware followed Ussher's analysis, that the word 'Mass' was meant for a variety of liturgical ceremonies, including evening prayer, and that communion was universally received in both kinds by the ancient Irish church. In support of this Ware used the same miracle of St Brigid (taken by Catholics to confirm transubstantiation) and repeated Ussher's theological challenge to that miracle.¹⁹ Ware, who held more conformist beliefs than Ussher, dwelt on the sacrificial nature of the early communion rituals and stated that the understanding of the early Christians of the word sacrifice 'did antiently import, what the sacrament doth now ... for what was offered to God was called the sacrifice, and what was given to, and received by the communicant, was called by the same name.'²⁰

Ussher and Ware therefore were unanimous in their historical interpretation of the eucharist in the early Irish church. However, their interpretations also serve to illuminate the particular preoccupations of the Church of Ireland in the early part of the seventeenth century. Ussher's Calvinist inclinations led him to focus his attention on communion in both kinds and he developed a perspective that encompassed a eucharistic celebration as a communal meal partaken by the godly. Ware, who worshipped at St Werburgh's church in Dublin, sought to connect the sacrificial language of some of the early Christian writers with the language he would have experienced at a parochial level.²¹ Where Ussher had a table in the aisle of his church, Ware's experience was of an altar placed at the east end of the church, and a rite dictated by the book of common prayer. Two of Ware's historical texts were dedicated to Thomas Wentworth, the lord deputy, who had worked with Bramhall to implement a policy of Laudian-style

reforms in the Church of Ireland, including raising up and railing in altars.²² This dichotomy in eucharistic beliefs would persist, and lay experience was often dictated by the particular stance of the local bishop or minister. Interestingly lay practice sometimes subverted the aims of the clergy, and the laity clung to an older tradition of receiving the eucharist only once a year, despite the efforts of the bishops to implement more regular practices.²³

PRESBYTERIAN HISTORIES

The sentiments of Ussher, and especially his heralding of the early church as a ‘company of saints’, would have found a distinctive resonance among the growing Presbyterian population of Ulster.²⁴ Ussher was a good patron to these settlers and we have seen that his own practices and those of some parishes in Ulster were formulated along ‘godly’ lines. Eucharistic practice was modelled on the celebration of the last supper where communicants sat around a table and the elements of bread and wine were administered by the minister and elders, or passed from one person to the next in the manner of a communal meal. It was in their celebrations of the eucharist that Presbyterians demonstrated a unique confessional identity. In the early years of plantation this was an identity of a frontier people, besieged by the particular difficulties of a newly settled population.²⁵ One of the first chroniclers of these fledging Presbyterian communities, Andrew Stewart, articulated the problems encountered by these people in a frequently quoted critique:

... from Scotland came many and from England not a few, yet all of them generally the scum of both nations, who, for debt, or breaking and fleeing from justice, or seeking shelter, came hither, hoping to be without fear of man’s justice in a land where there was nothing, or but little, as yet, of the fear of God ...²⁶

This designation of the early settlers as the ‘scum of both nations’ was a more stinging rebuke than that of Robert Blair, whose autobiography provided details on the beginnings of Presbyterianism in Ulster. Blair noted only that ‘little care was had by any to plant religion’.²⁷ Patrick Adair, who can be seen as the first ‘official’ historian of Ulster Presbyterianism,²⁸ held a similar view of the moral condition of the Ulster settlers, ‘the case of the people through all that part of the country was most lamentable, they being drowned in ignorance, security [sic] and sensuality.’²⁹

When pastors arrived to minister to these wayward people, the settlers welcomed them with enthusiasm, resulting in a period of religious regeneration. The early sacraments of the revival were large events, often involving thousands of people, who came to listen to the preaching before receiving communion. The crowds were often so large that sermons were delivered outdoors, a practice that continued throughout the seventeenth century.³⁰ The tradition of these early communions shaped the character of Presbyterian sacraments in Ulster for the remainder of the century. Large crowds, week-long celebrations, extensive preparatory work in the form of sermons and prayers and a 'festal' atmosphere had all been part of the experience of the revival.

Despite the criticism of early commentators, the overall historical approach of the Presbyterian narratives aimed to construct a chronicle of a community of believers whose eucharistic worship marked them out as an elect group. Andrew Stewart, who was the minister of Donaghadee in County Down between 1645 and 1671, recalled the communion events he had witnessed as a child during the revival: 'I have seen them myself stricken, and swoon with the Word – yea, a dozen in one day carried out of doors as dead, so marvellous was the power of God smiting their hearts for sin ...'³¹ Stewart, whose history was unfinished owing to his death in 1671, recounted the events of the revival from a critical perspective; the work of the revival 'lasted as a sort of disease for which there was no cure, the poor people lying under the spirit of bondage'. Without competent ministers the people languished in 'a most deplorable condition, slain for their sin and knew of no remedy'.³² With the arrival in Ireland of several young and committed clergy from Scotland, the religious sentiments of the people improved; 'the multitude of wounded consciences were healed, they began to draw into holy communion, and met together privately for edification.'³³

The work of these clergy features in early Presbyterian historiography. This is evident in the history written by Patrick Adair, *True narrative of the rise and progress of the Presbyterian church in Ireland* (first published Belfast, 1866). Adair began his history at the time of the settlement of Scots in Ulster, and made no attempt to link these settlers to the early Christian church. Andrew Stewart had included a history of the early church in the first two sections of his text, but it is unknown how he approached the topic; the editor of the third part of his history regarded the first two sections as 'of little historical importance ... some of the materials gathered from very doubtful authorities'.³⁴ Many Presbyterian historians took

their cue from Adair and traced the history of the community only from the arrival of the settlers, perhaps feeling that the early Christians from whom they descended had been adequately dealt with by Scottish historians.³⁵ Indeed the laity drew no distinction between the Scottish and Ulster traditions, and Adair recounts how crowds of Ulster settlers travelled to communions administered by John Livingston at Stranraer and by Robert Blair at Ayr.³⁶

The documenting of lay eucharistic practice was strongly connected to Presbyterian theological beliefs. In the narratives the laity were portrayed as an elevated community, which reflected Calvinist predestinarian teaching. This sanctification was demonstrated at both a communal and an individual level. When the saints acted together they were rewarded by God and thus their election was manifested. Patrick Adair recounted many instances of this, when describing the communions held by John Livingston, minister at Killinchy, and observed how the godly demeanour of the participants touched those outside of the community; ‘Because of their holy righteous carriage, they were generally revered even by the multitude they lived among.’³⁷ At a communion in Derry in the 1640s, the altar was removed from the church and a communion table erected, and ‘God appeared most sensibly and comfortably in that administration by the power of his Spirit on ministers and people.’³⁸

In other cases the saints could proactively achieve sanctification, in particular by fasting and praying together. During the early part of Robert Blair’s ministry a harvest was saved from excessive rain by the proclamation of a public fast, spurring on neighbouring ministers to attempt the same with comparable results.³⁹ On another occasion Adair recounted how non-Presbyterians ‘thanked God ... that the Presbyterians prayed and fasted and had obtained rain and a good season’.⁴⁰

These historical interpretations of communal election were also a feature of the contemporary record, as session minutes attest the fact that the community was recording precisely the same manifestations of divine providence.⁴¹ Group fasting was a common characteristic in the lead-up to communions, and in Carnmoney, County Antrim, the session recorded that ‘much of God’s presence [was] seen at the work’.⁴² Individual saints were also celebrated, and the historians recorded conversion experiences in a further attempt to highlight signs of election. Andrew Brown, once ‘a very vicious man’, underwent a godly conversion by ‘joining himself to religious people’ and, having proved himself sincere in his beliefs, was ‘admitted to the Lord’s Supper’.⁴³ Often ministers were instrumental in

these evangelical experiences and Presbyterian histories extolled these early clergy in the work of Reformation.⁴⁴ Of course the individual saint was a common theme in both devotional and polemical literature; the classic godly texts, John Foxe's *Actes and monuments* (commonly known as Foxe's *Book of martyrs* (London, 1563)) and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's progress* (London, 1678) both focused on the sufferings and trials of individual saints.⁴⁵ This dual identity of the individual and community found its expression most clearly in the communion ritual where communicants prepared themselves spiritually, often in isolation, before re-joining the community at the sacrament and taking their public place among the elect.⁴⁶ The seventeenth-century Presbyterian historians balanced their texts with instances of individual and communal election in order to confirm Presbyterian eucharistic practices, which by the late seventeenth century were coming under increasing pressure from the authorities.⁴⁷

In the later seventeenth century there were few historians from either denomination writing confessional histories, largely because war and persecution diverted interests elsewhere. In 1691 the Church of Ireland bishop of Derry, William King, wrote an account of the experiences of his co-religionists during the reign of James II. This text must be interpreted in light of King's project to justify the Glorious Revolution and the providential tenor of Protestant sentiments at the time when the recent turmoil of the late 1680s sparked not only a raft of 'thanksgiving' sermonising but also a movement to reform the laity so that they might be worthy of the divine benevolence shown to them.⁴⁸ That heightened political tension appeared to affect lay practice, albeit briefly, and parish records indicated an increase in those receiving communion, especially in Dublin parishes where the reforming activity was the most concentrated.⁴⁹ In this atmosphere one could expect an account of recent Protestant experiences to be less than impartial. At the end of the text King attached an appendix of anecdotal evidence, which outlined some of the wrongs perpetrated against Protestants during the reign of James II. A minister from County Meath, who wrote to King in the aftermath of the Williamite war reporting the desecration of the church at Trim by a Catholic soldier, indicated that Protestant clergy saw their altars as imbued with sacred meaning. The soldier,

resolved on *Christmas-day* at night, to brake and plunder our *Altar* ... entered the Church [and] immediately attempted to brake one of the folding doors leading to the Communion table, and endeavouring with all his

force to wrest the door from the hinges, immediately (as he thought) saw several glorious and amazing Sights ... which drive [sic] him immediately into so great disorder, that he tore all the Cloaths off his Back, and ran Naked about the Streets.

King saw clearly in this incident ‘an eminent instance of Gods [sic] vengeance’.⁵⁰

Some of King’s assertions remained influential, in particular the extent to which Catholics took over and used Protestant churches during James’s reign.⁵¹ While other Church of Ireland sources corroborate the use of Protestant churches by Catholics, parish records are not as forthcoming.⁵² There are some references to the ‘troublesome tymes’ and repairs made to city churches after arms-searches, but not to the widespread repairs to altars or church interiors that would be expected had King’s reported desecration taken place on a large scale.⁵³ King’s indignation at the desecration of altars spoke of his erastian outlook as a vociferous defender of the privileges of the Church of Ireland, and his own experiences during the period.⁵⁴ While imprisoned in Dublin Castle he noted in his diary the days he administered the sacrament to other prisoners, as well as the day when news reached him that the King had attended Mass in Christ Church cathedral.⁵⁵ King would soon engage in a pamphlet war with leading Presbyterian ministers over bodily worship and communion practices. By this time the Protestant eucharist had acquired political significance and was confirmed as a symbol of political loyalty with the introduction of the sacramental test in 1704.⁵⁶ King’s report of Catholics ‘breaking windows, pulling up seats and throwing down the pulpit, communion tables and rails’ highlighted the shift that had occurred in the Church of Ireland’s position since the days of Ussher and Ware.⁵⁷ Confessional identities were now more firmly entrenched and Protestant sufferings in the past became a justification and confirmation for their current position. Where Ussher and Ware were attempting to trace the religious customs of the past to justify a doctrinal and ecclesiastical position, King was using the immediate experience of Protestants to confirm a political position for which a specific type of religious practice was expected.

The extent to which these histories were read by the laity is difficult to gauge. Evidence of lay readership points to the reading of historical texts more for moral assurance or to harvest material for use in religious and political controversy than for intellectual curiosity.⁵⁸ Ussher’s *Discourse* was written in English and so was intended to be read by a more general audience,

in contrast to his more extensive works written in Latin and designed for a highly literate audience, such as *Britannicarum ecclesiarum antiquitates* (Dublin, 1639).⁵⁹ Booksellers' lists indicate that historical works were not a high priority. In the 1660s one of James Ware's texts was listed for sale among the more popular devotional and political texts.⁶⁰ Ware's texts were sold in English-language editions in Dublin in 1705 but were substantially enlarged with supplementary material, suggesting that the general public were not fully enthused by purely historical texts.⁶¹ However, the historical traditions instituted in the seventeenth century certainly had lasting effects on confessional historiographies, as is evidenced by several contributions in this volume.

For historians of the Church of Ireland, documenting the eucharistic practices and beliefs of the past changed over the seventeenth century. While Ussher and Ware sought to connect eucharistic practices with those of the primitive church as part of a larger narrative which gave historical legitimacy to the Church of Ireland, later writers, like William King, opted for a polemical style that addressed immediate concerns of political loyalty. Among the Presbyterians there was no attempt at a grand project, Adair's *Narrative* coming closest to a comprehensive account.⁶² Presbyterians seemed little interested in writing a narrative that connected their church to an earlier Irish tradition, probably a result of their strong Scottish connections. They focused instead on the beginnings of godly communities in Ireland. This could be seen in the documenting of a communion of saints, their identity being driven by spiritual rather than historical connections. The doctrine of predestination perhaps led to a degree of introspection, a searching for evidence of truth in their own lives and the life of their immediate community, rather than in the chronicles of previous generations. For both Church of Ireland and Presbyterian historians, evidence of divine favour was sought and recorded as proof of their religious positions.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1991); Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England, 1400–1580* (2nd edn, New Haven, 2005); Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted people: belief and religion in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997).

2. Alan Ford, “‘Standing one’s ground’: religion, polemic and Irish history since the Reformation” in idem, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds), *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), pp 1–14, pp 1–5 ; S. J. Connolly, *Contested island: Ireland, 1460–1630* (Oxford, 2007), p. 352.
3. Phil Kilroy, ‘Sermon and pamphlet literature in the Irish reformed church, 1613–1634’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxxiii (1975), pp 110–21.
4. W. D. Bailie, *The Six Mile Water revival of 1625* (Belfast, 1976), pp 4–5.
5. John McCafferty, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland, Bishop Bramhall and the Laudian reforms, 1633–1641* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 99.
6. Raymond Gillespie, ‘The shaping of reform, 1558–1625’ in Kenneth Milne (ed.), *Christ Church cathedral, Dublin: a history* (Dublin, 2000), pp 195–217, pp 196–8; Charles Elrington, *The life of the Most Rev. James Ussher, D.D.* (Dublin, 1848), pp 158–9.
7. Alan Ford, ‘The Church of Ireland, 1558–1634: a puritan church?’ in idem, McGuire & Milne (eds), *As by law established*, pp 52–68; Alan Ford, ‘Ussher, James’ in *ODNB* (accessed 19 June 2015); John McCafferty, ‘Ussher, James’ in *DIB* (accessed 19 June 2015).
8. Articles of religion (1615), article 94 (emphasis added), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schafft/creeds3.iv.xiv.html> (accessed 11 Feb. 2016).
9. James Ussher, *A discourse of the religion anciently professed by the Irish and British* (Dublin, 1622), p. 36.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
12. David Beresford, ‘Crump, Henry’ in *DIB* (accessed 19 June 2015); Ussher, *Discourse*, p. 39.
13. Ussher, *Discourse*, p. 43, ‘Ex actis Willielmi Andreæ Midensis episcopi contra Henr. Crumpe, anno 1384 quæ MS. habeo.’
14. McCafferty, ‘Ussher’ in *DIB*.
15. This had been the theme of Ussher’s work *Gravissimæ quaestionis de Christianarum ecclesiarum* (London, 1613).
16. *The whole works of Sir James Ware concerning Ireland* (2 vols, Dublin, 1764), ii, 3–4.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, pp 27–9.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
21. F. R. Bolton, *The Caroline tradition of the Church of Ireland* (London, 1958), pp 90–103.
22. The practical effects of the high-church movement of the 1630s still awaits a comprehensive examination. It is unlikely that the architectural aspirations of the movement, such as the raising up and railing in of altars, had

- sufficient time to develop much further than the planning stage, when rebellion broke out in 1641. T. C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford, 1975), pp 168–71; McCafferty, *Reconstruction*, pp 73–113.
23. See the list of communicants for Delgany parish in 1692 where the majority of parishioners received communion at Christmas (RCB Library, P917/5/1, p. 3). For a discussion of this see Evie Monaghan, ‘Eucharistic belief and practice in Ireland, 1660–1740’ (PhD thesis, NUI Maynooth, 2014), pp 71–7; for frequency of communion during the seventeenth century see Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, pp 171–3.
 24. Ussher, *Discourse*, p. 76.
 25. Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy fairs: Scotland and the making of American revivalism* (2nd edn, Grand Rapids, 2001), pp xi–xxviii.
 26. Andrew Stewart, ‘History of the Church of Ireland after the Scots were naturalized’ appended to W. D. Killen (ed.), *A true narrative of the rise and progress of the Presbyterian church in Ireland (1623–1670) by the Rev. Patrick Adair* (Belfast, 1866), pp 305–21, p. 313.
 27. Robert Blair, *The life of Mr Robert Blair*, ed. Thomas McCrie (Edinburgh, 1848), p. 57.
 28. It is likely that Adair’s *Narrative* was commissioned by the Antrim meeting, as in 1697 the synod solicited his son to transcribe the manuscript. Raymond Gillespie, ‘Patrick Adair’ in *DIB* (accessed 19 June 2015); *Records of the General Synod of Ulster from 1691 to 1820* (3 vols, Belfast, 1890), i, 25.
 29. Adair, *Narrative*, p. 9.
 30. Bailie, *Six Mile Water revival*, pp 13–14; ‘Lisburn session minutes’ (PRONI, MIC/1P/159/6–10, 28 June 1691).
 31. Stewart, ‘History of the Church of Ireland’, p. 317.
 32. *Ibid.*, pp 317–18.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 309.
 35. David Calderwood briefly traced Presbyterian history from the apostles to the Waldensians and then to the Lollards in England and Scotland in *The true history of the Church of Scotland* (n.p., 1678), pp 1–2. Alexander Shields made a more comprehensive attempt to trace the history of the godly tradition in Scotland in *A hind let loose or, An historical representation of the testimonies of the Church of Scotland for the interest of Christ* (n.p., 1687). The text was highly controversial in Scotland but was reportedly being widely circulated in Ulster and a shipment seized at Belfast port in the 1690s. William Tisdall, *The conduct of the dissenters of Ireland* (Dublin, 1712), pp 67–70.
 36. Adair, *Narrative*, pp 50–1.
 37. *Ibid.*, pp 41, 208.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
41. Phil Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy, 1660–1714* (Cork, 1994), pp 23–4, 238.
42. Carnmoney session book (PRONI, MIC/1P/37/4, 26 June 1698).
43. Adair, *Narrative*, pp 42–3.
44. See, for example, the influence of Robert Blair on a man who had sought initially to injure him: *ibid.*, pp 13–15.
45. For Foxe's *Book of martyrs* in an Irish context see Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: print, reading and social change in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2005), pp 174–5. Bunyan's texts were sold in Belfast at the turn of the century: see final advertisement leaves of Matthew Meade, *The almost Christian discovered* (Belfast, 1700).
46. Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, p. 95.
47. Templepatrick session book (PRONI, CR4/12/B/1, pp 168–9); Adair, *Narrative*, p. 288; Kilroy, *Protestant dissent*, p. 186.
48. Gillespie, *Devoted people*, chap. 7; *idem*, 'The religion of Irish Protestants: a view from the laity, 1580–1700' in Ford, McGuire & Milne (eds), *As by law established*, pp 89–99; T. C. Barnard, 'Reforming Irish manners: the religious societies in Dublin during the 1690s' in *Historical Journal*, xxxv, no. 4 (1992), pp 805–38; William King, *Ireland's day of rejoycing come, or joy and thanksgiving for the preservation of His Majesty's person* (London, 1690); John Stearne, *King David's case apply'd to King James and King William; in a sermon preach'd at Christ-Church, Dublin, on the fifth of November, 1691* (Dublin, 1691); Sermon preached by Anthony Dopping, bishop of Meath, at Christ Church, Dublin, 26 November 1691 (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 929 no. 61).
49. Church of Ireland catechisms were also produced in increasing volumes from the 1680s onwards: see Ian Green, "'The necessary knowledge of the principles of religion": catechisms and catechizing in Ireland, c.1560–1800' in Ford, McGuire & Milne (eds), *As by law established*, pp 69–88, pp 71–4; Monaghan, 'Eucharistic belief', pp 59–71.
50. William King, *The state of the Protestants of Ireland under the late King James's government* (London, 1691), pp 397–8.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 208; Richard Mant, *History of the Church of Ireland from the Reformation to the Revolution* (London, 1840), pp 722–3.
52. T. C. Barnard, 'Enforcing the Reformation in Ireland, 1660–1704' in Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550–1700* (Surrey, 2006), pp 202–27, pp 214–16.
53. Vestry book of St Michael's church (RCB Library, P118/5/1 pp 259, 265–6); Vestry accounts of St. Bride's (RCB Library, P327/4/1, p. 138);

- Vestry book of St. John's (RCB Library, P328/5/2, p. 156); King, *State of the Protestants*, pp 208–16, 395–8.
54. Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, 'The trials of the chosen peoples: recent interpretations of Protestantism and national identity in Britain and Ireland' in eidem (eds), *Protestantism and national identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850* (Cambridge, 1998), pp 3–29, p. 25.
 55. Hugh Jackson Lawlor (ed.), 'Diary of William King, D.D., archbishop of Dublin, during his imprisonment in Dublin Castle' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 5th ser., xxxiii, no. 3 (1903), pp 255–83, p. 263, no. 4 (1903), pp 389–415, pp 399–400, p. 407.
 56. Kilroy, *Protestant dissent*, pp 171–87; 'Laws and ordinances of war, 4 October 1662' in *Cal. S.P. Ire., 1660–2*, p. 600.
 57. King, *State of Protestants*, p. 209.
 58. For an account of lay reading of historical texts see Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp 172–5.
 59. Bernadette Cunningham and Raymond Gillespie, 'James Ussher and his Irish manuscripts' in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 33 (2004/2005), pp 81–99, p. 95.
 60. See advertisement at the back of Jeremy Taylor, *Chrisis teleiōtikē, A discourse of confirmation* (Dublin, 1663). For the popularity of devotional texts in England in this period see C. John Somerville, 'Religious typologies and popular religion in Restoration England' in *Church History*, xlv (1976), pp 32–41.
 61. Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, p. 174.
 62. For Catholic historians undertaking such projects see Bernadette Cunningham, 'The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain, 1607–1650' in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Ideology and the historians* (Dublin, 1991), pp 11–30.

Telling the Presbyterian Story in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: John McBride and James Kirkpatrick

Robert Armstrong

INTRODUCTION

James Seaton Reid's *History of the Presbyterian church in Ireland, comprising the civil history of the province of Ulster from the accession of James the First...* (3 vols, Edinburgh, 1834–53) was intended by its author to fill a 'chasm ... in the Ecclesiastical History of the [British] empire'. Monumental in scope and narrative in form, it promised the fruits of 'diligent and extended enquiries' after and into 'every accessible source of information'.¹ Reid's work towered over all subsequent Irish Presbyterian histories. His treatment of the seventeenth century was particularly extensive; indeed the two volumes published during his lifetime only carried his history as far as the reign of William III (1689–1702). For the earlier period he readily acknowledged the important work of the seventeenth-century minister Patrick Adair, whose 'valuable manuscript' (unpublished until 1866) he considered 'the only record of the Presbyterian Church, prior to the revolution, existing in Ireland', save for some minute books

R. Armstrong (✉)
Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: robert.armstrong@tcd.ie

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‘of little value to the historian’. By contrast, Reid only grudgingly admitted the influence, if not the merits, of a very different text, referring to ‘that well-known, but, so far as historical information is concerned, most meagre volume, “Presbyterian Loyalty”’.² Probably the work of the Belfast minister James Kirkpatrick, *An historical essay upon the loyalty of Presbyterians in Great-Britain and Ireland from the Reformation to this present year 1713*, appeared in the same year as *A sample of jet-black prelatial calumny in answer to a pamphlet...*, attributed to another Belfast minister, John McBride. Both were massively disproportionate refutations of the case made in an anonymous thirty-page tract, *A sample of true-blew Presbyterian-loyalty, in all changes and turns of government...* published in Dublin in 1709, and widely believed to be authored by the combative vicar of Belfast, William Tisdall.³

Patrick Adair was one of a succession of ministers called upon from 1669 onwards by the wider Presbyterian body to produce a ‘history of the church of Ireland’. Only one of his predecessors, Andrew Stewart, is known to have left behind a manuscript history: he composed an ambitious if derivative sketch of Irish Christianity beginning with St Patrick and ending in the 1620s.⁴ Adair and Stewart are Ulster Presbyterianism’s protohistorians. Not only were they the first to respond to their correigionists’ call, they both directed attention to a period that later generations of Presbyterians considered formative – the plantation era, before the wars of the 1640s and the establishment of a formal Presbyterian structure in Ulster in 1642.⁵ The importance of those early decades will become apparent as this chapter unfolds, but Adair and Stewart will feature much less than their successors McBride and Kirkpatrick, whose work was not cast in the narrative mode of Adair or later, Reid, and was more directly polemical in intent. Rather, the histories of McBride and Kirkpatrick were organised to confront and quash Tisdall’s claim ‘that there ever was a perfect Harmony both in Principles & Practice amongst all the *Dissenters of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, and that they were equally deep *in the Plots, Associations, and Factions against the King ...* in every Turn of Government since the Reformation ...’.⁶ Ian McBride has highlighted both the whig constitutional thinking that infused the work of McBride and Kirkpatrick, and the ‘anglocentric framework’ they adopted.⁷ This chapter explores how both addressed the specific situation of Ulster’s Presbyterians within a wider context of partisan histories that had originated in the 1660s at the latest. To begin, the focus is on their treatment of the turbulent 1640s and 1650s, the histories of which were

deeply contested in England and Scotland as well as in Ireland, and often cast as evidence of Presbyterianism's disloyal and destructive principles. Attention then shifts to the presentation of a Presbyterian pre-history stretching back to the early seventeenth century, and opening up vexed questions about religious divisions among Protestants and the place of the Scots community in Ireland. Finally, the broader question of how these authors sought to place Ulster Presbyterianism within a still wider story of civil liberty and religious Reformation stretching from the sixteenth century to their own day is addressed.

TORY HISTORY AND THE CIVIL WARS OF THE 1640s

Tisdall's pamphlet spoke into a moment of increasing political tension in Protestant Ireland, even as it spoke out of a particular reading of the recent past in England, notably the civil wars of the 1640s, which culminated in regicide, republican rule and the temporary overthrow of the established Church of England. Despite the proclaimed intention of the restored monarchy of Charles II to dispense with divisions from the war years, blame-directed partisan history flourished after 1660, nourished by the emergence of English party divisions (whig and tory) from the 1670s. Especially virulent during the reign of Anne (1702–14), these divisions had by then also impacted politics in Protestant Ireland where toryism coalesced as a 'church party', alert to the supposed dangers from Protestant dissent.⁸ Both tory and whig histories have been presented as fiercely present-centred and rigorously judgemental, determined not only to identify culprits behind past turmoil but to locate the same conspiratorial dangers endangering church and state still.⁹ For English tories – and for William Tisdall – the peril came from 'the puritan impulse', that restless tendency towards religious change (or 'reform') that had threatened civil no less than ecclesiastical peace since the sixteenth century. If it had been corralled by the Restoration settlement of the 1660s into a repressed and intermittently persecuted dissent, fear that the Revolution settlement of 1689–90 had set this restless tendency loose to once more endanger church and state coloured tory histories into the next century, and ensured that the conflicts of the mid-seventeenth century remained a battleground.¹⁰ That was the historical interpretation Tisdall transposed to Ireland and targeted at Ulster Presbyterianism in particular.

Even Tisdall was prepared to admit that, as William of Orange was 'very tender' towards the Presbyterians, so they proved '*Faithful and*

Loyal Subjects to that Glorious PRINCE' in the Revolution of 1688–9.¹¹ Unsurprisingly, his challengers' response was that the Revolution that founded the existing constitutional order in Britain, and Protestant security in Ireland, could hardly be justified if one were to condemn those in Scotland and England who took up arms '(all other Means proving ineffectuall)' in order to defend 'their Religion, Laws, Liberty and Property' during the earlier crisis of the 1630s–40s.¹² Kirkpatrick devoted dozens of pages to establishing the 'Equity and Justice of the long Parliament's Defensive War' in England,¹³ largely by cutting and pasting evidence from printed texts, his primary resource being the great documentary database, John Rushworth's *Historical collections*.¹⁴ As his account moved closer to the defeat, deposition and death of Charles I, he argued that Presbyterian failure to rally more effectively to their king was entirely consistent with their earlier stance. Had they done so, 'Religion and Liberty wou'd have been in a worse Condition, than they were in at the Commencement of the Civil War'. At the same time he defended them against accusations of any act or part in the regicide.¹⁵

In all this Kirkpatrick echoed views held by English whig historians. But here matters were brought home sharply to Ulster. Tisdall had expended no fewer than seven of the twenty-nine pages of his 1709 text reprinting a 'declaration of the presbytery at Bangor' (July 1649) referenced on his title page.¹⁶ In part the document's importance stemmed from its availability. It was one of a handful of printed texts to survive from the early years of Ulster's first presbytery. Formed in 1642 principally from the chaplains and officer-elders of the Scottish army in Ireland, it provided co-ordination among and jurisdiction over parishes or congregations.¹⁷ Better known was the presbytery's February 1649 'Necessary Representation', issued, as Tisdall had to admit, in 'Detestation' of the killing of Charles I,¹⁸ and owing much of its fame to the immediate and fierce response it had prompted from John Milton, writing on behalf of the regicidal English Republic. Milton accused Presbyterians of both hypocrisy and timidity in launching resistance to the king and then failing to follow it through to the end. From the other end of the political spectrum, tories continued to charge Presbyterians in London, Edinburgh and Belfast with moral responsibility for the king's death, declaring '*that Presbyterians murdered him in his Political Capacity*'¹⁹ even if they had not swung the axe. However, the July 1649 'Declaration' offered the prospect of a clearer hit at the Presbyterians. It was issued as a direct repudiation of an attempt made in the months after Charles I's death to forge a cross-religious

royalist alliance in Ireland, headed by the marquis of Ormond, in support of the newly-proclaimed Charles II. To explain that decision necessitated entering a direct discussion of events in 1640s Ireland.

Kirkpatrick was quite prepared to admit that Presbyterians inclined towards the parliamentary side in the English conflict, seeing their stance as 'lawful and Justifiable'. However, he emphasised that while Presbyterians in Ireland might have been ready to 'own' the English Parliament's war against the king, their priorities lay elsewhere. They

had other work to do, than to embroil themselves in the Debates between the King and Parliament; for while the greatest heat arose and was a carrying on in *England* between the *Royalists* and *Parliamentarians*; the *Presbyterians* in *Ireland* had the *Bloody Irish* Rebels to fight against: and were willing to take assistance from either the King's or Parliament's Forces against the Common Enemy.²⁰

McBride's account featured subtle differences, being more attuned to the pre-war discontent simmering in Scotland, and to how it was fanned into flame there and in Ireland. He declared that following the outbreak of the 1641 Rising it was '*the Scots, ... generally Dissenters ... [who] were the first that appeared in Ulster, against the Common Enemy...*'.²¹ In 1649 Presbyterians in Ulster could not have rallied to the king's representative, Ormond, without binding themselves to a treaty with Catholic interests, which was unacceptable by 'the Laws of God, and the Fundamental Laws of the Land ... Subversive not only of the *British* and *Protestant* Interest in *Ireland*, and of it's [sic] Dependence upon *England*, but also of the *Protestant* Religion'.²² At one level both authors were deflecting Tisdall's blows. They presented the Presbyterians of Ireland as embroiled in conflicts, the mainsprings of which lay elsewhere. Nonetheless, the Presbyterians were portrayed as engaged in a justifiable cause and on a front particularly threatened by the 'Common Enemy'.

PRESBYTERIAN PRE-HISTORY: PURITANS AND PLANTATION

McBride insisted that, in the Ireland of 1642, 'no Man then Questioned the Loyalty of *Puritans*; (who at that time began to be called *Presbyterians*)'.²³ With a parenthesis, he had posited a Presbyterian pre-history. For his part, Kirkpatrick acknowledged that his treatment of 'the first Settlement and Progress of the Presbyterians in *Ireland*' in the reign of James VI and

I relied upon the indispensable ‘Manuscript-History’ by Patrick Adair.²⁴ And Adair had opened his account not in the landmark year of 1642 but about two decades earlier, with the arrival in Ulster of the Scottish minister Robert Blair, ‘the first and greatest instrument for preaching of the Gospell in the north of Ireland’.²⁵ Andrew Stewart, too, identified a new chapter for Christianity in Ireland in ‘the History of propagating the Gospel among the new Plantation of Scots’ during those years.²⁶ Kirkpatrick knew that Adair had made use of Blair’s then-unpublished memoirs, and those of another early minister, John Livingston, of whom he reckoned ‘Mr. *Adair* was a great Intimate and (in some respect) a Disciple’.²⁷ Blair and Livingston, Scottish ministers whose relatively short sojourns in Ireland preceded their leading roles in the covenanting movement in 1640s Scotland, produced their accounts, in defeat, in the 1660s, not long before Stewart and Adair set to work. They ensured that the era of the Ulster plantations would assume an importance in the historical consciousness of Presbyterian Ireland that it would never quite lose. But how was it to be understood?

James Kirkpatrick stated the matter plainly: ‘the Settlement of Presbyterians in the North of *Ireland* was one of the Chief Means of bringing that Kingdom into the Obedience of the Crown of *England*, and of Securing and Enlarging the *British* and *Protestant* Interest in *Ireland*’. Scots who arrived in Jacobean Ulster ‘brought alongst with them their Presbyterian Principles, which they had learn’d at home, and encouraged Ministers of their own Persuasion to settle amongst ’em’.²⁸ He was well aware that such ministers ‘(*Blair* and all the rest)’ served within the established Protestant Church of Ireland, though he insisted that ‘they remain’d Presbyterian still, and us’d not the Liturgy’. They might cooperate with their bishop, and even participated in the Convocation of 1634, but they also ‘consulted together about the best Methods for Cherishing Piety in their several Congregations...’.²⁹ McBride was more forthright: he acknowledged that this early generation in Ulster ‘had no *Presbyteries*, for exercise of Church Discipline, but every Minister, with his Session, did exercise it in his own Congregation’.³⁰ He also offered a more subtle, more extended reading.

McBride only noted in passing claims pressed by Andrew Stewart, and by several generations of Scottish Presbyterians, that ‘from the *first plantation of Christianity in Scotland*’ its church had been governed in

Presbyterian fashion, proving ‘*Scots Presbytery* to be more Ancient then [sic] *English Episcopacy*’³¹ and worthy of restoration after the Reformation. But he also knew that James VI and I, who had once upheld Scottish Presbyterianism and interceded for English puritans, upon his accession to the English throne ‘Vigorously set Himself, utterly to overthrow and crush’ Presbyterian forms in Scotland. The result was that ‘the People called *Puritans*, were very severely treated ... for their *Non-conformity*’ but many of them ‘were warmly invited and welcom’d by the *Undertakers*’ of the Ulster plantation.³²

The precision of McBride’s language, and of his chronology, mattered. As he had argued in an earlier work, anyone seeking to demonstrate that a schism had occurred between the Presbyterians of Ulster and the established Church of Ireland, and to apportion blame for it, would need to demonstrate a prior unity. Yet, he challenged his readers, ‘it will puzzle you to prove, that the Presbyterians in the North ever joynd with the Establish’t Church in the things in which we now differ, to wit, Church-Government, Liturgy, and Ceremonies’,³³ even if ministers like Blair had held parish livings. In effect, and sometimes in direct language, he was claiming for them a puritan identity, but repudiating the negative connotations of the term. Where Tisdall had cast about for anti-puritan statements and seized upon some from Elizabeth I, McBride retorted that her criticisms could hardly be used against Presbyterians in Ulster, she ‘being Dead before any considerable Number of them came thither’. King James’s complaints of puritan disaffection in the early days of his reign were no more pertinent – ‘it cou’d not affect the *Presbyterians* in *Ulster*; seeing there were none of *Them*, in those Days; and as little the *Puritans* in *England*, who were not then under his Government’.³⁴ As with the question of civil war allegiance, the appeal to history meant asserting the need to attend closely to the particularities of time, place and language. Kirkpatrick insisted on the importance of context when interpreting quoted remarks, including their precise political setting and the current interpretation of terms to ensure that ‘no Violence [was] offer’d to the Common signification of Words in that age’.³⁵ This brought about a disaggregation of the tory strategy of seeking a continuous conspiratorial cause, rooted in shared principle, and working itself out in the form of disaffection to church and state over the best part of two centuries.

A USEABLE PAST: PLACING PRESBYTERIANS IN A HISTORY OF LIBERTY AND REFORMATION

But an opposite tendency was also at work, aimed at locating Presbyterian Ulster within an alternative, amenable, historical tradition. McBride reckoned ‘the Mock Name of *Puritans*’ was first applied in England from 1563 to critics of episcopal church government and a liturgy ‘savouring of *Popish Superstition*’.³⁶ For Kirkpatrick, ‘That Glorious Princess’, Elizabeth I, was certainly zealous ‘in promoting every step of the Reformation that was agreeable to her own Inclinations’. However, her unwillingness to press as far as ‘our Reformers had a Mind to have gone’ was, he believed, ‘so great a Misfortune to *England*, that (most probably) it has been the Cause of all the Unhappy Divisions and Animosities among *English* Protestants from *that* time to *this*’.³⁷ Indeed he went further, claiming that ‘the Seeds of Non-Conformity began to appear’ in England as far back as the reign of Edward VI, and identified worship and church governance as the issues in contention.³⁸ An aspiration to chart a ‘history of the Nonconformists’ at least as far back as the 1550s had existed within English dissent since the Restoration³⁹ but was only fulfilled in print with the publication of Daniel Neal’s *History of the Puritans* (4 vols, London, 1732–8). By 1713 a second edition of the other key historical text to emerge from eighteenth-century English dissent – Edmund Calamy’s *Abridgement of Mr Baxter’s history of his life and times* (London) – had appeared. It set out a compelling ‘counternarrative’ to the dominant conformist version of history, affirming a principled tradition within English Protestantism against the persecuting state and church of Restoration England.⁴⁰

In England, history offered a means to overcome the disunity of disparate dissenting bodies.⁴¹ McBride determinedly rejected Tisdall’s claim that in Ireland all dissenters professed the same principles as the Scottish kirk, their ‘Elder Sister’. This might be true for McBride himself, but it was not true, he insisted, even of all ‘that go under the Name of *Presbyterians*’.⁴² Yet his principal attention was given to ‘The *Christian* Loyalty of *PRESBYTERIANS* ... More Particularly, of the *PRESBYTERIANS* IN *ULSTER*’.⁴³ After all, they constituted the vast majority of Protestants outside the established church, and their numbers had increased significantly through Scottish immigration in recent decades.⁴⁴ If McBride intended to write that community into a history that could encompass the ‘Nonconforming Fathers in Queen *Elizabeths* Reign’ who were ‘Ornaments to their Nation’ (England),⁴⁵ it meant addressing a fact long since recognised by Patrick Adair: that those ‘who

owned the Reformation' in Ireland were, for the most part, 'the generality of the Scotch in Ulster'.⁴⁶

Reformation was a key term in Adair's lexicon. He depicted Robert Blair as basing his stance upon scripture, upon positions held by the primitive church and by contemporary scholars, but also in line with 'famous divines who had been seeking reformation these 1300 years'.⁴⁷ While Adair noted 'that famous reformation first began by Luther', he used the term much more readily when referring to the work undertaken in Scotland following the emergence of the covenanting movement in 1637: here was 'reformation ... coming in like a flood', washing away error, superstition and idolatry and leaving behind 'pure church ordinances'. As the tide washed over Ireland, it too began to experience 'a more full reformation'. The Restoration, by contrast, was depicted as restoring to power those whose aim it was 'to overturn the work of reformation and declare it all rebellion', thereby re-establishing episcopacy and the pre-war liturgy.⁴⁸ Adair's narrative is a deft and sophisticated one. He was alert to the workings of providence without squeezing his account into a simplistic presentation of reward following virtue or doom close on the heels of sin.⁴⁹ Instead he wove patterns through his text, not least that of renewed repression and recurrent retreat into a hidden church with pockets of believers and their hunted and hindered pastors, before freedom unexpectedly budded forth again – a story of the persistence of faith under trial and in hope.

The heroic sufferers in Adair's account were 'puritanes' and (more consistently) 'non-conformists',⁵⁰ though both terms, especially the former, are more usually found in modern English historiography than Scottish.⁵¹ If Adair restricted his use of 'puritane' to the pre-1641 years when 'the more religious and stricter sort of people were then [so] nick-named', he also portrayed that period as one when laws were severely executed by bishops against 'the Nonconformist's' who differed from them over church governance and forms of worship.⁵² The work of 'reformation' embraced a renewed Presbyterian church order, certainly, but it was part of a larger struggle, directed towards the twin goals of true worship and godly discipline, both means for the promotion of gospel truth. It was a struggle patiently pursued across three kingdoms, within as well as outside the established churches as circumstances dictated, and directed against mighty foes – princes as well as prelates. To that cause a common language, that of old puritanism and newer nonconformity, could be applied. The language could embrace but was not confined to Presbyterians, and in no way excluded them from the common name of Protestant.

The implications were necessarily and not accidentally political. On the one hand, a true understanding of political loyalty must be disentangled from the false claims made for ‘*Ecclesiastick Loyalty*’, ‘Whereby it appears that the *Hierarchy* and *Ceremonies* are the *Jachin* and *Boaz* of the *English Temple* and *Monarchy*:⁵³ Which if a Man do not acknowledge and submit unto, he is not only excluded from being a Member of the Church; but also Declared a Traitor to the State’.⁵⁴ On the other, the Presbyterians’ ‘*Ecclesiastical Constitution*’ provided not only ‘*Effectual Remedies* against the *Usurpations* and *Ambitions* of the *Clergy*’, but also laid ‘such *Foundations* for the *Liberty* of the *Subject* in *Church* matters that it naturally creates in *People* an *Aversion* from all *Tyranny* and *Oppression* in the *State* also’. It made Presbyterians ‘constant *Haters* of *Arbitrary Power* in all *Princes*’.⁵⁵ Here McBride and Kirkpatrick were speaking a ‘whig-gish’ language of liberty, hostile to tyranny and free from the constraint of religious uniformity. But liberty was sought in order to pursue those twin goals of ‘*Reformation*’ in worship and in church governance and discipline which so exercised Adair, even as ‘*Reformation*’ principles gave strength to the cause of civil liberty. Kirkpatrick and McBride were mainstreaming Presbyterian principles into a common cause which could bring together ‘*Moderate Conformists*’ and ‘*Puritans*’, or ‘the *Low-Church* and the *Dissenters*’ against ‘the *Common Enemy* of *Religion* and *Liberty*’ ‘the *Court* ... *Papists* and *High-flyers*’.⁵⁶ But they were also reworking the ‘*Presbyterian story*’ relayed by Adair’s generation.

MCBRIDE, KIRKPATRICK, AND THE SHAPING OF THE ‘PRESBYTERIAN STORY’

That story necessarily spanned the Irish Sea. Recourse to Scottish and, in Kirkpatrick’s case especially, English history, permitted a deflection of tory blows, whether these were charges of acting disloyally in 1640s Ireland or of generating schism in its Protestant church. Suggesting that causation lay elsewhere could, of course, leave Presbyterian champions open to Tisdall’s wider, if wilder, claims about a persistence of pernicious principles across all three nations and multiple generations. Kirkpatrick and McBride brought precision to the task of picking apart such grand assertions. Their care in elaborating the particular stance and circumstances of those they chose to defend was not extended to their opponents, whom they cast into a shadow history of popery, tyranny and faction. They bombarded Tisdall with evidence far in excess of his own. Not all of this was recycled.

Kirkpatrick inserted rare, sometimes otherwise unknown, Ulster material, whether regarding ministers' confrontation with the authorities of the Commonwealth during the 1650s, or contemporary contests within the corporations of Belfast and Londonderry.⁵⁷ Ulster Presbyterians' history was distinctive, certainly, but in the sense of a distinct sub-plot within the story of the 'Protestant and British Interest' in Ireland. That story, of course, could be seen as but chapters within the greater tale of civil liberty and religious truth upheld and extended in the British kingdoms. And the Ulster story could have further plot twists. Fetched to a province where plantation was a 'Necessity ... in order to the Preservation of the Peace of *Ireland*', the '*Papists* being *Barbarous*, and the *Land*, Generally a *Wilderness*', Presbyterians had taken the lead in combating the 'Common Enemy'.⁵⁸ Yet their 'Modern Protestant Persecutors' were unrelenting. But for government clemency and the readiness of noblemen and gentlemen of good sense to reject the policy of severity urged on them by 'their Ghostly Fathers', the clergy of the established church, there was a danger history could unwind; without a Presbyterian presence 'the far greater Part of *Ulster* ... [would] be laid waste; and very much of other Parts in *Ireland* ... it might easily fall as a Prey to *Papists*, and justly so too ...'.⁵⁹

James Kirkpatrick and John McBride produced exercises in applied history. Reid may have been right in finding Kirkpatrick's stock of historical 'information' 'meagre', certainly if the standard of comparison was Adair. Kirkpatrick arranged his work in lengthy chapters, mostly bounded by the reigns of English monarchs, but largely filled them with page upon page of extended extracts from well-worn texts. McBride showed little interest in imposing any order, chronological or even logical, on his materials and arguments, other than some matching of the sequence of points made by Tisdall. The endurance of their work, Kirkpatrick's in particular, in Presbyterian circles owed much to their existence in print and relative availability. Rooted in the contests of their time, the texts had a clearly defined purpose: to reject a partisan reading of British and Irish religious history which placed Presbyterians, including those of Ulster, in the villains' role, and to contribute to the construction of an alternative, equally partisan and equally expansive in its range. Yet even in so doing their writings also took a place within an emerging 'Presbyterian story', inscribed on those twin pillars of Irish Presbyterian history-writing, the narrative accounts of Patrick Adair and James Seaton Reid, and echoed in countless everyday productions, whether petitions to government, or sermons to congregations. When Reid asserted that Presbyterians' history was 'intimately connected with all

the more important changes in the civil affairs of Great Britain ... and the cause of constitutional freedom is so much indebted to their noble efforts at the Revolution ...', his claim was one his eighteenth-century predecessors would have understood and upheld. His language was equally telling when he lamented the lack of a history 'of any *branch* of the Protestant Church in Ireland', and reminded readers that within that church, 'the Presbyterians have long formed an extensive and influential section ...'.⁶⁰ For Reid, as for his predecessors, Presbyterians were a constituent part of Protestant Ireland, both in church and in state. Indeed, in the persistence of their witness to the purity of 'Reformation' truth, they were its better part.

NOTES

1. 'Preface to the first edition' in James Seaton Reid, *History of the Presbyterian church in Ireland* (2nd edn, 3 vols, London, 1853), i, pp v–vi (subsequent references are to this edition). For Presbyterian history-writing across the nineteenth century see Andrew R. Holmes, 'Presbyterian religion, historiography, and Ulster Scots identity, c.1800 to 1914' in *Historical Journal*, lii (2009), pp 615–40.
2. Reid, *History*, i, 196, n. 22. For a new edition of Adair, alongside the first full publication of Andrew Stewart's history, see Robert Armstrong, Andrew R. Holmes, R. Scott Spurlock and Patrick Walsh (eds), *Presbyterian history in Ireland: two seventeenth-century narratives by Patrick Adair and Andrew Stewart* (Belfast, 2016). Reid's use of Adair is fully explored in that volume in Holmes, 'Rediscovery, controversy and identity: the use of Adair's narrative, c.1825–1914', pp 47–60.
3. Kirkpatrick at least could claim that his 564 pages also took in a second, more substantial, publication, *The conduct of the dissenters in Ireland with respect both to Church and State ...* (Dublin, 1712), intended as a sequel 'by the author of Presbyterian-Loyalty'. McBride's response, only more modest by comparison, covered 218 pages.
4. It also fell under Reid's eye: Reid, *History*, i, 80, n.18. For the ongoing efforts to produce an officially sponsored history see Patrick Walsh, 'Writing history: Andrew Stewart, Patrick Adair and their narratives' in Armstrong et al. (eds), *Presbyterian history*, pp 29–46.
5. Thus, for example, in 1913 the 'tercentenary of Irish Presbyterianism' was celebrated, predicated upon the arrival in Ulster in 1613 of the Scots minister Edward Brice: Holmes, 'Presbyterian religion', pp 638–9. Kirkpatrick reckoned Brice to be a Presbyterian and 'the first Minister of that Persuasion (of the Scots Nation)' to settle in Ulster: [James Kirkpatrick], *An historical essay upon the loyalty of Presbyterians in Great Britain and Ireland ...* ([Edinburgh], 1713), p. 161.

6. [William Tisdall], *A sample of true-blew Presbyterian-loyalty, in all changes and turns of government...* (Dublin, 1709), p. 5.
7. Ian McBride, 'Ulster Presbyterians and the confessional state, c.1688–1733' in D. George Boyce, Robert Eccleshall, and Vincent Geoghegan (eds), *Political discourse in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp 169–92. The 'anglocentric' emphasis is more clearly present in Kirkpatrick than John McBride, though both authors limit their direct coverage of specifically Irish developments, and this needs constantly to be borne in mind, despite the focus here on this element within their texts.
8. D. W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685–1742* (Woodbridge, 2004), esp. pp 35, 92–3.
9. Mark Knights, 'The tory interpretation of history in the rage of parties' in Paulina Kewes (ed.), *The uses of history in early modern England* (San Marino, CA, 2006), pp 347–66.
10. Matthew Neufeld, *The civil wars after 1660: public remembering in late Stuart England* (Woodbridge, 2013), esp. pp 3–5, 12–14.
11. [Tisdall], *A sample*, p. 13.
12. [John McBride], *A sample of jet-black prelatial calumny in answer to a pamphlet called A sample of true-blew Presbyterian loyalty, or the Christian loyalty of Presbyterians in Britain and Ireland, in all changes of government since the Reformation, asserted* (Glasgow, 1713), p. 174.
13. [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, p. 236.
14. *Ibid.*, pp 168–227. It was a technique he used for other decades and episodes, if less extensively, for example, in discussing laws directed against Presbyterians in Restoration England, where he relied heavily upon material from the *State tracts* (*ibid.*, pp 325–54). McBride, too, referenced speeches and documents from these years, making use of Rushworth, for example, for Lord Falkland's speech critical of 'some Bishops and their Adherents' (printed at pp 116–23).
15. [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, pp 227–49, 256.
16. [Tisdall], *A sample*, pp 25–31.
17. Parish-based ministers and elders dominated membership by the mid-1640s.
18. [Tisdall], *A sample*, p. 14.
19. Quoted in [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, p. 109.
20. [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, pp 247, 253.
21. [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, pp 130, 174. Kirkpatrick made much less of the emergence of discontent in Scotland or Ireland, though see for example [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, p. 226.
22. [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, p. 203.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

24. [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, p. 165.
25. Adair, 'True narrative' in Armstrong et al. (eds), *Presbyterian history*, p. 63.
26. Stewart, 'Short account' in Armstrong et al. (eds), *Presbyterian history*, p. 362.
27. [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, p. 165.
28. *Ibid.*, pp 159, 161.
29. *Ibid.*, pp 162–3.
30. [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, p. 16.
31. *Ibid.*, pp 59–61.
32. *Ibid.*, pp 13, 57.
33. [John McBride], *Animadversions on the defence of the answer to a paper, intituled, the case of the dissenting Protestants of Ireland ... with an answer to a peaceable and friendly address to the non-conformists* ([Belfast], 1697), p. 98.
34. [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, pp 39, 54.
35. [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, p. 58; for examples of contextualization see *ibid.*, pp 121, 141.
36. [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, p. 41.
37. [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, p. 102; cf. p. 108, and for similar criticism of Elizabeth see [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, p. 39.
38. [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, p. 82. Kirkpatrick traces such principles back to the Lollards at least.
39. Mark Goldie, *Roger Morrice and the puritan Whigs* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp 269 (quoting Matthew Newcomen, 1661), 299. Goldie offers a detailed discussion of Morrice's historical endeavours in the 1690s.
40. John Seed, 'History and narrative identity: religious dissent and the politics of memory in eighteenth-century England' in *Journal of British Studies*, xlv (2005), pp 46–63, pp 52–3.
41. *Ibid.*, pp 46–8.
42. [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, pp 22, 39.
43. Taken from the sub-title of [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*.
44. S. J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power: the making of Protestant Ireland, 1660–1760* (Oxford, 1992), pp 158–62.
45. [McBride], *Animadversions*, p. 45.
46. Adair, 'True narrative', p. 189.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 77. This phrase is taken directly from Blair's own account.
48. *Ibid.*, pp 101, 126–7, 150, 232.
49. Robert Armstrong, 'Of stories and sermons: nationality and spirituality in Presbyterian Ulster in the later seventeenth century' in idem and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin (eds), *Community in early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), pp 215–31.

50. I have identified eleven uses of 'puritane(s)' in the text, all for the years before 1641, but twenty-one of 'nonconformist(s)' and a further ten of 'nonconformity', spanning the whole range from 1620s Scotland to repeated usage for the 1660s. I was only able to find one use of the term 'dissenters', employed for negotiations between the Presbyterian ministers and Bishop Taylor in 1661 (p. 238).
51. For an important discussion see John Coffey, 'The problem of Scottish puritanism, 1590–1638' in Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550–1700* (Aldershot, 2006), pp 66–90.
52. Adair, 'True narrative', pp 106, 116.
53. 'And he [Solomon] reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the right hand Jachin, and the name of that on the left Boaz' (II Chronicles 3: 17).
54. [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, pp 7–8.
55. [Kirkpatrick], *Loyalty*, p. 152.
56. *Ibid.*, pp 191–2, referring to the reign of Charles I.
57. *Ibid.*, pp 288–302, 420–9.
58. [McBride], *Sample of jet-black*, pp 13, 174.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
60. Reid, 'Preface to the first edition' in *History*, 2nd edn, p. v (emphasis added).

Laying the Nineteenth-Century Foundations: Contributions from a Catholic and a Protestant Scholar in the 1820s

Jacqueline Hill

Yet ... no connected history of the Irish Church has been hitherto published, although an abundance of materials for that purpose are still in existence... (John Lanigan, *An ecclesiastical history of Ireland* (2nd edn, Dublin, 1829), preface, p. iv)

I know many eminent living [Protestant] authors but none has studied ancient Irish history ... (William Phelan, *The case of the Church of Ireland stated* (Dublin, 1823), pp 60–1)

During the seventeenth century, lasting contributions to Irish church history were made by both Catholic and Protestant scholars. However, the age of the penal laws that followed proved to be a less fruitful period for the subject. This was partly because during that time, few Catholic scholars (mostly priests) had the opportunity to pursue such studies, while Protestants, secure in their privileged position (Presbyterians became eligible for public office from 1780), and generally lacking the ability to

J. Hill (✉)

National University of Ireland Maynooth, Maynooth, Ireland

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read early Irish documents, had little incentive to attempt the task. In the 1740s and later, scholars from both the main traditions did display a renewed interest in ancient Irish history.¹ But despite the appearance of one particularly influential work mentioned below, Irish church history as such had not been the principal focus for these studies. However, by the 1820s change was apparent, and this chapter will centre on key contributions from a Catholic scholar, Dr John Lanigan, DD (1758–1828), and a Church of Ireland scholar, the Reverend William Phelan, FTCD (1789–1830).²

These two scholars, though born a generation apart, had a certain amount in common. Both were born into Catholic families in County Tipperary; Lanigan in Cashel and Phelan in Clonmel. Both received part of their education in schools run by Church of Ireland clergymen, and both would be ordained: Lanigan into the Catholic priesthood, while Phelan became a clergyman of the established church. Both would publish some of their work pseudonymously (Lanigan as ‘Irenaeus’, and Phelan as ‘Declan’).³ Both would be frequently cited or referenced by later generations of scholars, and both so impressed their admirers that after their death, memoirs were published of them.⁴

Before their contributions to Irish church history can be discussed, it is worth noting that the limited engagement with the subject in the decades preceding their publications had been compounded by doubts, fostered in part by Enlightenment scepticism, about the authenticity of certain sources for early Christian Ireland. An influential work in this respect was *The antiquities of Ireland* (Dublin, 1790) by Church of Ireland scholar Reverend Edward Ledwich. Although not free himself from the antiquarian romanticism that became prevalent in the later eighteenth century, Ledwich had cast doubt on the very existence of some of the earliest Irish saints, including, notably, St Patrick. Despite his neglect of early Irish sources, Ledwich’s arguments were advanced with confidence, and his work took on something of the status of a classic that no scholar, Protestant or Catholic, could ignore.⁵

Meanwhile, international events were posing challenges for all the churches in Ireland. The spread of French revolutionary armies across Europe during the 1790s and the subsequent captivity of the pope appeared to suggest that the Vatican would be permanently weakened. This fostered tendencies, apparent from the 1760s onwards, for the development of better relations between the Vatican and Great Britain: both now faced a common enemy. Given the spread of revolutionary ideology, the British

government also wished to conciliate Ireland's majority Catholic population. That prompted measures of Catholic relief in 1792 and 1793, and the establishment of St Patrick's College, Maynooth in 1795, which permitted the training of Irish seminarians at home. Although falling short of full equality, many political rights were granted, including the right to vote.⁶ This retreat from persecution offered the prospect of new relations between church and state, and created a climate in which Catholic church-building and pastoral reform could proceed. However, resentment over remaining restrictions, and the requirement to pay tithes to the minority established church, could be more openly expressed.⁷

These developments naturally had implications for the established Church of Ireland, despite the fact that the act of union of 1800 had apparently copper-fastened 'for ever' its position as the state church in Ireland. Located as it was between the Irish Catholic church on one side and Irish Presbyterianism and smaller Protestant denominations on the other, the spread of various Protestant evangelical societies from the 1790s also posed problems for those on the 'high' side of the church who cherished traditional church structures and hierarchy above the more populist approaches of many evangelicals. While this could engender defensiveness, there were also opportunities. Internationally, the Vatican's status had suffered the impact of the French revolution; at home, funds for Church of Ireland church-building and repairs were becoming available via the Board of First Fruits, with a marked effect in certain dioceses.⁸ These developments afforded an opportunity, if not an incentive – perhaps the first in its history – for the established church to become the church both of the state and of the people of Ireland. This was one of the messages that could be drawn from Archbishop William Magee of Dublin's address to his archdiocesan clergy in 1822, widely credited by historians with starting 'the second Reformation'.⁹

It was inevitable, therefore, that the two main churches would find themselves at odds in new ways as the post-revolutionary era began. Rivalry took various forms, but the discussion here concerns church history. This might have been expected in any case, since, in their different ways, both churches were now more openly articulating their long-standing claims to be *the* national church of Ireland. But it is also worth remembering, in a broader European context, that this was an age that blended nationalism and backward-looking romanticism, and attempts were under way well beyond Ireland to enlist the past in support of nationalist causes.¹⁰

DR JOHN LANIGAN

The discussion here begins with the contribution of Dr John Lanigan. In common with other aspiring priests in penal times, he had travelled abroad for his seminary training (to the Irish college in Rome). Following early ordination, he was appointed to the chair of scripture, Hebrew and ecclesiastical history at the University of Pavia, where he was conferred with a doctorate of divinity following publication of his history of the Old and New Testaments. When the university closed in 1796 following the French revolutionary incursion, Lanigan returned to Ireland. He was apparently offered the chair of scripture at Maynooth, but in circumstances that remain obscure the appointment fell through (it was later claimed that Lanigan, who is described as having ‘a certain acerbity of temperament’, resented being requested to sign an anti-Jansenist statement proffered by the bishop of Cork, and, having declined, refused to remain in the chair).¹¹ This anti-Jansenist incident may be more usefully considered in the light of contemporary Gallican versus Ultramontane issues, though in the Irish context the matter was complex. In Lanigan’s case (and he was not alone in this), opposition to the prospect of a government veto over episcopal appointments did not imply that he held Ultramontane views: overall, as will be noted, he had strong Gallican tendencies.¹² In 1797 he accepted employment at the Dublin Society (subsequently becoming its librarian) and remained there for almost two decades, preoccupied with the work that would make his name among contemporaries and later generations: *An ecclesiastical history of Ireland, from the first introduction of Christianity among the Irish, to the beginning of the thirteenth century: compiled from works of... authors, foreign and domestic, who have written ... on ... the Irish church; and from Irish annals and other authentic documents, still existing in manuscript* (4 vols, Dublin, 1822). As the subtitle suggests, what was unprecedented about Lanigan’s *History* was its extensive engagement with original sources, some known to the author from his studies abroad, but also including many Irish and Hiberno-Latin manuscript sources in Ireland and Britain. (It may not be coincidental that in the late eighteenth century the Dublin Society had acquired extensive materials compiled by Walter Harris for the political and ecclesiastical history of Ireland from the twelfth century on; materials that as librarian Lanigan might well have encountered.)¹³

In the preface, the author explained that his main aim in the work was ‘the establishment of truth and the overthrow of error’. Moreover,

he had ‘proceeded to the enquiry divested of all national or religious prejudices’.¹⁴ The latter claim is hardly persuasive. Lanigan was a passionate writer, and his loyalties, especially his national loyalties, emerged strongly. Indeed, while pointing out that contrary to widespread assumptions many documents relative to the early history of the Irish church remained in existence, he claimed that they were extant ‘notwithstanding that the devastating hand of barbarism has been unsparingly engaged in the overthrow of our literary establishments, and in the destruction of our ancient records, the monuments of our nation’s glory’.¹⁵ The work’s overall religious perspective is described in the *ODNB* entry on Lanigan as ‘unashamedly confessional’.¹⁶ Certainly, Lanigan was partisan – a staunch champion of the Irish church (and a particularly scathing critic of Edward Ledwich and his *Antiquities of Ireland*). However, as noted, his Gallicanism gave his views a certain complexity. While fully identifying with the universal Roman Catholic church headed by the pope, he did not endorse the temporal claims of the papacy.¹⁷ This gave him something in common with certain earlier Church of Ireland scholars, notably Archbishop James Ussher and Sir James Ware.¹⁸ Of them his comments (especially in Ussher’s case) were frequently complimentary – ‘Usher [sic] has with his usual sagacity observed ...’; ‘[Ware is] one of our most accurate and impartial antiquaries’. And Lanigan could be critical of Catholic scholars with whom he disagreed: ‘[Geoffrey] Keating is wrong’; Sylvester O’Halloran ‘knew nothing of ecclesiastical history’; ‘even Dr [John] Milner who should know better, has repeated the falsehoods of Brompton against the Irish nation’.¹⁹

But if any real sense of Lanigan’s contribution to church history is to be conveyed, it is necessary to identify some of the key issues addressed in the *Ecclesiastical history*. First, and it was here that Ledwich had made some of his most dramatic claims, there was the matter of the existence of St Patrick and certain other early Irish saints. Though not the first to raise such doubts, Ledwich had suggested that in several cases these saints had simply been geographical features personified.²⁰ His claims had attracted some criticism during the 1810s, but such correctives lacked the extensive scholarly apparatus that Lanigan was able to deploy. Lanigan cited a wide range of sources in Ireland, Britain and the Continent that testified to the reality of such saints. On St Patrick, for instance, he noted the publication in the 1770s at Arezzo in Italy of an early manuscript in Hiberno-Latin, *The antiphony of Bangor* (now dated as late seventh century), containing texts of Irish hymns and other works, which took for granted the existence

of the saint; and (notwithstanding later debates about the possible multiplicity of Patricks) modern scholars would undoubtedly favour Lanigan's views over those of Ledwich.²¹

A related issue was the extent to which early Christian Ireland had come under the control of Rome. This had been a sensitive topic for Protestants since the seventeenth century. Ussher had been prepared to accept that Patrick might have been sent to Ireland by the pope, and doubtless had a special regard for Rome's views. However, he found no evidence to indicate that Roman teachings were regarded as binding on the Irish church.²² The view that Ireland had generated a great ancient Christian and scholarly civilisation without being beholden to any external power had also appealed to some earlier Catholic and Gaelic scholars. They included Geoffrey Keating, in his *Foras feasa ar Éirinn* (Compendium of wisdom about Ireland), written in the 1630s. Certain other Catholic scholars had disagreed, such as David Rothe and the émigré priest Abbé James MacGeoghegan, who in his *Histoire de l'Irlande* (1758–62) had strongly contended for the *Roman* character of the early church.²³

For his part, reflecting his Gallican outlook, Lanigan was relatively relaxed about Patrick's precise contacts with Rome. He argued that Patrick was briefly in Rome, but conceded that details of his commission to go to Ireland remained obscure. Moreover, he contended that Patrick enjoyed full powers to appoint his own successors without any reference to Rome.²⁴ However, Lanigan explained that his aim in the work was to provide a faithful account of 'the doctrine and practice of the ancient Irish Church, and to show its connection, at all times, with the universal Church of Christ'. He accepted that the Irish church had displayed some deviation from general Roman practices: concerning the date of Easter, for instance, he argued that the early church exhibited some variety, but that the Irish church had come into general conformity with Roman practices during the seventh century. Again, Lanigan's Gallican views turn out to accord well with those of modern scholars, who have benefited from a growth of historical specificity.²⁵

As for the contentious papal bull *Laudabiliter* (1155)²⁶ (in which the English Pope Adrian IV approved the projected conquest of Ireland by Henry II of England on the grounds that the Irish church required reform), Lanigan aligned himself with Catholic writers in the later eighteenth century who claimed that reforms were already underway before this period.²⁷ In any case, *Laudabiliter* had made no claim of papal authority to grant Ireland to Henry II. However, Lanigan did not regard the bull

as a forgery (as some writers had done): he regarded it as unjustifiable, but (citing Archbishop Ussher) no forgery, a view that is now accepted.²⁸

Lanigan also considered that Ledwich had been wrong to claim that the Irish church permitted married clergy. While it is now accepted that there were some married clergy, it is argued that this was neither approved nor the norm.²⁹ And while he conceded that there were abuses in the church, Lanigan was sceptical about the claims of Giraldus Cambrensis (whose role as an apologist for English intervention is now recognised) that external (English) intervention was necessary to tackle them.³⁰

Lanigan was particularly irritated by some of Ledwich's more outrageous claims about the early church (the index entry on Ledwich began: 'Ledwich, Doctor, proofs of ... the ignorance, errors, and malevolence of ...'). Where Ledwich had had the temerity to stigmatise the Christian mores of the people, Lanigan could be particularly censorious. Concerning the suggestion that the Irish who lived beyond the precincts of towns rarely contracted marriage (apparently based on a misunderstanding of Hiberno-Latin), Lanigan denounced the 'monstrous lie advanced by Ledwich', and elsewhere commented 'the audacity of this pseudo-antiquary is intolerable'.³¹

Clearly, therefore, Lanigan's *Ecclesiastical history* combined impressive scholarship with often outspoken denunciation of those scholars with whom the author disagreed. However, for his Catholic contemporaries the power of the scholarship far outweighed concerns about the work's tone. Apparently all but two of the professors in St Patrick's College, Maynooth subscribed to the *Ecclesiastical history* on its publication (the exceptions being Drs François Anglade and Louis-Gilles Delahogue). So did the entire episcopal hierarchy, though not John MacHale, later archbishop of Tuam.³² This was despite the fact that ecclesiastical history, as such, did not enjoy a high profile in Maynooth (or in other Irish Catholic seminaries of the period), and it was only in 1845 that a separate chair of ecclesiastical history was established in the college. Even then (as far as can be assessed in the absence of yearly college *Calendars* before the 1860s), the subject played only a limited part in what was a very crowded curriculum.³³ Moreover, Lanigan's work must have seemed unduly specialised, given that the college did not enjoy university status before the 1890s. Attempts were soon underway to produce a shorter text. The first was written by a professor of divinity at Maynooth, Patrick J. Carew. Entitled *An ecclesiastical history of Ireland: from the introduction of Christianity into that country, to the commencement of the thirteenth century* (Dublin,

1835), this was an abridged, non-combative, and more readable version of Lanigan's work. In the view of the author of the standard history of the college (himself a professor of ecclesiastical history) Carew's version did not stand the test of time as well as Lanigan's.³⁴

Lanigan's work enjoyed an important place in the curriculum of the Catholic University in Dublin, founded in 1854. Its *Calendar* for 1863 shows that the *Ecclesiastical history* featured strongly in the Irish history curriculum, being a set text for advanced students. In view of all this, it is understandable that Lanigan attracted a full-length biography (and a shorter memoir), and that a memorial was raised to him in the University of Pavia on the occasion of its eleventh centenary in 1925.³⁵

REVEREND WILLIAM PHELAN

The contribution of the Reverend William Phelan to the writing of Irish religious history was of a different order from that of Dr Lanigan. A moderately 'high' member of the Church of Ireland, valuing church hierarchy and structures, Phelan too had ambitions to write a history of the ancient Irish church (which, like Ussher, he regarded as the forerunner of the Church of Ireland of his own day). But he suffered from ill-health, and died in 1830, barely into his forties. He did produce a *History of the policy of the Church of Rome in Ireland*, but this covered mainly the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries, and had comparatively little to say about the early church.³⁶ However, it has been argued elsewhere that Phelan's principal contribution to the writing of Irish religious history lay not so much in his own scholarship (though he made some telling points), but in what he had to say about an alleged tendency of Catholic writers to blend Irish church history with that of Rome. He contended that 'some designing Papists endeavour to prepossess the *nationality* of their warm-hearted countrymen, by artful declamations on *the religion of their forefathers*', thus giving the early Irish church a 'Roman' character that in Phelan's view was undeserved.³⁷

The implication of what he saw as the manipulation of church history was all the more significant since according to Phelan, Irish Catholics 'receive their religion as the last bequest ... of their almost canonised forefathers, and they cling to it with a devoted and desperate fidelity'.³⁸ His own Catholic background added context to the claim. Phelan explained that he was not thinking of the more eminent Catholic historians (he instanced Drs Charles O'Connor, John Milner, and Lanigan) – all of whom,

he conceded, were men ‘of great erudition’. Indeed, he drew on Lanigan’s *History* to acknowledge that St Patrick had indeed existed – though he challenged the suggestion that the early Irish church had come at all within the Roman sphere.³⁹ Rather, it appears that Phelan had in mind those who recounted legends, miracles and prophecies so as to reinforce what he identified as the sectarian, national, and family values cherished by the lower classes in Ireland. His biographer mentioned an anecdote that Phelan (the son of a wool comber) related of his boyhood. William recalled being taken aside by a local friar, who told him that the land around had once belonged to his ancestors, from whom (in medieval times) it had been unjustly despoiled: ‘my young blood boiled in my veins.’⁴⁰

Phelan’s comments about the alleged manipulation of church history must have seemed all the more suggestive to Protestant readers because the early 1820s witnessed the spread of millenarian beliefs associated with ‘Pastorini’s prophecies’. This was the expectation, apparently widespread among the peasantry, that the existing order would come to an imminent end; Protestantism would be overthrown – the year 1825 was the expected date – and a (Catholic) golden age would commence.⁴¹ While some Protestants suspected that the Catholic clergy were fostering such beliefs, for their part Catholic clergy resented the activities of the evangelical societies and their attempts to proselytise the poorer classes. Complaints were made to Rome, and a papal bull (1818) warned the Catholic clergy about these activities.⁴² All this contributed to growing confessional discord.

In an early publication, Phelan had criticised certain evangelical societies for a lack of commitment to episcopacy. But it was his reply to Bishop James Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin, who in 1823 had defended some recent miracles and attacked the established status of the Church of Ireland, which really attracted attention.⁴³ Doyle had targeted the existing tithe system as particularly reprehensible, and Phelan, writing as ‘Declan’, undertook the defence of the established church’s right to tithe. He took issue with Doyle’s implication that tithes had been odious in Ireland ever since they were introduced in Henry II’s time (both writers assumed that the tithe system dated only from Anglo-Norman times, a view that has received little challenge until recently).⁴⁴ Citing, among other sources, Lanigan’s *History*, but drawing different conclusions, Phelan noted that the early Irish church had enjoyed revenues from its landed possessions, not from tithes.⁴⁵ But the upheaval wrought by the ‘Danish invasions’ had witnessed the seizing of land by invaders and even natives; episcopal lands had been taken, and secular lords had infringed on the clergy’s spiritual

functions. In these circumstances, Phelan suggested, the ‘total extinction of a clerical order’ was threatened, and, despairing of domestic relief, Irish prelates began to look to Rome. Hence the papal grant to Henry II in the interests of promoting church reform, prompting the introduction of tithes at the synod of Cashel in 1172.⁴⁶

The thrust of that account was broadly in line with the views of Giraldus Cambrensis, whose role as a contemporary apologist for Henry II’s intervention in Ireland has been noted above. It had suited Giraldus’s purposes to contend that over the centuries the Irish church had been slow to embrace reforms characteristic of western Christendom. Such a view retains support in some recent accounts, although it has been strongly challenged.⁴⁷ However, Phelan offered his own gloss on the effects of Anglo-Norman intervention. Conceding that the reforms projected by Henry II had not in fact taken hold, he suggested, in a useful insight, that it was England’s lack of power in Ireland, not its abuse of power, that accounted for this.⁴⁸

Phelan was not, however, simply concerned with matters of history, but their implications for his own day. His premise was that the papacy still had pretensions to secular dominion, to which Ireland’s link with England, and the status of the established church, constituted a barrier.⁴⁹ An important aspect of his discussion of the origins and significance of tithes was that it put the beginnings of Anglo-Norman claims to overlordship of Ireland in a more positive light than that sometimes suggested by Irish Catholic writers. Lanigan, for instance, as noted, had stressed that church reform was underway well before Henry II’s arrival. In his view, the (English) Pope Adrian IV’s key aim in issuing *Laudabiliter* had been ‘to lay the foundation of the destruction of the independence of Ireland’.⁵⁰ Phelan, by contrast, argued that ratification of the decisions of the synod of Cashel represented the first act of the new sovereign. For him, the origins of the church establishment predated any granting of property rights to laymen in Ireland: the church became, in effect, a corporation. Tithes were not to be considered as a deduction from the produce of landlords; rather, they were a legitimate means to fund the church’s ministry.⁵¹

This naturally raised an issue that Lanigan’s *History*, ending in the twelfth century, did not address, though it had been taken up by Bishop Doyle: whether the right to tithes had legitimately descended to the Protestant establishment. For Phelan, it was the Reformation that had ultimately enabled the reforms intended by the synod of Cashel to be implemented. After the break with Rome, the Catholic clergy who accepted the

pope's temporal power, and failed to recognise the Protestant crown, had lost any legitimate title to tithes. As for the Protestant bishops, according to Phelan there was no disruption of continuity in their legal line of succession (reaching back to Patrick), and they were fully entitled to tithes.⁵² And as for Doyle's point that the Protestant clergy had failed to convert the masses, Phelan noted that the established church had no explicit missionary duties, but that in current circumstances, it could be expected that 'a missionary zeal will spread among our ministry'.⁵³

Towards the end of *The case*, Phelan returned to the issue that he had raised in his 1817 pamphlet:

Profoundly versed in the language and the antiquities of their country, [Catholic writers] have formed its church history into a regular system, and interwoven the supremacy of the Roman See with the whole of the elaborate texture ... [The Catholic religion] is made to look venerable through the vista of antiquity ...⁵⁴

If his discussion of the origins of tithes had offered Church of Ireland clergy a more positive perspective on this troubled issue than that offered by critics, Phelan's comments on the alleged manipulation of church history by Catholic clergy implied that if Protestants were to make a reality of their mission in Ireland, they would need to engage with that very subject. He would be mentioned by several Church of Ireland clergy in coming decades as having inspired their own investigations into church history; and his influence can be detected in the outlook of early incumbents of the chair of ecclesiastical history in Trinity College, Dublin, founded in 1850.⁵⁵

In conclusion, Phelan would scarcely have merited the encomium bestowed on Dr Lanigan by the author of *Lives of the Irish saints*, Canon John O'Hanlon (d. 1905), who wrote: 'he has taken rank as a classic historian of the first order.'⁵⁶ Nevertheless, by his account of the origins of tithes, and by inspiring a generation of Church of Ireland scholars to regard church history as an important pursuit, William Phelan made his own contribution to laying the foundations for the nineteenth-century engagement with the subject. It may seem surprising that he didn't make more of the Gallican elements in Lanigan's *History*, but by the 1820s he was too worried about the increasingly assertive tone of Catholic spokesmen, and the implications for his own church, to concede that the two scholars had more in common than mere acceptance of the existence of St Patrick.

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NOTES

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3. P. L. O'Madden, *An Irish church historian – Dr John Lanigan, D.D., 1758–1828* (Dublin, Catholic Truth Society, 1928), p. 10; Thomas McGrath, *Politics, interdenominational relations and education in the public ministry of Bishop James Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin, 1786–1834* (Dublin, 1999), pp 117–19.
4. W. J. Fitzpatrick, *Irish wits and worthies; including Dr Lanigan, his life and times, with glimpses of stirring scenes since 1770* (Dublin and London, 1873); O'Madden, *An Irish church historian*; [Phelan], *The remains of William Phelan* (ed. Jebb), vol. i.
5. Donald MacCartney [*recte* Donal McCartney], 'The writing of history in Ireland, 1800–50' in *Irish Historical Studies*, x, no.40 (1957), pp 347–62, pp 348–9; O'Halloran, *Golden ages*, pp 59–60, 86–9.
6. 32 Geo. III, c. 21; 33 Geo. III, c. 21; Matthias Buschkühl, *Great Britain and the Holy See, 1746–1870* (Dublin, 1982), pp 17–44.
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10. See Tim Blanning, *The romantic revolution: a history* (London, 2011).
11. Corish, 'Lanigan, John'.
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13. Charles McNeill, ‘Harris: Collectanea de rebus Hibernicis’ in *Analecta Hibernica*, vi (1934), pp 248–450.
 14. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical history*, i, p. xiii.
 15. *Ibid.*, i, p. iv.
 16. Corish, ‘Lanigan, John’.
 17. See, for example, Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical history*, iv, 160–2, n. 17.
 18. John McCafferty, ‘Ussher, James (1581–1656)’; William O’Sullivan, ‘Ware, Sir James (1594–1666)’; Bernadette Cunningham, ‘Keating, Geoffrey (c.1580–1644)’; J. B. Lyons, ‘O’Halloran, Sylvester (1728–1807)’; all in *DIB* (accessed 15 Feb. 2016); Judith F. Champ, ‘Milner, John (1752–1826)’ in *ODNB* (accessed 15 Feb. 2016).
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 20. For Ledwich’s argument, see *ibid.*, ii, 46, n. 147; ii, 95, n. 38; O’Halloran, *Golden ages*, p. 88.
 21. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical history*, i, pp vii–viii & chs 2–7; ii, chs 11–12. The *Antiphonary* was included in Ludovico Muratori, *Opera omnia* (Arezzo, 1770–1), vol. xiii. See also T. M. Charles-Edwards, ‘Introduction: prehistoric and early Ireland’ in Dáibhí Ó Crónín (ed.), *A new history of Ireland, i: prehistoric and early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), pp lviii–lxxxii, pp lviii–lviii.
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 23. O’Halloran, *Golden ages*, pp 86–8; Jacqueline Hill, ‘Popery and Protestantism, civil and religious liberty: the disputed lessons of Irish history 1690–1812’ in *Past & Present*, no.118 (1988), pp 96–129, pp 104, 114–16.
 24. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical history*, i, 134, 191–2, 320–1, n. 2.
 25. *Ibid.*, i, pp xii–xiii, ix–x; & ch. 15; ii, 256–72 & ch. 15; Kathleen Hughes, ‘The Celtic church and the papacy’ in C. H. Lawrence (ed.), *The English church and the papacy in the middle ages* (London, 1965), pp 3–28; Charles-Edwards, ‘Introduction’ in *New history of Ireland i*, lxxvi.
 26. *Laudibilter* was represented in the Dublin Society’s archive of records collected by Harris, to which Lanigan may well have had access (above, and n. 13).
 27. Owing to scarcity of sources, the extent of church reform (and the comparative importance of internal and external influences) before Henry II’s intervention is still debated: see Marie Therese Flanagan, *The transformation of the Irish church in the twelfth century* (Woodbridge, 2010), pp 243–8; Martin Holland, ‘Dublin and the reform of the Irish church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries’ in *Peritia*, xiv (2000), pp 111–60.

28. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical history*, iv, 204–16, 158–66; O'Halloran, *Golden ages*, p. 94; F. X. Martin, 'Diarmait Mac Murchada and the coming of the Anglo-Normans' in Art Cosgrove (ed.), *A new history of Ireland, ii: medieval Ireland, 1169–1534* (Oxford, 1993), pp 43–66, pp 57–9.
29. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical history*, iv, 364–5; Martin Holland, 'Were early Irish church establishments under lay control?' in Damian Bracken and Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel (eds), *Ireland and Europe in the twelfth century: reform and renewal* (Dublin, 2006), pp 128–42.
30. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical history*, iv, 201–11; Flanagan, *Transformation*, pp 243–5.
31. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical history*, iv, 474; 72, n. 52; ii, 47.
32. Fitzpatrick, *Irish wits & worthies*, p. 99.
33. *Report of her majesty's commissioners appointed to inquire into the management and government of the college of Maynooth* (Dublin, 1855), Part 1, App., part 2, p. 61; Patrick J. Corish, *Maynooth College, 1795–1995* (Dublin, 1995), pp 51, 78–90, 114–16.
34. Corish, *Maynooth College*, ch. 9 & p. 79.
35. *The Catholic University calendar for the year 1863* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 68; Fitzpatrick, *Irish wits & worthies*; O'Madden, *An Irish church historian*, p. 18.
36. [Phelan], *The remains of William Phelan* (ed. Jebb), i, 79; ii (*History of the policy of the Church of Rome*), *passim*.
37. William Phelan, *The bible, not the Bible Society* (Dublin, 1817), pp 22–3; Jacqueline Hill, 'The Church of Ireland and perceptions of Irish church history c.1790–1869' in Terence Dooley (ed.), *Ireland's polemical past: views of Irish history in honour of R. V. Comerford* (Dublin, 2010), pp 9–31, pp 14–18, 20–21, 24–6.
38. Declan [William Phelan], *The case of the Church of Ireland stated, in a letter respectfully addressed to ... the Marquess Wellesley, and in reply to the charges of J. K. L.* (Dublin, 1823), pp 78–9; [Phelan], *The remains*, i, 2.
39. Declan [Phelan], *The case*, pp 62–3.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 78; [Phelan], *The remains of William Phelan* (ed. Jebb), i, 2.
41. Whelan, *Bible war*, pp 142–9.
42. *Ibid.*, pp 78–84; Hill, 'The Church of Ireland', pp 13–15.
43. Phelan, *The case*, *passim*; McGrath, *Politics*, pp 115–19.
44. On tithes, see Flanagan, *Transformation*, pp 86–7; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and Aidan Breen, 'The laws of the Irish' in *Peritia*, iii (1984), pp 382–438, pp 409ff.
45. Lanigan had in fact suggested that a tithe system had existed, albeit patchily, in some parts of the country, before the Anglo-Normans' arrival, *Ecclesiastical history*, iv, 264–84.
46. Declan [Phelan], *The case*, pp 12–18.

47. Martin, 'Diarmait Mac Murchada', pp 58–60, idem, 'Allies and an overlord, 1169–72' in *New History of Ireland* ii, pp 67–97, pp 89–93; see also n. 27 above.
48. Phelan, *History of the policy of the Church of Rome*, in [Phelan], *The remains*, ii, 4.
49. Declan [Phelan], *The case*, pp 5–8.
50. Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical history*, iv, 205–10, 158.
51. Declan [Phelan], *The case*, pp 16–18, 28–30.
52. *Ibid.*, pp 30–41; the point was also made in Phelan's *History of the policy of the Church of Rome*, in [Phelan], *The remains*, ii, 166–7. The issue of episcopal succession would be taken up by apologists for both main churches in the later nineteenth century: Fergal Grannell, 'Early Irish ecclesiastical studies' in Michael Hurley (ed.), *Irish Anglicanism, 1869–1969* (Dublin, 1970), pp 39–50, p. 41.
53. Declan [Phelan], *The case*, p. 46.
54. *Ibid.*, pp 60–1, 78.
55. For the importance of Phelan for later Church of Ireland historians, see Hill, 'The Church of Ireland', pp 18–26.
56. O'Madden, *An Irish church historian*, p. 16.

Writing Medieval Irish Religious History in the Nineteenth Century

Elizabeth Boyle

Since the 1980s, there has been a transformation in the understanding of the nature and structures of the early medieval Irish church. Linguistic, textual and archaeological advances have clarified the nature of conversion, of religious practice, of doctrine and liturgy, and of church hierarchies and organisation in pre-Norman Ireland.¹ However, this somewhat clearer picture of the early Irish church has not been adequately conveyed to audiences outside the specialist academic discipline of early Irish history. The gulf between academic and popular understanding of the early Irish church is wide. Some misconceptions have proved especially stubborn: in particular, the myth of a ‘Celtic church’, existing in opposition to an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and/or a ‘Roman’ church, remains important to popular conceptions of the Irish past, despite having been long since discarded by historians of medieval Ireland.² The blame for this must lie in part with those of us who work in the field: we have failed to convey this transformation in understanding to those in related disciplines or outside academia. That there is no accessible introductory guide to the early medieval Irish church which accurately summarises recent scholarly developments helps explain this ever-widening chasm between specialist and popular conceptions.³

E. Boyle (✉)

National University of Ireland Maynooth, Maynooth, Ireland

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These advances in the understanding of the early Irish church are complemented by developments elsewhere in the study of the early medieval church in western Europe more broadly.⁴ One shift in the way historians view early medieval European culture has been the realisation that ‘culture’ is not synonymous with ‘ethnicity’ or ‘language’. Cultural practices frequently do not observe national or linguistic borders, and the interactions between ‘language’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘culture’ are fluid and complex. There is now a more subtle characterisation of the early medieval western church as an institution which both unified western Europe, in the sense, for example, of certain shared beliefs, a common worldview, and the use of Latin as a shared ecclesiastical language; but also as an institution that was, at least before the reforming papacies of the late eleventh century, subject to great regional variation in terms, for example, of saints’ cults, some liturgical practices, and some points of doctrine. However, these regional variations were not coterminous with linguistic or ethnic boundaries. It is not possible to speak of a ‘Celtic church’, because there were no distinctive aspects to the Christianity practised in early medieval Ireland, Wales and Scotland; that is, no distinctive aspects that were shared by those societies and not found elsewhere: Christianity in the Celtic-speaking world was as like and unlike the Christianity of the rest of early medieval western Christendom. In what follows, an example of regional variation in religious practice will be discussed, which was, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, seen as an instance of a Celtic church at loggerheads with the Roman church, but which in fact was something simultaneously more local and more international than ‘Celts’ versus ‘Romans’.

The flowering of the idea of a ‘Celtic church’ or a distinct ‘Celtic Christianity’ occurred during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although it built on earlier work. The concept’s history has been well discussed by a number of commentators.⁵ Suffice to say that what interests us here is the way that the pre-Norman Irish church was a contested space for nineteenth-century historians of medieval Ireland, whose selective reading of what is very complex evidence allowed them to create an image of an early Irish church which most conformed to their own worldview. The ‘Celtic church’ was a politically convenient myth, particularly for Protestant scholars, who asserted – tendentially – that the early Irish church was established independently of Rome; that it had little or no episcopal hierarchy (a view particularly favoured by Presbyterian writers, though subsequently adopted by certain others); and that it delighted in a sort of innocent, instinctive Christianity – free from scholasticism and

Catholic sophistry: a natural, emotional, and suspiciously Protestant-looking faith.

GEORGE T. STOKES

This discussion begins with the work of the nineteenth-century ecclesiastical historian George T. Stokes (1843–98). Stokes was born in Athlone and educated at Trinity College, Dublin; in 1883 he was appointed professor of ecclesiastical history at TCD; and in 1887 he was appointed librarian at Marsh's Library. He seems not to have been related to the well-known Stokes family of Dublin, which produced many illustrious medical doctors and scholars of early Irish language, literature and art.⁶ Perhaps Stokes's best-known work was his *Ireland and the Celtic church: a history of Ireland from St Patrick to the English conquest in 1172* (London, 1886). With the benefit of hindsight, one can only concur with the opinion of Aubrey Gwynn that the book 'is today perhaps best forgotten'.⁷

For the study of the history of early Irish Christianity, Gwynn was right to suggest that the book should be discarded. However, as Gwynn acknowledged, it did run to six editions in twenty years, being hugely popular and very positively reviewed in mainstream magazines and journals of the time.⁸ Indeed, Stokes was such a popular lecturer at TCD that members of the public attended his lectures on ecclesiastical history.⁹ So, while his work may have little value as historical enquiry, it has immense value as a cultural artefact of the nineteenth century. His was a history of the Irish church that was widely read and accepted as historically accurate by many of its readers. It seems that Stokes was genuinely well intentioned, if misguided. Although *Ireland and the Celtic church* comprises 360 pages of generalisation and stereotyping, one need not doubt the sincerity of the following statement in the book's preface:

I must ... express the hope that no words of mine may help to deepen the wounds of Ireland, or cause pain to any generous heart, no matter what his religion or politics.¹⁰

It is unlikely that Stokes intended to be prejudiced, but he unconsciously and unquestioningly articulated the preconceptions and deeply-rooted stereotypes of his day (bearing in mind that the 1880s witnessed the beginnings of the study of eugenics). We can see below an example of how

he developed the idea of a Celtic church, in accordance with his preconceptions, on the basis of racial stereotyping rather than historical evidence:

Addressing a University audience, I need scarcely remind them that a Celtic Christianity, with its peculiar national faults and characteristics, finds place even in the New Testament. The Galatians, whose apostasy from pure Christianity has endowed the Church with St Paul's masterly defence of Christian freedom, were Celts; and let me say at the same time that, though they may have given the apostle trouble, yet nowhere did the Church of Christ find a more loving and a more passionate devotion in those earlier ages than among the Celts of Asia Minor.¹¹

This is of course problematic. There was a Celtic-speaking population in Galatia in the late centuries BC and perhaps into the early centuries AD, of which only fragmentary traces of the language survive in attested personal and place name evidence. However, the idea that the early Christian communities in Galatia shared certain 'national faults and characteristics' with the population of early medieval Ireland is entirely without foundation. Stokes's characterisation of the Galatians as troublesome but passionate formed the basis for his characterisation of the Irish as equally troublesome but passionate.¹² To give an analogy, what Stokes does is akin to observing that the language of modern-day Portugal is related to the language of eighth-century Italy and that if eighth-century Italians acted in a certain way, it must follow that the modern Portuguese act in the same way. The first statement is linguistically true: both languages are ultimately derived from Italic. But it does not follow that a shared linguistic group has shared characteristics. And yet Stokes sees in the Galatians evidence of Celtic racial characteristics which he will see transposed equally into the Christianity of early medieval Ireland.

The idea of a doctrinally subversive but passionately devout Celtic church was connected for many Protestant scholars in the nineteenth century with the idea that the Christianisation of Ireland was not the result of a Rome-sponsored mission. The present understanding of the conversion of Ireland emphasises that it was a multi-faceted – and largely anonymous – process. By the time Pope Celestine sent Palladius to be a bishop to the Irish in 431, there were already Christian communities in Ireland, who must have been converted through contact with the Roman Empire, particularly Roman Britain. St Patrick's missionary activities would now be acknowledged as being geographically limited, despite the so-called

‘aggrandising’ tendencies of Armagh from the seventh century onwards, which successfully elevated Patrick to the position of Ireland’s foremost saint, the ‘apostle of the Irish’.¹³ Owing to a conflation in the historical sources between Palladius, sent from Rome by Pope Celestine, and Patrick, a Briton who seems to have acted outside any officially sanctioned mission, nineteenth-century scholars became rather exercised by whether Patrick had been sent by Rome to convert the Irish.

Though I have no fancy to take part in this controversy, I must still say a few words concerning it. I do not, indeed, believe in the Roman mission of our national apostle, not only because his own language appears inconsistent with it, but also upon broader grounds. People who read Church history through the spectacles of the nineteenth century are very apt to fancy that the pope occupied then for the whole Western Church the same position as he does now in the Roman Communion. The Congregation *De propaganda Fide* now controls the whole missionary activity of that Church ...

Stokes goes on to list other missionary activities in the early medieval world which operated without official papal sanction, including Colum Cille’s missionary activities among the Picts, and asks:

... But, after all, why should there be bitter contention about the mission of St Patrick? Suppose that he was consecrated and sent to Ireland by Celestine¹⁴ himself, what does it matter? Every one confesses that Augustine of Canterbury was sent to England direct from the pope; does that fact affect ... the independent claims of the English Church? A parallel instance is a sufficient reply. Everyone admits that the first bishop who ministered in the United States derived his orders from the Church of Scotland; does that fact imply the supremacy of the Scotch bishops over the American Church?¹⁵

Stokes was undoubtedly right to note that the nature and extent of papal power were significantly different in the early Middle Ages than in his present age; but his modern analogies are clumsy at best. His awkward attempts at impartiality were in fact reflective of deeply embedded and divisive attitudes towards the relationship between Rome and early medieval Ireland which, of course, had far more to do with modern history than medieval. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his discussion of the controversy over the dating of Easter.

THE EASTER CONTROVERSY

Since the second century, Easter has been celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon in spring, and once this was determined, mathematical and astronomical calculations needed to be formulated in order to calculate when that would be.¹⁶ The calculation requires a synthesising of the lunar and solar calendars. The Julian calendar was the common solar calendar across Christendom, but there were competing lunar calendars: the Alexandrians used a nineteen-year lunar cycle from the third century onwards, and the Romans used various different cycles, eventually settling on an 84-year lunar cycle.¹⁷ In the mid-fifth century Pope Leo the Great asked Victorius of Aquitaine to produce a compromise between the Alexandrian and Roman systems: the resulting system has been memorably described as a ‘bastardized jumble palmed off on the mathematically challenged’¹⁸ and failed to offer a satisfactory solution. In the year 525 Dionysius Exiguus was asked by the papal curia to devise a solution: he identified an accurate cycle, based on the Alexandrian calculations. This new system was finally adopted by Rome in the 640s or slightly thereafter; in Anglo-Saxon England by the 660s; churches in the south of Ireland had adopted it before much of Anglo-Saxon England, seemingly by the early seventh century; northern Irish churches followed in the early eighth; Welsh churches by the late eighth century and in Francia, where the change was piecemeal and regional, the system had been adopted completely by the ninth.¹⁹ The complexity of the accurate calculation of Easter, and the failure by some scholars to recognise the careful way in which medieval ecclesiastics considered whether or not to change their method of calculation, has been grossly simplified into a conflict between an Anglo-Saxon and a so-called Celtic church. This simplistic characterisation has continued to be influential, particularly for popular conceptions of the church in early medieval Britain and Ireland, to the present day.

The synod of Whitby (AD 664), saw the Northumbrian churches headed by Bishop Wilfrid challenge the Columban foundations, with their leading monastery at Iona, on the subject of the dating of Easter.²⁰ The Columban foundations maintained the older dating system; Wilfrid espoused the newer one. His arguments triumphed, and the Northumbrian churches followed suit. By this time many churches in Ireland had already adopted the newer system. This was, on the one hand, a local problem relating to the Columban and Northumbrian churches; but it was also a wider problem: as noted above, many of the Frankish and Welsh churches were yet to

adopt the new system. It was not, by any means, a clash between a ‘Celtic’ and an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ church, but here is Stokes’s account, which – notwithstanding his characteristically colourful prose – is not untypical of his historical accounts of the time.

King Oswy was keeping Easter upon one day while his Queen, who followed the Roman party, was still keeping Lent. This arrangement deranging all the King’s domestic plans, determined him to bring about some settlement ... He summoned Colman as leader of the Celtic party, and Wilfrid as the leader of the Roman party, and ordered them to debate the differences in his presence; and the result was a characteristic Roman victory, gained by Roman ways and arguments such as we are still well accustomed to. Wilfrid deftly and cleverly used female influence, and the inconveniences of a disturbed domestic life, of which men are so impatient, to incline the King to his views. Do we not daily see the same subtle but powerful influence brought into play to insure the triumph of Roman domination? Wilfrid, too, is strictly modern and papal in his method of Scriptural quotations. It is, for instance, precisely the same method as the present Pope has boldly ventured to use when asserting Papal supremacy two years ago in the Encyclical called *Satis Cognitum*,²¹ quoting, or rather misquoting, Origen, Cyprian and Augustine as his authorities.²²

Stokes’s excursus on Leo XIII’s encyclical hangs awkwardly with his professed impartiality, but it is far from the only piece of inflammatory rhetoric in his work. The misogynistic undertone in Stokes’s account of the synod of Whitby is encountered elsewhere in his work and was not reserved only for medieval women. For example, in his *Ireland and the Celtic church*, he wrote:

Miss Cusack, in her *Life of St Patrick*, gives as intimate and minute an account of his history as the special correspondent of the *New York Herald* or of the *Daily Telegraph* could have done. But then she is a lady, and, therefore, gifted with an imagination.²³

Miss Margaret Cusack, or Sister Francis Clare, founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace, also known as the ‘Nun of Kenmare’, published her *Life of St Patrick* in 1871.²⁴ It does not conform to modern standards of historical enquiry, but neither does the work of George Stokes. Entirely unfamiliar with the notion of *Quellenkritik*, or source criticism, an approach that had only recently developed in German universities in

the mid-nineteenth century, Cusack used literary sources from the twelfth century and later to create her supposedly historical account of Patrick's fifth-century life. Indeed, rather than seeing her lack of judgement or discrimination in the use of historical sources as a weakness, she seems to have viewed it as a strength.²⁵ But Cusack's *Life of St Patrick* is bad because she was a bad historian not because she was a woman. And both Cusack and Stokes were, in any case, products of their respective religious and educational *milieux*.

The focus will return to Cusack's *Life of Patrick* below, but lest the impression remains that Stokes's lowest opinions were reserved for women, he must be allowed to offer his views on the French:

The Conference at Whitby beheld, I say, a Roman victory, marked by Rome's favourite methods and arguments. Whitby saw, too, a characteristic Celtic defeat, which in Celtic fashion was worse than a defeat. It became a disastrous rout of the whole Columban party, horse, foot and dragoons. It was like the French routs at Waterloo or Sedan,²⁶ and they too are largely Celts. The Celts are ever deficient in staying power. They are splendid fighters so long as fortune shines clear and bright upon them. But when fortune turns there is but one step from triumphant victory to disastrous defeat, as the long course of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic warfare has often proved. Whitby was the Waterloo and the Sedan of the Celtic and Columban Church.²⁷

The synod was no such thing. It was, as has been noted, a local manifestation of a widespread European phenomenon which required a fundamental shift in the calculation of Christian time, and which therefore happened piecemeal across Christendom as individual churches and kingdoms implemented the change.²⁸ The 'Celts' were no more recalcitrant than the Franks or, in some areas of England, the Anglo-Saxons. Some Frankish and Welsh churches were significantly later in adopting the new calculation of Easter than many Irish or English churches, and the speed with which churches did so was not culturally or ethnically or linguistically determined. Incidentally, Stokes's statement that the French are Celts is about as well-founded as his statement that the Galatians were Celts. What is now France was, of course, once a Celtic-speaking region in the pre-Roman and Roman periods. But a country's ancient linguistic origins can hardly be used to justify national or ethnic stereotyping.

So much for the Reverend Professor George Stokes. His work may have little use for historians of the medieval church today, but because of its

popularity and influence, it offers a useful illustration of the way that writing medieval Irish religious history in the nineteenth century was bound up with broader cultural trends and contemporary political circumstances. Stokes's view of the Celts as a culturally uniform 'race' stretching from Galatia in Asia Minor, through France, to Ireland and Scotland was the dominant one of the later nineteenth century, a view reinforced by philological research which demonstrated the relationships between languages, and a cultural view that saw 'languages', 'cultures' and 'ethnicities' as practically identical. Stokes's opinions of women reflected those of many contemporaries. His anti-Catholicism seemed to embrace both a sense of superiority and, simultaneously, anxiety towards the Roman Catholic church, particularly the papacy. Stokes's view of the early Irish church could not escape or transcend his wider preconceptions.

CATHOLIC SCHOLARSHIP

It was not only Protestant scholars who so distorted the history of the early Irish church. There are plenty of examples in nineteenth-century scholarship of an equally sweeping and inaccurate portrayal in the opposite direction. For instance, the anonymous reviewer of the facsimile edition of the great eleventh- or twelfth-century vernacular manuscript known as *Lebor na hUidre*, now in the Royal Irish Academy, after citing some passages from the Middle Irish religious texts preserved in that manuscript, wrote:

... there is one special feature of these extracts to which, before concluding, we wish to call ... attention ... it is, that like every other document handed down to us from the early ages of Celtic piety, they contribute to establish in the clearest manner the oneness of the faith of the Catholic Church of the present day with the ancient Church of our fathers ... Such was the teaching of St. Adamnan, St. Columbkille, and the other great fathers of the Irish church – such still is the faith that quickens the heart of their spiritual children.²⁹

Such a statement is of course unfounded. There have been many changes in Catholic doctrine over the centuries, in relation to issues ranging from purgatory to papal infallibility,³⁰ and the idea that every document that survives from the early Irish church demonstrates the 'oneness of the faith of the Catholic church of the present day with the ancient church of our

fathers' is just as misleading as the claim of an independent non-Roman 'Celtic church'. We can see this same claiming of Adomnán, Columba, and, indeed, St Patrick, in the 1854 diatribe published by John O'Beirne Crowe, professor of Celtic languages at Galway from 1856 to 1862. O'Beirne Crowe writes in relation to the establishment of a Catholic university in Ireland that:

... the golden light of learning is once more about to break with glorious givings upon our isle, and the spirits of our mighty sages of the olden time are fluttering in holy ecstasy while viewing with prophet vision the revival of our antient fame. Columba and Adamnan, and above all Patrick our blessed apostle himself, together with the whole host of Erin's saints and sages, are now looking down upon us from above, and blessing that mighty project of Christian daring which we have undertaken to establish in our Catholic land.³¹

This claim of ownership of the major saints of early medieval Christian history exemplifies the way that the history of the church in pre-Norman Ireland was a contested space. Patrick was a controversial figure whose Britishness and iconic status in the traditional historical narrative of Ireland made him the subject of controversy, and evoked competing depictions of him as proto-Protestant or prefiguration of nineteenth-century Catholicism.

Margaret Cusack, as mentioned above, was among those who sought to claim Patrick for Catholicism and to see the direct influence of a Roman mission in the conversion of Ireland to Christianity. In the preface to her *Life of Patrick*, her characterisation of previous scholarship on Patrick can best be described as passive-aggressive. She noted the necessity of removing 'misapprehensions' which have been caused by the, no doubt, unintentional misstatements of Protestant writers'. These 'no doubt unintentional misstatements' include the idea of a 'Celtic church' independent of Rome until the Reformation.³² Cusack explicitly differentiated between Protestant and Catholic ownership of St Patrick, stating: 'but although there has been as yet no complete Catholic Life of St. Patrick, two volumes have been written by Protestants, purporting to be Lives or Memoirs of the Saint.'³³ One of those books was J. H. Todd's *St Patrick, apostle of Ireland*.³⁴ While Cusack praised Todd for his 'avoidance of any kind of vulgar bigotry in his remarks on Catholic customs', she also condemned him for his depiction of Patrick as a man who brought a form of proto-

Protestantism to Ireland from Britain, leading to the establishment of a ‘Celtic church’ independent of Rome, which would be sullied by popish practices at the time of the Reformation. In both cases Patrick is read in nineteenth-century, rather than early medieval, terms.

Common to all these depictions of the early Irish church, whether Catholic or Protestant, is their telescoping and simplifying of early Irish Christianity. The historical period of early Irish Christianity, normally taken to span from the conversion era, which had certainly begun by the fifth century at the very latest, to the introduction of the Cistercians and Augustinian canons in the twelfth century, is too compressed in nineteenth-century accounts. There were great processes of change during that period, but for many nineteenth-century commentators – indeed, for too many twenty-first-century commentators – the medieval Irish church was a monolith. Sweeping statements are made regarding the beliefs of ‘the medieval Irish’, with little consideration of local variation or change over time. For O’Beirne Crowe, all early Irish church documents testified to the oneness of that faith with Catholicism. For George Stokes, all of the ‘Celts’ were just one step away from disastrous defeat. The early medieval history of Ireland was foreshortened, and brought up too close to recent history, to contemporary events.

To conclude, the following example encapsulates this historical foreshortening. It is found in a nineteenth-century manuscript now in the Royal Irish Academy.³⁵ The manuscript, a religious miscellany, is in the hand of the professional scribe, Micheál Óg Ó Longáin. One of the texts in the manuscript is a thirty-five stanza poem on eucharistic doctrine. Ó Longáin states that the poem was written in 1544 and that it

Ag suighiomh, a n-aighidh Eiriceach na h-aimsire sin, corp Chríost do bheith san abhluinn choisrigthe.³⁶

The poem expounds the doctrine of the Real Presence in the eucharist, but it was not written in 1544. And it was not addressed to the heretics – by which he meant Protestants – of the sixteenth century. The poem is Middle Irish, and was written in the eleventh or twelfth century by Echtgus Úa Cúanáin of Roscrea.³⁷ In the longer eighty-six stanza form in which it survives in some earlier manuscripts, it is in part a verse reworking of the ninth-century Latin text *De corpore et sanguine Domini* by the Carolingian scholar Paschasius Radbertus.³⁸ It exemplifies the complexity of the early Irish church: it is both local – written in the Irish vernacular

in accordance with the metrical rules of early Irish poetry – and international – expounding mainstream western European doctrine of the early Middle Ages with recourse to Continental Latin authorities. Ó Longáin knew that he was copying an older Irish poem and to him, apparently, the only possible context for a controversy on eucharistic doctrine was the Protestant Reformation. The roots of religious debate, scholastic discourse, and doctrinal controversy in Ireland and across western Europe, are of course far older.³⁹ The early medieval Irish church was a complex institution – neither ‘Celtic church’ nor Roman Catholic in the modern, post-tridentine sense – comprising many different individual voices: the challenge for someone writing medieval Irish religious history is to try to let those voices speak for themselves without them being drowned out by the background noise of contemporary preconceptions, prejudices and political divisions. In facing this challenge, nineteenth-century historians were not always successful.

NOTES

1. Among the most important studies are Richard Sharpe, ‘Some problems concerning the organisation of the church in early medieval Ireland’ in *Peritia*, iii (1984), pp 230–70; Colmán Etchingham, *Church organisation in Ireland, 650–1000* (Maynooth, 1999); Tomás Ó Carragáin, *Churches in early medieval Ireland: architecture, ritual and memory* (New Haven and London, 2010).
2. Kathleen Hughes, ‘The Celtic church: is this a valid concept?’ in *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, i (1981), pp 1–20; Wendy Davies, ‘The myth of the Celtic church’ in Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane (eds), *The early church in Wales and the west* (Oxford, 1992), pp 12–21; Donald E. Meek, ‘Modern Celtic Christianity’ in Terence Brown (ed.), *Celticism* (Amsterdam, 1996), pp 143–57; idem, *The quest for Celtic Christianity* (Edinburgh, 2000).
3. Even specialists have not always absorbed the implications of these changes, and some historians continue, for example, to speak of ‘monasteries’ when referring to ecclesiastical sites with a range of episcopal and/or pastoral functions (which may or may not have included a monastic element). This misleading use of terminology perpetuates the idea that the early Irish church was monastic *rather than* episcopal in its organisation and hierarchy, something not supported by the evidence.
4. Some key studies include Peter Brown, *The rise of western Christendom: triumph and diversity, AD 200–1000* (Oxford, 1996); Julia M. H. Smith,

- Europe after Rome: a new cultural history, 500–1000* (Oxford, 2005); Susan Wood, *The proprietary church in the medieval west* (New York, 2006).
5. See, for example, the works cited above in n. 2.
 6. See Elizabeth Boyle and Paul Russell (eds), *The tripartite life of Whitley Stokes, 1830–1909* (Dublin, 2011).
 7. Aubrey Gwynn, ‘Ireland and the Continent in the eleventh century’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, viii (1953), pp 193–216, repr. in idem, *The Irish church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries*, ed. Gerard O’Brien (Dublin, 1992), pp 34–49, p. 39.
 8. However, it was not universally acclaimed, as Stokes himself acknowledged: ‘My volume on *Ireland and the Celtic church* has indeed received, for the most part, a very kind and generous treatment at the hands of reviewers. But some critics have found fault with its tone. It treated Irish history, in their opinion, in a style very different from the great masters thereof in the past, and discussed it in a very flippant spirit, as one stern critic put it. ... There are some circles where obscurity is mistaken for profound thought, and pedantic dullness for surpassing learning’ (George T. Stokes, *Ireland and the Anglo-Norman church: a history of Ireland and Irish Christianity from the Anglo-Norman conquest to the dawn of the Reformation* (2nd edn, London, 1892), p. vii). This latter statement by Stokes exemplifies his obstinately populist – even anti-intellectual – approach, which often sacrificed accuracy, subtlety and the acceptance of uncertainty for the sake of a narrative-driven, anecdotal and entertaining form of history. That continues to be the variety of history most likely to be read and remembered by the general public.
 9. David Murphy, ‘Stokes, George Thomas’ in *DIB* (accessed 1 May 2015).
 10. George T. Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic church: a history of Ireland from St. Patrick to the English conquest in 1172* (3rd edn, London, 1892), p. viii. He expressed similar sentiments in the preface to his *Ireland and the Anglo-Norman church*, p. x: ‘I can only hope that the present work may ... tend in some small degree to a better understanding ... among the various races, Norman, Saxon, Scandinavian, and Celtic, inhabiting England, Ireland and Scotland.’ That work was conceived as a companion volume to *Ireland and the Celtic church*, and was also based on Stokes’s ecclesiastical history lectures at TCD.
 11. Stokes, *Ireland*, p. 2.
 12. For this characterisation as a widespread topos in discourse about the Celts from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, see the essays collected in Brown (ed.), *Celticism*.
 13. Liam de Paor, ‘The aggrandisement of Armagh’ in *Historical Studies*, viii (1971), pp 95–110. On Palladius, see Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ‘New light on Palladius’ in *Peritia*, v (1986), pp 276–83.

14. Pope Celestine I (d. 432), who, according to the Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine, sent Palladius to Ireland in 431 to serve as a bishop to ‘the Irish who believe in Christ’.
15. Stokes, *Ireland*, pp 48–51.
16. Immo Warntjes, *The Munich computus: text and translation. Irish computistics between Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede and its reception in Carolingian times* (Stuttgart, 2010), p. xxxii.
17. *Ibid.*, pp xxxv–xxxvi.
18. Leofranc Holford-Strevens, ‘Marital discord in Northumbria: Lent and Easter, his and hers’ in Immo Warntjes and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (eds), *Computus and its cultural context in the Latin west, AD 300 – 1200. Proceedings of the 1st international conference on the science of computus in Ireland and Europe, Galway, 14–16 July, 2006* (Turnhout, 2010), pp 143–58, p. 145.
19. Warntjes, *Munich computus*, pp xxxviii–xli; James T. Palmer, ‘Computus after the Paschal controversy of AD 740’ in Immo Warntjes and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (eds), *The Easter controversy of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Proceedings of the 2nd international conference on the science of computus in Ireland and Europe, Galway, 18–20 July, 2008* (Turnhout, 2011), pp 213–41.
20. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), III.5 (pp 296–8); Holford-Strevens, ‘Marital discord’.
21. *Satis cognitum*, encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, 29 June 1896, on the unity of the church.
22. George T. Stokes, ‘St Colman of Lindisfarne and Innisbofin’ in idem, *Some worthies of the Irish church: lectures delivered in the divinity school of the University of Dublin*, ed. H. J. Lawlor (London, 1900), pp 309–34, p. 321.
23. Stokes, *Ireland*, p. 48.
24. M. F. Cusack, *The life of Saint Patrick, apostle of Ireland* (London, 1871).
25. *Ibid.*, p. 1: ‘The present Life of Patrick, whatever ... its defects, can at least claim the credit of being the first Life of the great Apostle of Ireland which has given full details of his acts and missionary labours – the first Life in which all the existing material has been used.’ That some of that existing material is historically unreliable and/or dates from many centuries after Patrick’s death seems to have been immaterial to Cusack.
26. Battle of Waterloo, 1815; Battle of Sedan (Franco–Prussian War), 1870.
27. Stokes, ‘St Colman’, p. 324.
28. For further discussion, see the essays in Warntjes & Ó Cróinín (eds), *Easter controversy*.

29. Anon., ‘The “Leabhar na-Huidhri”’ in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, vii (1870–1), pp 224–35, p. 235.
30. See, for example, Jacques Le Goff, *The birth of purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, 1984); Brian Tierney, *Origins of papal infallibility: a study on the concepts of infallibility, sovereignty and tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1972).
31. John O’Beirne Crowe, *The Catholic University and the Irish language* (Dublin, 1854), p. 5. On O’Beirne Crowe, and for the suggestion that he might also be the author of the anonymous review cited above (n. 29), see Elizabeth Boyle, ‘Resurrection: the study of medieval Irish eschatology in the nineteenth century’ in Paddy Lyons et al. (eds), *Romantic Ireland, from Tone to Gonno: fresh perspectives on nineteenth-century Ireland* (Newcastle, 2013), pp 52–63.
32. Cusack, *Life of Patrick*, pp 1–2. The idea that the Reformation brought Roman Catholicism to Ireland is a variation on the equally anachronistic idea that it was the Anglo-Norman invasion that brought Roman Catholicism to Ireland.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 1. Cusack notes (p. 6) that her book has been written principally for Catholics, thereby explicitly delineating two distinct historiographical traditions written for two separate audiences.
34. James Henthorn Todd, *St Patrick, apostle of Ireland: a memoir of his life and mission* (Dublin, 1871). Todd (1805–69) was professor of Hebrew at TCD from 1849.
35. The important role of manuscript culture in nineteenth-century Irish intellectual life can often be forgotten in the focus on print culture. For discussion of the Ó Longáin family of scribes in particular, see Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland: motivations and milieu* (MÓ/Anster, 2000).
36. Dublin, RIA MS F vi 1 (Cat. no. 252) f. 65–67v.: (‘establishes – contrary to the heretics of that time – that the body of Christ was in the consecrated wafer’).
37. Elizabeth Boyle, ‘Sacrifice and salvation in Echtgus ÓšÚa Cúanáin’s poetic treatise on the eucharist’ in Juliet Mullins, Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Richard Hawtree (eds), *Envisioning Christ on the cross: Ireland and the early medieval west* (Dublin, 2013), pp 181–94.
38. Paschasius Radbertus, *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, ed. Bede Paul (Turnhout, 1969). The longer version of the poem was edited from a Brussels manuscript by A. G. van Hamel: ‘Poems from Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale MS 5100–4’ in *Revue Celtique*, xxxvii (1917–19), pp 345–52, 345–9, and this version was translated by Gerard Murphy, ‘Eleventh- or twelfth-century Irish doctrine concerning the Real Presence’

in J. A. Watt, J. B. Morrall and F. X. Martin (eds), *Medieval studies presented to Aubrey Gwynn S.J.* (Dublin, 1961), pp 19–28.

39. See, for example, Edward J. Kilmartin, *The eucharist in the west: history and theology* (Collegeville, MN, 1998); J. de Montclos, *Lanfranc et Bérenger: le controverse eucharistique du XIe siècle* (Louvain, 1971); Ian Levy, Gary Macy and Kristen van Ausdall (eds), *A companion to the eucharist in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2011).

William Dool Killen (1806–1902): A Presbyterian Perspective on Irish Ecclesiastical History

Laurence Kirkpatrick

Irish Presbyterians make up a mere 2.9 per cent of contemporary Irish society, but some valuable studies of Irish Presbyterian history have appeared recently.¹ While James Seaton Reid (1798–1851) is, arguably, the most famous of a small number of Irish Presbyterian historians,² the subject of this chapter is William Dool Killen (1806–1902), who succeeded Reid in 1841 as professor of church history in Belfast Academical Institution.³ A consideration of his career and works will illuminate nineteenth-century Irish Presbyterian self-awareness and outlook. Throughout their Irish experience, Presbyterians have been sandwiched between Catholics and episcopal Protestants and as such they have a unique perspective on Irish history. With their distinctive view of church government, Presbyterians rejected both Catholic and Protestant episcopal models and this ensured that inter-denominational argument often focused upon the patristic church era for appropriate self-supporting antecedent. Biblical and patristic evidence was viewed as a crucial buttress in a case for expanding Irish Presbyterianism in the nineteenth century, which witnessed the high water mark of such controversy, when William Killen emerged as a champion

L. Kirkpatrick (✉)
Union Theological College, Belfast, Ireland

of the Presbyterian cause. Killen embodied this perspective and, as his life extended throughout most of the nineteenth century, his publications provide a useful lens through which to examine relevant aspects of the Irish Presbyterian psyche. The same theological and political factors repeatedly appear in his writings and, helpfully, Killen never tries to conceal his own views on all matters. Three main themes permeate his writings; Irish inter-church rivalry, Irish ecclesiastical history, and (building on the work of Reid) the connection with seventeenth-century Scottish Presbyterianism.⁴ For Killen, only the Presbyterian system of church government, with ministerial equality and group responsibility, had biblical support, and this was a recurrent theme. In short, he strongly defended nineteenth-century Presbyterianism, and is worthy of attention as no extended treatment of him has been produced.

William Dool Killen was born at Church Street, Ballymena in County Antrim on Easter Saturday, 5 April 1806, the third of four sons and nine children of John and Martha Killen (née Dool). His initial education was at a Presbyterian controlled school in Ballymena where a contemporary was Samuel Davidson, who later became a distinguished Old Testament scholar. In November 1821 he entered Belfast Academical Institution where Professor James Thompson, father of physicist Lord Kelvin, took a special interest in his education. Killen graduated with the general arts certificate in 1824 and, after one year as a private tutor in County Cavan, he returned to the Academical Institution as a ministry student of the Presbyterian general synod of Ulster. Following successful completion of this course he was licensed to preach by Ballymena Presbytery in October 1827. Killen was ordained on 11 November 1829 as Presbyterian minister in Raphoe, County Donegal. He married Anne Young on 10 August 1830 in Ballymena. At the Presbyterian General Assembly on 9 July 1841 he was unanimously appointed professor of ecclesiastical history, church government and pastoral theology. In consequence of this appointment he resigned from Raphoe on 12 October 1841 and took up residence in Belfast. Here, in a one-year overlap, he renewed his acquaintance with former school colleague Samuel Davidson who was professor of biblical criticism within the collegiate department of the Academical Institution.⁵ Killen occupied this chair with some distinction for forty-eight years until his retirement in 1889. Upon the death of Henry Cooke⁶ in December 1868, Killen was appointed president of the Presbyterian College, Belfast and held this position until his death on 10 January 1902, in his ninety-sixth year.

BISHOPS VERSUS ELDERS: KILLEN AND THE ‘DERRY CONTROVERSY’

As early as the seventeenth century Presbyterians and episcopal Protestants in north-west Ulster had clashed as each vied for local supremacy, a situation exacerbated by the close proximity of bishoprics in Derry and Raphoe. The Church of Ireland did not recognise Presbyterian ordination or marriages, and Presbyterians resented its privilege of establishment. Such clashes were exacerbated in the early nineteenth century by the Puseyite movement within Anglicanism.⁷ In late 1837 Church of Ireland curate Reverend Archibald Boyd preached a series of sermons in St Columb’s cathedral, Derry in which he claimed that the Anglican church was the most authentic of the contemporary Christian denominations. The sermons were published in spring 1838 as *Sermons on the church* (London). A later sermon by Reverend Dr Boyton, rector of Tullyaghuish, also preached in Derry cathedral, pointedly denied that Presbyterian ministers were validly ordained, as no bishop had participated in the rite. Boyton described Presbyterian ministers as ‘humanly appointed professors of the art of persuasion’.⁸ Four local Presbyterian ministers⁹ replied to this challenge, each delivering a sermon on four successive Sunday evenings in First Derry Presbyterian church, refuting Boyd’s views, and these were subsequently printed as *Presbyterianism defended* (1839).¹⁰ William Killen contributed the first discourse in which he defended the Presbyterian church in general and its ordinations, and attacked its rival’s claims of apostolic succession. Killen took particular exception to Dr Boyton’s refusal to accord the title ‘church’ to Irish Presbyterianism, preferring ‘religionists’ or ‘dissenting body’. He also explained that the Presbyterian understanding of apostolic succession signified a spiritual line of descent as measured by current teaching rather than a physical descent as in the laying on of hands at ordinations.¹¹ The Presbyterian case was further expanded in 1840 with the publication by the same four ministers of *The plea of presbytery* (Belfast, 1840). Killen’s section, like the others, was much expanded and the book was enthusiastically endorsed by the General Assembly in 1840. Reverend Boyd responded with *Misrepresentation refuted* and the Presbyterians in turn with *Mene, tekel*.¹² Perhaps the inconvenient truth in this very public theological spat is that both sides could claim scriptural support for their respective forms of church polity; inconvenient because each side tried, unsuccessfully, to deliver a decisive blow to the other based upon a set of biblical texts.

At least two points regarding this literary and theological contretemps are noteworthy. The main theological issue central to the controversy was church government. Each side claimed that their system had scriptural warrant from the apostolic era: episcopal for the established church and eldership for the Presbyterian church. This was to be a recurring theme throughout William Killen's life, and he frequently took up his pen in defence of his Presbyterian understanding.

The 'Derry Controversy' was a particularly significant stepping stone in Killen's career. When the leading Presbyterian historian, Reverend James Seaton Reid, was appointed to the chair of ecclesiastical history in Glasgow University in 1841 (only months after the publication of *The plea of presbytery*), the general assembly elected Killen, who was enjoying popular Presbyterian acclaim for his literary endeavour, to succeed him. Significantly, Henry Cooke, who also wished to follow Reid, was persuaded by friends that Killen was a more popular candidate. Rather than risk public defeat, Cooke withdrew his candidacy. There has always been a strong Presbyterian Glasgow–Belfast axis and it is perhaps no coincidence that Glasgow University awarded Killen a Doctor of Divinity degree in 1843, doubtless in recognition of his labours to defend Presbyterianism and enhance his professorial standing in Belfast.

KILLEN'S HISTORY OF PRESBYTERIANISM AND PLEA FOR PROTESTANT UNITY

James Seaton Reid died on 26 March 1851, aged fifty-two, while working on a third volume of his seminal *History of the Presbyterian church in Ireland*.¹³ The executors of his will asked Killen to undertake the task of completing the book, providing him with Reid's notes. He agreed, and completed the task within a year by appending five additional chapters.¹⁴ Although it has been noted that of the thirty or so errors in the three volumes of *History of the Presbyterian church in Ireland*, half are in Killen's 20 per cent contribution to the whole,¹⁵ the third volume was well received and Killen was widely congratulated upon completing the first major history of the Irish Presbyterian church. It is testament to Reid's skill that this work is still regarded as the most accurate and informative account of Irish Presbyterianism.

Killen's material in the third volume related a titanic controversy within the synod of Ulster over the practice of subscription to the Westminster

confession of faith. Early eighteenth-century controversies regarding this practice had been complicated by the conscientious scruples of some theologically orthodox ministers against subscription and an equally genuine fear of heresy creeping into the church if creedal adherence was slackened. Church of Ireland critics had been quick to cast aspersions upon Irish Presbyterian beliefs at a time when Presbyterians were keen to gain full legal toleration. An ingenious pragmatic solution was found in 1725 with the creation of the Antrim Presbytery as a forum for all non-subscribing ministers and under whose aegis subscription was not required at ordination services. Within nineteenth-century Presbyterianism, the larger pro-subscription group was led by Reverend Henry Cooke and the anti-subscription party was led by Reverend Henry Montgomery.¹⁶ Cooke advocated subscription as a protection against potential heresy and Montgomery denied subscription on a principle of individual freedom. A schism occurred in 1829 when seventeen ministers and their congregations withdrew from the synod to eventually form the Remonstrant synod which subsequently united with the synod of Munster and Presbytery of Antrim to form the Non-subscribing Presbyterian church.

Killen was warmly supportive of Cooke. Additionally, Killen was more strident in his opinions against both Catholicism and the Church of Ireland than Reid, and certainly the non-subscribers thought his version of the 1829 schism to be one-sided. It is also worth noting that in a later version of the third volume of Reid's work, published in 1867, Killen added a further chapter covering the years 1840–1867, which included important topics such as the Irish Famine and the 1859 Revival. Interestingly, the changing political landscape of late 1860s Ireland prompted Killen to plea for Protestant unity, though on Presbyterian terms. He wrote:

Presbyterianism, though often frowned upon by statesmen, and always hampered by its limited resources, has, after all, been the best benefactor of the country. The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland upon a Presbyterian basis would add immeasurably to its vigour as an ecclesiastical institute.¹⁷

Patently, this was not so much a call for compromise and mutual self-respect, but rather a call on the eve of Church of Ireland disestablishment for the latter's unconditional surrender.

THE CONTEST FOR SUPREMACY: BISHOPS VERSUS ELDERS

All the main churches in nineteenth-century Ireland were contending for legitimacy and, unsurprisingly, a major battlefield was interpretation of the supposed golden age of the patristic era. The Catholic church condemned both Anglicans and Presbyterians as illegitimate schismatic groupings, products of the sixteenth-century Reformation, having no living link with the early church. For some in the Church of Ireland, the response was to trace lineage, and therefore legitimacy, through an unbroken line of bishops to the New Testament era. The Presbyterian response was to argue that their lineage was spiritual, not physical, and that group rule by presbyters was the earliest, and therefore purest, form of church government, traceable to the patristic and New Testament era.

To this end, in 1859, Killen published *The ancient church*, a 600-page survey of the early church era, with special focus upon the years between the first century and the conversion of Constantine in 312. The book covers two periods; the first century and 100 to 312. Each period is divided into three sections and features history, literature and the nascent theology of the church. *The ancient church* is a ground-breaking work in that no Irish Presbyterian had ever produced such a thorough survey of the patristic era. Presbyterians tended to ignore the fifteen hundred-year lacuna between the New Testament and the sixteenth-century activity of their founder and hero, John Calvin. Killen set out to provide patristic legitimacy for the Presbyterian system of church government, which he argued was superior to either of its main rivals. Noting that Jesus had trained two groups of leaders: the Twelve (representing the Jewish tribes) and the Seventy (representing the heathen nations), Killen pointed out that, ‘no proof can be given from the sacred record, of the ordination, either by the Twelve or by the Seventy, of any one presbyter or pastor’.¹⁸ He also highlighted the practice of Paul and Barnabas who ‘presided in every church at an appointment of elders, in which the choice was determined by popular suffrage’.¹⁹ These examples were, for Killen, unanswerable in justifying Presbyterian belief and practice. Indefatigably, Killen sallied forth against his twin foes; Catholicism and the Church of Ireland, on the patristic battleground. In *The ancient church* he exhibited a detailed knowledge of early church writers and these he examined in turn, dismissing in every case the claims of his rival churchmen to represent early polity. For all protagonists this battle was fundamental. In nineteenth-century Ireland, to claim the high ground of biblical and early church authenticity was to dominate, if not vanquish, the claims of rivals.

Killen identified the development of certain ‘rites and ceremonies’ which he termed ‘innovations’,²⁰ notably the rise and growth of church hierarchy in general and the prominence of the bishop of Rome in particular. A generous space was accorded a discussion of the Ignatian correspondence,²¹ a major source of support for episcopal authority, a matter that occupied much of Killen’s academic attention. Unsurprisingly, Killen pronounced these letters to be ‘utterly spurious’. *The ancient church* was published simultaneously in Britain and America and was widely read, as is testified by the publication of a second edition in 1861. Twenty-one years later, in 1886, the eighty-year-old Killen returned to this precise topic with renewed gusto, publishing *The Ignatian Epistles entirely spurious* (Edinburgh). The title tells everything he believed about these letters but the timing is also significant. This is a short ninety-page book arranged in five chapters in which Killen responded to Bishop Joseph Barber Lightfoot’s²² 1885 work, *The apostolic fathers: Part II* (London), which represented a scholarly reassessment of the Ignatian correspondence. Lightfoot had pronounced that the middle recension was the genuine collection and it was this to which Killen objected, repeating his mantra that all the Ignatian letters were forgeries. In something akin to an ecclesiastical smokescreen, he went further, surmising that Callistus²³ was the likely author.

WRITING PRESBYTERIANS INTO IRISH HISTORY

William Killen was sensitive to the charge that Irish Presbyterians were merely a recent product of colonial invasion, and, commencing in the 1860s, he focused much of his literary output upon explaining the significance of the Presbyterian contribution to Irish history from the seventeenth century onwards. To this end he produced four main works, the first a new twenty-one page introduction to an 1861 edition of *Mackenzie’s memorials of the siege of Derry* (Belfast and London) (originally published in London, 1690), the second, an edition of Patrick Adair’s *Rise and progress of the Presbyterian church in Ireland* (Belfast, 1866), thirdly a memoir of his close friend, John Edgar (Belfast, London and Edinburgh, 1867), and fourthly *The Old Catholic church* (Edinburgh, 1871), an overview of Irish spirituality in which Presbyterianism is portrayed as a natural development. There is no doubt that, while Adair’s work had affirmed the Scottish origins of Ulster Presbyterianism,²⁴ with these other publications Killen reflected a growing trend in which the main churches were exhibit-

ing a budding consciousness of their place in *Irish* history. The plaudits for the most significant contribution to the survival of Derry in 1689 had been hotly contested between the Church of Ireland and dissenters since the city was relieved.²⁵ While the decision to republish Mackenzie's work came from Mackenzie's own Presbyterian congregation in Cookstown, Killen was asked to write a new foreword and took the opportunity to downplay the role of the Church of Ireland. Reverend John Mackenzie was one of eight Presbyterian ministers in Derry during the Jacobite siege and had, with his fellow dissenters, taken exception to Reverend George Walker's subsequent account, which he saw as a blatant attempt to minimise the Presbyterian contribution to breaking the siege. In the weeks after the liberation of the city, Walker and Mackenzie indulged in a pamphlet war which was heading for a costly judicial settlement in London before the matter was prematurely settled by Walker's death on 1 July 1690 at the Battle of the Boyne. Killen's foreword to the reprint of Mackenzie's work indicates that Presbyterian ire had not dwindled in the intervening 170 years. There was no biblical or doctrinal issue at stake in this work, but it did highlight the Presbyterian contribution to this important political episode in Ulster and Irish history. Killen was flying a flag for the Presbyterians who, in his opinion, were being written out of Irish history by their arrogant rivals. Simply stated, it was Killen's, and the Presbyterian, contention that dissenters outnumbered their rivals within Derry and played the more significant role in its survival.

In 1867 Killen published his *Memoir of John Edgar*. Reverend John Edgar was one of several nineteenth-century giants of Irish Presbyterianism.²⁶ Doubtless the motivation for this book was personal; Edgar was a close friend of Killen's, proposing his name for the chair of church history in 1841, and a faculty colleague. But John Edgar certainly merited such a publication; an eminent philanthropist, he raised thousands of pounds for famine relief in the 1840s in Connaught and established a thriving industrial school network in that province. As Father Theobald Mathew in Cork was the leading Catholic advocate of temperance, so, undoubtedly, was John Edgar the Protestant equivalent before the movement was subsumed by a stricter teetotal movement. He was also a staunch advocate of Presbyterian church extension, particularly in Connaught, and education throughout Ireland.

REACTIONS TO DISESTABLISHMENT, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH HISTORY

William Ewart Gladstone's Irish Church Act in 1869, which disestablished the Church of Ireland, enjoyed support from the vast majority of Irish Presbyterians, though it created a pamphlet war in anticipatory comment. In 1868 Killen entered the fray with his penny pamphlet entitled, *Why should prelacy dominate in Ireland?* (Belfast). This eight-page contribution to the debate left the reader in no doubt that Killen had no sympathy for the Church of Ireland in its forthcoming predicament. Killen showed himself as more than competent in this literary genre, hitting his target with five key observations on the Church of Ireland. In his view it had a weak view of scripture, it harboured ambiguous understandings of sacraments, it suffered from alignment to the state, it exhibited a low level of spirituality, and had proved a failure in Ireland. The pamphlet leaves the reader in no doubt that disestablishment should not be feared but rather welcomed as a step forward in Ireland. Commenting upon the extent of state support for the Irish churches, Killen wrote:

The Establishment principle, as taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith, has never been carried out in Ireland. In its present form of development, it supports Popery in Maynooth, Presbyterianism in the General Assembly, and Prelacy in the Episcopal Church. The Westminster Divines never intended to sanction any such absurdity.²⁷

This was a mocking reference to the fact that although the Church of Ireland was the established church, both Irish Catholics and Presbyterians also received state financial support.

Killen returned to this theme in 1871 with his significant publication, *The Old Catholic church* (Edinburgh). His intention is clarified in his sub-heading, *The history, doctrine, worship, and polity of the Christians traced from the apostolic age to the establishment of the pope as a temporal sovereign in AD 755*. His 400 pages of material is divided into two parts. The first part extends from Christ's birth to the conversion of Constantine in 312. It is arranged in three sections under the history of the church, the doctrine of the church and the worship and constitution of the church. The second part extends from Constantine's conversion to 755 and is arranged under five sections; general church history, the doctrine of the

church, worship and constitution of the church, ecclesiastical history of Great Britain and Ireland, and the progress of popedom (sic).

While there is much overlap, especially in the first part, with his 1859 work, *The ancient church*, this book differs in that Killen wrote in a more condensed style and covered the first seven and a half centuries of the Christian era. The chief difference consists in his inclusion and treatment of the church in Britain and Ireland. Understandably, Presbyterian historical enquiry tended to focus upon the sixteenth-century Reformation and the writings of Calvin and Knox. In *The Old Catholic church* Killen had attempted to demonstrate that there were spiritual antecedents in Britain and Ireland for Irish Presbyterianism. Hence he explored in some detail the close Scottish–Irish links in the days of Columbkille and the later subjection of the Irish church to Rome.²⁸ He also examined the life and ministry of Patrick and concluded that the Irish church was not then under any form of subjection to Rome:

Though Pope Leo the Great wrote such a multitude of letters; though he was so remarkable for energy and vigilance; and though he filled the Roman chair for twenty-one years at the very time when Patrick was proceeding so prosperously in the Western isle; he never penned a single line for his encouragement.²⁹

While Reid's *History* had touched on early Irish church history, we see in this publication confirmation that Irish Presbyterians were beginning to explore their 'Irishness' in more depth than Reid had done. The aim was to construct an identity that accommodated both the British (notably Scottish) and Irish aspects of their being. In matters of politics they were caught between Britain and Ireland, and in matters of religion they were caught between Catholicism and Anglicanism. Interestingly, although Reid had mentioned 'the presbyterial order of the Culdees' and their 'opposition to the Papal system',³⁰ Killen made no effort to develop this obvious support for his case.

Irish history continued to prove a new ecclesiastical theatre of war. Killen was part of this phenomenon, as is evidenced by the publication, in 1875, of *The ecclesiastical history of Ireland* (2 vols, London). The Catholic church claimed, with some justification, that it alone predated the sixteenth-century Reformation and thereby represented a continuity in Ireland which could be traced back to the introduction of Christianity to Ireland and St Patrick himself. Both the Church of Ireland and the

Presbyterians felt keenly the charge that they represented recent, foreign innovations. Hence, historians from both traditions endeavoured to discredit Catholic claims by presenting the early Irish church as uniquely Irish and out of step with Rome. The Church of Ireland emphasised episcopal continuity and links with St Patrick, while Presbyterians stressed their spiritual pedagogy, in efforts to validate their respective claims to be authentically Irish.

Killen's *The ecclesiastical history of Ireland* is a weighty double tome in which the author presents a broad sweep of Irish ecclesiastical history. The first volume comprises nineteen chapters and deals with the period from the introduction of Christianity to Ireland to the death of James I in 1625. The second volume comprises eighteen chapters and continues developments up to and including the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1870. This represented more than a Presbyterian history, in that Killen was working on a broader canvas, tracing developments in all three denominations in Ireland in the period, again marking a shift in perception. While not surrendering faith in his beloved Presbyterianism, Killen here attempted to present that Presbyterian stream as one of several on the Irish historical landscape. 'It is the object of the present work to trace the proceedings of all the religious denominations on the island; so that the reader, as he passes on from age to age, may be acquainted with their relative strength, their peculiar arrangements, and their mutual influence.'³¹ This seminal publication marks the high water mark of Irish Presbyterian perceptions of Irish history.

William Killen published three more volumes in his twilight years. *A history of congregations of the Presbyterian church in Ireland* (Belfast, 1886) utilised a notebook of James Seaton Reid which detailed information on every Presbyterian congregation, including names of ministers and dates of their ordinations. Reid had published numerous miniature congregational histories on a regular basis in *McComb's Presbyterian Almanac*.³² This new publication updated the information on 273 congregations and added biographical information on nineteen Presbyterian luminaries, together with a broad overview of Irish Presbyterian history. The book was extremely popular in Presbyterian circles, though there were some congregational omissions, for example Ahorey, Kilmount and Loughaghery. Owing mainly to declining health, especially increasing deafness, Killen was finally persuaded to resign his chair in 1889; he published *The framework of the church* (Edinburgh) in the following year. In this publication Killen examined and compared congregationalism, prelacy and presbytery

in turn, unsurprisingly coming to the conclusion that the Presbyterian form of church government best conformed to New Testament and early church polity.

REMINISCENCES AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL LEGACY

In October 1901 Killen published his last book, *Reminiscences of a long life* (London). The title was apt as Killen was now ninety-five years of age. He had been asked several times by family members and numerous ministerial colleagues to record his personal life experiences. It is a valuable short volume, as he provides numerous first-hand accounts of various events, including appraisals of several ecclesiastical notables such as Robert Stewart, Samuel Hanna and James Morgan.³³ In addition to discussion of key episodes in his lifetime and issues facing the Presbyterian church, his *Reminiscences* are truly Tertullianesque in style.³⁴ The old warrior was a *vir ardens* and had lost none of his combativeness against his long-standing opponents, the Church of Ireland and Catholicism, commenting on the former that it was ‘costly, despotic, ill-balanced, and wanting in efficiency’.³⁵ Of Catholicism he wrote, ‘The tendency of Popery, wherever it prevails in Ireland, is to deteriorate the moral atmosphere.’³⁶ Remarkably, he concurred with an interpretation of the apocalyptic literature in Daniel, asserting that ‘the Papacy will disappear in AD 2015’.³⁷

While the coterie of Irish Presbyterian historians may be limited, there can be little doubt that William Dool Killen stands proudly and justifiably among them. Contrary to popular perceptions, Irish Presbyterians are not and were not homogeneous, and Killen himself demonstrates aspects of their complex identities. He argued vociferously against both rival churches in matters political and economic and was assuredly representative of an emergent evangelicalism within nineteenth-century Irish Presbyterianism. As such, he always tried to argue his case from scripture and was strongly of the opinion that the doctrinal purity of his church was directly commensurate with its influence for good in Irish society. However, like the Reformation leaders themselves, he discovered that while it is one thing to claim to be scriptural in outlook, it is disconcerting to discover that on some issues there is a spectrum of scriptural interpretations. In short, in theological debate it was often impossible to deliver a decisive blow with a telling text from scripture. Such proved to be the case with the New Testament and patristic era arguments relating to church government, which abound in his writings. Killen was consistent in his view that the

New Testament pattern of collective church government by elders was authentically replicated in Presbyterianism, and that monarchical episcopacy, as exemplified in the established church, and in many countries by the Catholic church, was a later, and therefore *ipso facto* a more imperfect, form of church government.

For most of his professional career Killen experienced and wrote with growing confidence in Irish Presbyterianism. He clearly believed that an age of Irish Presbyterian ascendancy was dawning, and this is evidenced in his consistent deference to the Scottish ‘mother church’ and Presbyterian progress in Ireland (most notably in Connaught in the 1830s and 40s), and internationally, especially in missionary activity in Gujarat and Manchuria. The disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869 marked a major development in his interpretation of Irish ecclesiastical history. Arguably, the culmination of this ‘Presbyterian crusade’ was the formation, in 1875, of the Alliance of Reformed Churches³⁸ and Killen had been among several Irish Presbyterians calling for such an organisation. He authored the first Irish report to the inaugural General Presbyterian Council meeting in Edinburgh in 1877 and wrote of his church, ‘It has at present under its care about half a million of people, including a large proportion of the substantial farmers and merchants of Ulster. Very few of the aristocracy ever were attached to it; but of late its members have been advancing steadily in social position; and at this moment it has in its communion seven Members of Parliament, several considerable landed proprietors, and many gentlemen holding the Commission of the Peace.’³⁹ The third meeting of the Alliance was held in Belfast in 1884. In retrospect, William Killen continued the denominational self-understanding of Reid (while strengthening its Irish dimensions). This was in turn extended by other Presbyterian writers such as Hamilton Magee and Thomas Witherow.⁴⁰

Killen was curiously silent on the important topic of Irish home rule. The vast majority of Irish Presbyterians, including Killen, were clearly against home rule, but they were disappointed by the ambivalence of their Scottish co-religionists. The Free Church of Scotland⁴¹ wanted Gladstone to disestablish the Church of Scotland and so was unwilling to oppose his Irish home rule proposals. It may be that it would not have strengthened Killen’s theory of growing Presbyterian influence to highlight this Scottish fracture line. He exhibited the main traits of his people; personally affable and approachable, but obstinate in his avowal of the correctness and superiority of his church. He made a significant contribution to ecclesiastical historiography; and in 1901 he was awarded an LLD degree from

Glasgow University, fifty-eight years after his earlier award from the same institution.

William Dool Killen died on 19 January 1902, and the Assembly memorial record states:

He was a faithful and accurate historian, and ... wrote in a style ... distinguished by its vigour and perspicuity ... He was a keen controversialist, and an eager defender of the polity and doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, but he loved all Evangelical Churches, and ... [during] his life hoped and prayed for a closer union among them.⁴²

NOTES

1. See, for example, A. R. Holmes, *The shaping of Ulster Presbyterian belief & practice, 1770–1840* (Oxford, 2006) and other works by this author, cited below; R. F.G. Holmes, *The Presbyterian church in Ireland* (Dublin, 2000); John Dunlop, *A precarious belonging: Presbyterians and the conflict in Ireland* (Belfast, 1995).
2. For example, Patrick Adair (d.1695), Thomas Witherow (d.1890), William Latimer (d.1919), David Stewart (d.1961), John Barkley (d.1997) and Finlay Holmes (d.2008).
3. Finlay Holmes, 'Killen, William Dool' in *DIB* (accessed 14 Feb. 2016).
4. See Andrew R. Holmes, 'Presbyterian religion, historiography, and Ulster Scots identity, c.1800 to 1914' in *Historical Journal*, lii, no.3 (Sept. 2009), pp 615–40, pp 625–9, 632.
5. Davidson espoused Congregationalist views and resigned his chair in 1842. He was appointed to lecture in Lancashire Independent College in Manchester but was obliged, controversially, to resign in 1857 for publishing his liberal views on the Old Testament and bible interpretation.
6. Reverend Henry Cooke (1783–1868) minister in Duncane (1808–10), Donegore (1811–18), Killyleagh (1818–29), May Street, Belfast (1829–48) and president of Assembly's College, Belfast (1847–67) [recte (1853–67)]; see Finlay Holmes, 'Cooke, Henry' in *DIB* (accessed 11 Feb. 2016).
7. Andrew R. Holmes, 'Covenanter politics, evangelicalism, political liberalism and Ulster Presbyterians, 1798–1914' in *English Historical Review*, cxxv, no.153 (2010), pp 340–69, pp 349–51.
8. Quoted in Archibald Boyd, *Episcopacy, ordination, lay-eldership, and liturgies: considered in five letters* (London and Dublin, 1839), p. 5.
9. William McClure (First Derry), James Denham (Second Derry), Alexander Goudy (Strabane) and William Killen (Raphoe). Reverend Goudy, being a grandson of Reverend James Porter who was hanged in Greyabbey for his part in the rebellion of 1798, was particularly scathing of the established church and landlordism.

10. Published in Glasgow, Londonderry, Belfast, Dublin, Edinburgh and London.
11. Ministers of the General Synod of Ulster, *Prebyterianism defended* (Glasgow, 1839), Discourse I, pp 27–61.
12. The full text of *Mene, tekel* (Derry, 1840), and a description of Reverend Boyd's *Misrepresentation refuted* can be found in Ministers of the General Synod of Ulster, *The plea of presbytery* (3rd edn, Belfast, 1843).
13. Vol. i (1600–1645) was completed in December 1833, vol. ii (1645–1701) was completed in February 1837.
14. Vol. iii (1702–1841) was completed in April 1853.
15. See Robert Allen, *James Scaton Reid* (Belfast, 1951), p. 174.
16. Reverend Henry Montgomery (1788–1865), minister of Dunmurry (1809–65) and headmaster of the English department, Royal Belfast Institution (1817–39); see Finlay Holmes, 'Montgomery, Henry' in *DIB* (accessed 11 Feb. 2016).
17. J. S. Reid, *History of the Presbyterian church in Ireland* (3 vols, Belfast, 1853), iii, 520–1.
18. W. D. Killen, *The ancient church* (Belfast, 1859), p. 41.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
20. *Ibid.*, preface.
21. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in late first and early second century, wrote several letters during the journey from Syria to his martyrdom in Rome in which he argued strongly in favour of an episcopal form of church government; *ibid.*, pp 389–412.
22. Lightfoot (1828–89) was a professor of divinity in Trinity College, Cambridge (1861–71), chaplain to Queen Victoria, canon of St Paul's cathedral, and bishop of Durham (1879–89). See C. K. Barrett, 'Joseph Barber' in *ODNB* (accessed 24 Mar. 2016).
23. Callistus was a former slave who became bishop of Rome c.217–22.
24. Holmes, 'Presbyterian religion', p. 629.
25. See Ian McBride, *The siege of Derry in Ulster Protestant mythology* (Dublin, 1997).
26. Finlay Holmes, 'Edgar, John' in *DIB* (accessed 14 Feb. 2016).
27. W. D. Killen, *Why should prelacy dominate in Ireland?* (Belfast, 1868), p. 1.
28. W. D. Killen, *The Old Catholic church* (Edinburgh, 1871), pp 287–8.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
30. J. S. Reid, *History of the Presbyterian church in Ireland*, i, 2.
31. W. D. Killen, *Ecclesiastical history of Ireland* (London, 1875), i, p. viii.
32. William McComb was a Presbyterian bookseller in High Street, Belfast. His popular *McComb's Presbyterian Almanac* was produced between 1840 and 1884.

33. For further information see James McConnell, *EASTI of the Irish Presbyterian church, 1613–1840* (Belfast, 1951), pp 205, 232, 284.
34. Tertullian, a second-century Carthaginian presbyter, whose views grew increasingly extreme.
35. W. D. Killen, *Reminiscences of a long life* (London, 1901), p. 245.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
38. Founded by mainly American, Scottish and Irish Presbyterians in 1875 in London. The organisation held quadrennial world conferences (1884 in Belfast).
39. *Proceedings of the First General Presbyterian Council held at Edinburgh* July 1877 (Edinburgh, 1877), p. 315.
40. Reverend Hamilton Magee (1824–1902), superintendent of Dublin Mission (1854–97) and Reverend Thomas Witherow (1824–90), minister of Maghera (1845–65), professor in Magee College, Londonderry (1865–90).
41. The Free Church had separated from the Church of Scotland in 1843 and enjoyed Irish Presbyterian support.
42. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in Ireland*, 1902, p. 354 (Gamble Library, Union Theological College, Belfast).

History-Writing, Collective Memory and Identity in an Irish Context: George V. Jourdan and R. Dudley Edwards

Miriam Moffitt

This chapter examines the methods employed in the 1930s by two Irish historians, one Protestant, the other Catholic, to reinforce their readers' identification with either the Catholic or Protestant perspectives on Irish history. It explores how collective memories can be crafted to reflect the dominant ethos of a group, thereby consolidating its sense of religious, cultural or political identity, and superimposes theoretical frameworks from the disciplines of psychology and sociology onto the Irish historical and historiographical experience.

The manner in which a community or society perceives its location in the present has a profound bearing on the way in which it remembers its past. A group's representation of its history shapes its sense of what it was, can and should be, and is thus central to the construction of its identity, norms and values. Such historical interpretations serve to enforce a society's foundational myths, defining its rights and obligations and legitimising its social and political arrangements.

M. Moffitt (✉)
St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland

Every collective comprises individuals who are socially situated, thinking and feeling beings with personal life-stories, who live under certain material and historical conditions.¹ Therefore, the conceptual schemes, knowledge, and information that shape its view of the world, and its interpretation of the past, are socially mediated. Although individuals within a group may claim an impartial version of history, it has been suggested that ‘collective memory’ can be subjective and biased, based on selective accounts of the past, influenced by the inclusion, omission, exaggeration or down-playing of events. While it can be argued that actual remembering is carried out at the level of the individual, in fact society remembers events, and transmits memories of events, at the level of the collective.² It should be noted that although individuals, whether trained or untrained in the discipline of history, have the potential to re-assess the past objectively, the likelihood of their diverging from a communal norm depends on their temperament, on previous conditioning and experience and, above all, on access to a comprehensive range of appropriate sources. It also depends on their receptiveness or otherwise to fresh perspectives on the past.

Collective memory is difficult to define. It is referred to by some as popular memory, by others as social or collective memory, and by others as public memory. The idea that groups of people recall their past and that of their ancestors in meaningful ways has attracted the attention of scholars from a number of disciplines and has not resulted in an agreed definition.³ Collective memory exerts a profound impact on the manner in which a society perceives itself. Such memories are deep, not only in the sense that they are not obvious or explicitly formulated, but because they are deeply embedded and resistant to change.⁴ Since collective memory is frequently called upon to define a community’s location within society and to reinforce parameters of admission to or exclusion from a collective, it is necessary to understand the nature, role, and *modus operandi* of collective memory, and also the manner in which it is informed, and by which it informs its sociocultural environment. Collective memory is shaped by both the rememberer and the textual and oral resources (cultural tools) on which it draws. It follows therefore, that cultural tools, in this case accounts of history, comprise the most important intermediary between the rememberer and his/her sociocultural environment.⁵

What follows is an exploration of communal memory, which will be discussed with particular reference to the Catholic-nationalist and Protestant-unionist communities in Ireland. As happens elsewhere in the world, members of both communities frequently insist that their version

of the past represents the genuine account of what happened, believing that members of the other group are projecting a biased or false account of the past.

Although studies of identity and of collective memory have flourished elsewhere, the topic is relatively understudied in the Irish context. Among those who have researched the role of memory as it pertains to Ireland are Guy Beiner, Joep Leerssen, and the contributors to the edited works of Ian McBride and Oona Frawley. Guy Beiner's analysis of the 1798 rebellion in Ireland differs from the publications of Leerssen, McBride and Frawley as it estimates the retention of the episode in social memory by examining folklore, oral traditions and local commemorations.⁶ Leerssen, McBride and Frawley, in contrast, draw on written sources. Leerssen's analysis of the writing of Irish history provides a valuable account of the manner in which conceptions of identity were shaped from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In his preface to *Mere Irish and FÁor-Ghael*, he explains that the Irish past was shaped under conditions of hegemony and resistance and states that, although variations in this general pattern exist, a person's interpretation of Irish history depended largely on his/her political and religious background. He explains how seventeenth-century English writers tended to depict the native Irish as being religiously and culturally barbarous, which led Irish Catholic writers, then exiled on the Continent, to emphasise the civility of Gaelic culture and the persistent strength of Ireland's attachment to the church of Rome. In this way, Gaelic historians generated a 'legend' from their country's cultural traditions out of which grew the conceptions of identity held by later generations of Catholic nationalists.⁷ He also shows how in political tracts and in literature emanating from England the native Irish were depicted as ignorant and untrustworthy, in marked contrast to loyal Protestant subjects of the crown. This in turn shaped the conceptions of identity found among the Protestant community.⁸ Similarly, in *History and memory in modern Ireland*, Ian McBride has shown how, over the centuries, the conflicting nature of historical narratives served to reinforce oppositional constructs of the past until the mid-twentieth century.⁹

The understanding of collective memory in the Irish context is greatly enhanced by Frawley's four-volume *Memory Ireland*, volumes I and II, which appeared in 2011 and 2012 respectively.¹⁰ This multi-disciplinary work explores the interconnection of collective memory and national identity. The first two essays in volume I provide a valuable review of recent scholarship relating to the theoretical understandings of memory, where

Barbara Misztal explains how memory forms ‘the basis of the collective identity of a community’; a resource for the construction and defence of cultural identities,¹¹ while the essays of Frawley, Christopher Ivic and Malcolm Sen make significant contributions to the understanding of collective memory in an Irish context.¹²

The methodology of the present study differs from that deployed by McBride and Frawley and from Leerssen’s *Mere Irish* in that both the content of the narrative and the manner of telling are explored. The scholarship of McBride and Frawley (and their contributors) and of Leerssen is meticulous; they examine an extensive range of sources, seeking out and probing the message contained therein. But the sheer scope of their source material precludes the type of analysis attempted in this chapter, which focuses exclusively on the writing of two historians: George Vivilliers Jourdan and Robert Dudley Edwards. In addition to identifying and interrogating the content of their material, this chapter considers the techniques these men employed to forge connections with their readers and to ensure that their particular historical interpretations were transmitted and absorbed.

NARRATIVES

If it is accepted that history, and the ideals of history, have emerged in a context populated by collective memory, it must be recognised that historians have, from the very outset, been influenced by the collective memories of the society in which they lived.¹³ In focusing on textually-mediated collective memory (derived from written sources), the influence of language or narratives becomes apparent.¹⁴ Narratives provide the essential ‘tool-kits’ by which the socio-cultural setting is characterised.¹⁵ They draw together strands of information, and in order to include some aspects of a story, other elements are, of necessity, left out – a phenomenon known as ‘emplotment’.

For some individuals, membership of a collective can influence their perception and depiction of the group, as they need to think well of the collective to which they belong and to project a glowing account of its past.¹⁶ This can lead to distortion in the narrative since they seek not only to recount the group-version of their past, but to justify it, and to grant legitimacy to an existing social order.¹⁷ Since collective memory relies heavily on a particular emplotment of events, and since events that do not contribute to a positive self-image are omitted, this can give rise to

the formation of conflicting narratives relating to the same episode, but emanating from oppositional groups.¹⁸ That can in turn lead to ‘mnemonic battles’ over *what* is remembered and *how* it is presented.¹⁹ This is especially problematic where an episode represents a trajectory of progress for one grouping, but is perceived as a trajectory of decline for another; and a crucial factor in shaping the emplotment of narrative is the sense of an ending.²⁰ Narratives, whether the writings of academic historians or oral accounts drawn from collective memories, are shaped by the process of emplotment and are frequently organised around a sense of an ending so that the inclusions and omissions imposed on the resultant narrative inform both analytical history and collective memory.

ANALOGISMS

An individual’s beliefs, theories, and schemas are acquired through a variety of different channels, including education, the media, and social interactions in childhood and adult life. The inclination toward simplified and/or distorted (but often useful) reasoning in the form of analogism and a propensity to organise events into teleological narratives to which causality is attributed, is of particular interest to this discussion. Humans have been shown to be ‘cognitive misers’, inclined to take the easy option when presented with a complex psychological or cognitive situation. This often results in the use of cognitive strategies without much reflection, and it has been shown that people tend to select previous episodes that come to mind easily when comparing historical events with a new set of circumstances (analogism). That is important since people tend to remember significant events better than mundane ones (termed the *availability heuristic*) and are more likely to remember vivid than pallid information. Periods of tranquillity can, in consequence, be sidelined in favour of more traumatic occurrences, so that spectacular episodes are more likely to become embedded in the collective memory of a mnemonic community.²¹

Throughout the world, it has been seen that elites within communities utilise analogisms in order to direct people’s belief-formation by creating a usable past. This was evident in the highly emotive rhetoric employed throughout Ireland in the run-up to the third home rule bill when unionist leaders spoke of the maltreatment of Protestant subjects in the seventeenth century, thereby warning their community of the perils awaiting Irish Protestants should power fall into the hands of Catholic nationalists.²² In doing so, they relied on the fact that it is easier to conjure

up memories of dramatic events, such as war and conflict, than of long periods of peace – an observation that is especially applicable to societies with a history of prior conflict.²³ Some researchers have argued that the use of analogisms provides a top-down manipulation of identity,²⁴ while others have drawn attention to the fact that, in order for the message to be effective, it must resonate with the recipient community.²⁵ In other words, propaganda or moralising speeches will not have the required effect unless they are sufficiently attuned to the collective’s presumptions and can make an emotional connection or can answer to self-interests of the group. For analogisms to be successful, therefore, they must be capable of harmonising with the ‘culturally shared symbolic forms’ of the collective.²⁶

This is most likely to succeed where the collective has been predisposed to messages of this kind and where members have been exposed to narratives that are essentially moralising in nature and teleological in form. Schematic narrative templates play a crucial role here, since in order to make sense of present events and situations, people create their own narratives by drawing on an existing stock of stories and because they are more likely to identify with familiar narrative forms. By cleaving to a set of stories with narrative fidelity, a collective’s interpretation of the past remains culturally resonant.²⁷

SCHEMATIC NARRATIVE TEMPLATES

Narratives may be categorised into specific narratives and schematic narrative templates. The former describes precise historical accounts that are purely factual and quantitative in nature; the second is more qualitative in form, describing what happened, giving reasons, outcomes and consequences. The latter type is of interest to this study.²⁸ Templates work efficiently because humans, being cognitive misers, use shortcuts and general algorithms when thinking and making decisions. A narrative template provides a reusable scaffolding upon which may be draped stories from different eras and involving different characters, so that people generally employ a form of simplified generic narrative for making sense of complex information, regardless of context.²⁹

In the case of history and collective memory in the Irish context, a persistent template is found in the oppositional tropes of ‘All Catholics want to murder us Protestants in our beds’ and ‘All Protestants or Englishmen want to exterminate us Catholics’. These narrative templates may be

utilised over a variety of settings but the basic plot remains the same. Both templates rely on similar underlying assumptions:

1. If left to ourselves, we are a peaceful, law-abiding people
2. All trouble and violence originated from beyond our community
3. It has resulted in a time of great suffering and persecution
4. But we have survived through heroism, valour and superior civilisation, and because God is on our side.

These four criteria can be applied to schematic templates used throughout the world, in cases such as the American collective memory regarding the attack on Pearl Harbour. This narrative has been termed the ‘triumph over alien forces’ trope. One of the reasons for its ubiquity is its flexibility. Regardless of whether the alien in question is foreign or domestic, the alien’s action is invariably depicted as aggressive towards a genuine ‘us’.³⁰ The potency of the alien model depends on the maintenance of a binary interpretation of ‘them’ and ‘us’, where parties are separated in a bipolar field with sharply delineated boundaries.³¹ Hence there are no neutral parties in these accounts and none are allowed to emerge; there are merely determined opponents in an uncompromising struggle. The issue here is not one of accuracy, but of employment in the service of creating a usable past. As has happened in other instances, rememberers of Ireland’s past have drawn together segments of history to create schematic narratives whose very essence is grounded in a sense of victimhood.³²

The four points listed above are crucial to the belief commonly held by Irish Catholic-nationalists that they were a much victimised and blameless population. They believed that Ireland would have been trouble-free but for the belligerence of a malicious alien force, and that Irish Catholics were victims of a devious and unprovoked aggression – points (1) and (2). They also believed that they had the support of Providence in their crusade against the ‘heresy’ of Protestantism – point (4). Similarly, the Protestant-unionist settler population considered that they were unjustly subjected to attack – points (1) and (2), and that the barbaric and inferior culture of the Gael was, of necessity, swept aside to facilitate the establishment of a civilised Protestant country, which would be impervious to the devious machinations of Roman intrigue – point (4). Appropriation of point (3) was common to both communities. The following discussion identifies the presence of such patterns in the writings of the Protestant historian, George Vivilliers Jourdan, taken from W. A. Phillips, *History of the Church*

of Ireland published in 1934, and of Robert Dudley Edwards, a Catholic scholar, which appeared the following year as *Church and state in Tudor Ireland*.³³

Jourdan (1868–1955) was reared and educated to view Irish history through an exclusively Protestant prism. Born into a Dublin Huguenot family, he was awarded a BA from Trinity College, Dublin in 1893 and was ordained the following year. He served as rector of St Mary's church in Shandon, Cork from 1915 and succeeded Hugh Jackson Lawlor as professor of ecclesiastical history at Trinity College, Dublin in 1933, a position he held until his death.³⁴ Jourdan was a canon of St Patrick's cathedral from 1931, became a fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 1915, and a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1934. He published a lengthy account of the Reformation in 1914 and his short pamphlet, *The Reformation in Ireland in the 16th century*, appeared as part of a series of booklets produced by the Church of Ireland in 1932 to commemorate the fifteen-hundred year anniversary of the arrival of St Patrick.³⁵

Jourdan attended Trinity College, Dublin a full thirty years before Edwards embarked on third level studies. Although educated in a wholly denominational environment, Jourdan approached the Reformation in Ireland in an analytical fashion, but as will be noted in Edwards's case, his interpretation was influenced by earlier, less scholarly, accounts.³⁶ This does not mean that these men neglected to consult original documents, as in both cases their writings reveal extensive research among primary sources. Instead, it suggests that their interpretation of sixteenth-century material was influenced, to some extent, by the partisan scholarship of the intervening period.

Jourdan's thesis was that the Church of Ireland was the legitimate descendant of the church of St Patrick, and that the failure of the Protestant Reformation was owing to the backwardness of the native Irish, which impeded their reception of Reformation ideologies. This argument runs through Jourdan's contribution to the *History*, delivered in an overt manner and reinforced by the vocabulary employed. Jourdan's claim on the early Irish church would be countered by Edwards, again by direct assertions, by choice of vocabulary, and also by stressing the unbroken faith of Irish Catholics from the medieval to the post-Reformation era.

Dudley Edwards (1909–88) studied history at University College Dublin from where he graduated with a BA in history in 1929, followed by an MA in history two years later. His doctoral thesis from London University (1933) formed the basis for *Church and state in Tudor Ireland*.

He became a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1936, was appointed to a position of lecturer in modern history in University College Dublin in 1939, became a statutory lecturer the following year, and held the chair of history in that institution from 1944 to 1979. During his time in London, he shared lodgings with Theo Moody, a graduate of Queen's University, Belfast, then a research student at the Institute of Historical Research in London. During their time in London, Moody and Edwards were exposed to a form of empirical scholarship not commonly practised in Ireland at the time (and not available to Jourdan), although the output of historians such as Edmund Curtis, J. B. Bury and Eoin MacNeill indicates that the profession had already begun to veer in that direction. Edwards and Moody were jointly convinced of the merits of a 'scientific' approach, which led to the establishment of the Irish Historical Society and the Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies in 1936, and to the publication of *Irish Historical Studies* two years later.³⁷

Edwards espoused historical objectivity, and set out to base his research solidly on the grounds of historical evidence. Although he is generally credited with transforming the writing of Irish history by providing a scientific account of the past in contrast to a more common confessional narrative, opinion is divided on the merits or otherwise of *Church and state*. It has been variously claimed that the work is completely impartial; unduly detached and clinical, or that it exhibits a Catholic bias. Aidan Clarke viewed *Church and state* as an impartial analysis, which avoided 'both confessional and nationalist glosses'.³⁸ Brendan Bradshaw believed it was unduly detached, and he disparagingly referred to the output of the 'impatient young men of the 1930s' (Moody and Edwards) as 'value-free' history, a clinical narrative in which the emotion of former accounts was lacking.³⁹ In contrast, Steven Ellis considered that Edwards's *Church and state* was neither detached nor impartial.⁴⁰ However, while insisting that it was not value-free, Ellis acknowledged that Edwards's interpretation was 'an honest attempt by a professional historian writing in the Catholic and nationalist tradition who tried to understand and analyse a movement with which he fundamentally disagreed'.⁴¹

Cultural or collective memories are not biologically inherited, but are preserved and perpetuated vertically through a canon of historical accounts, which in turn influences the public utterances of societal and clerical leaders and the tone of reporting in the media. This careful crafting of the past has given rise to the opposing constructs that (until recently) comprised Catholic and Protestant versions of Irish history.⁴² By selective

objectification, storage, reactivation and repetition, the two communities imbued new generations with partisan and conflicting ‘memories’ of the past. Throughout their works, both Jourdan and Edwards remained conscious of the existence of an opposing version of history. In some instances, they directly confronted the interpretation of the ‘other’, but more usually countered or pre-empted hostile accounts by projecting and validating their own ‘true’ version of events. As *Church and state* was published in 1935, a year after Jourdan’s chapters appeared, Edwards was able to confront Jourdan’s writings directly. Although Edwards acknowledged Jourdan’s extensive research, he believed that it contradicted the opinions of ‘every other reputable scholar of Elizabethan Ireland’.⁴³ While Edwards described Jourdan’s account as ‘apologetic rather than historical’, he would probably be dismayed that some historians have accused his own *magnum opus* of presenting a partisan account of the past.⁴⁴

Both built their arguments in a plausible manner, carefully selecting their sources to bolster their points of view and, even more importantly, to undermine the legitimacy of the opposing interpretation. In doing so, they created a usable past on which their particular ‘present’ interpretation of history could be built. For instance, Jourdan cast doubt on Catholic assertions that underhand methods were used to ensure the passage of the oath of supremacy (to the monarch as head of the church) by the Irish parliament in 1560, and indicated how this erroneous belief was perpetuated in Catholic scholarship.⁴⁵ Edwards repeated the allegation of sharp practice and provided additional proof of it.⁴⁶

Open confrontation between Protestant and Catholic historiography was nothing new, and instances can be found in Edwards’s and Jourdan’s depiction of events. However, it is more common to find evidence of hidden dialogicality, where one side emphasises its stance so as to silently undermine the validity of the other. This is particularly evident when schematic narratives are employed. Analysis of the structure and employment (omission/inclusion of material) of the narratives of Jourdan and Edwards demonstrates that both authors consistently employed ‘triumph over alien’ schemes and that both emphasised the positive aspects of their own history and the negatives of the other version.

A tendency to amplify the misfortunes of the other can be seen in, for example, the descriptions of the abortive invasion of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Jourdan devoted over four pages to the episode, recounting the destruction of the ships and loss of thousands of Spanish lives. He assured his readers that the native Irish mostly refused assistance to the Spanish invaders and that they regarded the Spanish with hostility after the fail-

ure of the Armada. Jourdan's readers also learned that the failed invasion altered public opinion in England so that 'All the results of the Jesuits' missionary work were swept away'.⁴⁷ Edwards, by contrast, disposed of the attempted invasion in three sentences, suggesting that future assistance from this quarter might be expected: 'The Armada, although defeated, showed the latent possibilities of Spain, and emphasised her determination to accomplish an invasion of England.'⁴⁸

There are marked similarities between the two scholars' approaches, as both delivered a steady stream of 'small' schematic narratives which suggest to the reader that their particular confession was in a healthy state, that all trouble originated external to that confession, that this resulted in unfair pressure, persecution and violence, but in spite of this, their particular confession remained in a dominant position. Jourdan structured his account of efforts to further British rule and to advance the reformed religion according to a predictable pattern which conforms to the template of 'triumph over alien forces' already described.

- (A) The reformed religion was in a healthy state:
it was more popular than Catholic sources admitted and it was not unduly aggressive towards Catholics
- (B) It was subjected to unfair persecution and political interference:
chiefly through the efforts of the papacy and the Catholic countries of Europe
- (C) In spite of unfair persecution, violence and political interference:
the reformed religion remained the official religion of the country
- (D) Therefore, regardless of external influence:
the reformed religion remained dominant as political control remained in the hands of its adherents.

Edwards employed a mirror-image structure to project the resilience of Catholicism; his account also conforms to the 'triumph over alien forces' pattern.

- (a) The Roman Catholic church was in a healthy state:
it commanded the affiliation of most of the Irish population and it would not initiate trouble unless interfered with
- (b) It was subjected to unfair persecution and political interference from Protestant authorities located in both England and Ireland
- (c) In spite of unfair persecution, violence and political interference the Irish people were strongly attached to the church of Rome

- (d) Therefore, regardless of the external influence:
 Roman Catholicism remained dominant, the religion of the majority of Irish people, and thus it could not be suppressed.

Jourdan's use of schematic narratives was more overt than that of Edwards who was more inclined to use 'small' episodes to silently influence the reader. For instance, Edwards's readers learned that the Catholic laity was afforded a good degree of religious toleration in the early years of Elizabeth's reign (a), but that aggression towards Catholic clergy was met with 'popular disapproval' (b). Readers then learned of the imprisonment of Catholic friars (c) and were told that two friars were rescued from a certain death at Navan in 1577 (c and d), which proved the 'real attitude of the people' (d).⁴⁹ Then, in a triumphant but understated manner, Edwards congratulated the Irish people for their steadfastness: 'How different a state of affairs from that of England which hooted priests to their execution!' An entire 'triumph over alien' narrative is delivered in this short anecdote (a mere 15 lines), so quietly in fact that its message floats silently to the reader in a manner that facilitates unconscious assimilation. Edwards transmitted his message time and time again, in short, easily-comprehended passages. An 'alien' trope is contained in twelve lines on pages 242–3, where readers learned of the attachment of the people to their church (a), resistance to Archbishop Loftus's objectives (b and d), proven by the popular affection for the imprisoned Primate Creagh (b and d), especially in the light of Creagh's suffering (c).

Like Edwards, Jourdan provided numerous versions of the 'triumph over alien' narrative. He employed this template to describe the invasion of James Fitzmaurice in 1578. He explained that steps were taken to advance the reformed religion throughout the island with the establishment of a Commission of Faculties in 1576 (A), and outlined how Fitzmaurice, accompanied by Bishop O'Hely and Dr Nicholas Sanders, arrived at Dingle with the expressed desire of securing 'the administration of Christ's sacraments to a Catholic people in a Catholic rite' (B). He detailed the repeated onslaughts on English rule and the reformed faith (C) and reported that they were not received with great enthusiasm (D).⁵⁰

The Munster rebellion, although ultimately a failure for Catholics, was recounted as a 'triumph over alien' episode by Edwards. He told how the rebellion drew considerable support (a), although he noted that some Catholics, especially in the towns, were unenthusiastic about rising against

the crown.⁵¹ He told of an ongoing war against priests,⁵² of numerous executions carried out on charges of treason, and he noted the widespread belief that Elizabeth wanted to exterminate the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish population (c).⁵³ He outlined executions and imprisonments following the defeat of Catholic forces (c), and appealed to his readers' sympathy by reporting the killing of over six hundred persons including women and children at Smerwick in 1580 (b and c).⁵⁴ He noted that those executed by the authorities died resolute in the Roman faith (d)⁵⁵ and that Lord Grey de Wilton, lord deputy, was forced by the crown to moderate his increased aggression towards Catholicism and was subsequently recalled to London (d).⁵⁶ Through accounts like these, Edwards managed to turn a failed rebellion into a triumph. He glossed over the rebellion's failure, focusing instead on the heroism and valour of the Irish Catholics: 'there had been great suffering – untold suffering – yet they were ready to go through it all again' (d).⁵⁷

The accounts of the killing of Dermot O'Hurley, Catholic archbishop of Cashel, in 1584 provide a useful example of the workings of schematic narratives and show how this episode was manipulated and portrayed as a 'triumph over alien' episode in Catholic and Protestant scholarship. Both Jourdan and Edwards claimed that their denomination operated in a reasonably satisfactory manner by the early 1580s, that their church was unjustly attacked by external or 'alien' forces, and that it survived and thrived in spite of such trials.⁵⁸ Jourdan acknowledged the poor state of the established church but told of admissions by eminent Catholics that Protestant services were attended by a significant portion of the population (A).⁵⁹ He highlighted the political nature of the Roman church, stressed papal involvement in the Desmond and Baltinglass rebellions, and informed his readers of the Jesuitical ambition to return England and Ireland to the church of Rome (B and C).⁶⁰ He recounted the 'foul type of murder' of Protestants by Catholics and the sack of Youghal (C),⁶¹ and while he condemned the English massacre of Catholic forces at Smerwick, he depicted the episode in a favourable light when compared with the killing of Protestant forces by the duke of Alva in the Netherlands War.⁶²

According to Jourdan, O'Hurley was involved in the revolt of Viscount Baltinglass, took an active part in the torture of English Protestants by the Roman inquisition, and was involved in a plot to assassinate Elizabeth, leading to his indictment on charges of high treason (B and C).⁶³ (Edwards denied the first and second allegations and ignored the third).⁶⁴ Jourdan supplied extensive details of the torture inflicted on O'Hurley

but afforded little space to Perrot's ill-fated efforts to impose the oath of supremacy. He devoted considerable attention, however, to the need for such measures by alerting his readers to 'The ceaseless energy of the Vatican, its plots, its manifestoes [sic], its host of emissaries everywhere' (B and C).⁶⁵ While Edwards's account suggested that Catholicism was ascendant by the end of the 1580s, Jourdan's readers were told of the progress of the reformed faith throughout the country, learning, for example, that Stephen O'Kirwan, bishop of Clonfert, had 'professed publicly to renounce the Pope and take the oath of supremacy' in 1584 (D).⁶⁶

Edwards's short account of O'Hurley's death (one page and nine lines) imparts a completely different story. He stressed the inability of the authorities to restrict Catholicism (d).⁶⁷ He showed how the Catholic church operated relatively unhindered in the 1580s, although its clergy were subjected to persecution and torture, and told that Catholicism could not be curtailed on account of the unworkable nature of the religious laws (a and d).⁶⁸ Edwards did not elaborate on the mistreatment of O'Hurley and restricted his account of the archbishop's torture to one sentence – 'to toast his feet against the fire with hot boots' (c).⁶⁹ In line with the 'triumph over alien' trope, Edwards glossed over the setbacks experienced by Irish Catholics and emphasised their resilience by recounting O'Hurley's refusal to divulge information to the authorities (d).⁷⁰ Edwards devoted two pages to Perrot's subsequent inability to impose the oath of supremacy and told his readers that the Irish parliament of 1585 was unable to pass legislation to curtail Catholicism owing to the strength of recusancy (d).⁷¹ (Jourdan, by contrast, was more forthcoming with details of the maltreatment of O'Hurley. Although careful to justify the episode on political grounds, he made little reference to Perrot's failure to impose religious conformity.)

In spite of the execution of a high ranking cleric, Edwards depicted the entire O'Hurley episode as a 'triumph over alien' trope by emphasising such progress as was made by Catholicism and by attributing setbacks and rebellions to external influences. Jourdan too portrayed the killing of Dermot O'Hurley and the developments of the 1580s as a 'triumph over alien' narrative and suggested that the irregular progress of the established church in the second half of Elizabeth's reign was primarily owing to external political interference.

The tone of both narratives is set by their emplotment. As has been shown this often functioned by stressing the positive and almost totally ignoring setbacks. The language employed was also significant. Edwards's

use of language is extremely subtle and his bias not readily identifiable. For instance he commented on page 217 that Archbishop Loftus's fondness for money diminished the reputation of the Church of Ireland and noted that Loftus had been translated from Armagh to Dublin on account of the moral conduct of the previous archbishop of Dublin, Hugh Curwen, claiming that the latter's example 'was a bad one as chief bishop of the infant colonial church'. The inclusion of this telling three-word phrase, at the end of the sentence, most likely impacted Edwards's readers in a subconscious manner. His use of the words 'infant' and 'colonial' would connect with the basic tenets of Catholic tradition: that the sixteenth-century Church of Ireland was a recently fledged entity of English origin lacking any connection to the centuries-old church of St Patrick. By cleverly including the deprecating adjectives 'infant' and 'colonial' when his readers' attention was focused on the shortcomings of Archbishops Loftus and Curwen, Edwards's convictions regarding the nature, and therefore the validity, of the Church of Ireland were transmitted in a manner that did not invite reflection or analysis.

The power of narrative lies in its ability to subtly and quietly influence thinking, a power that is augmented by making a strong psychological connection within the recipient who has, to some extent, been prepared for the story by exposure to similar schematic narratives in the past. One characteristic of schematic narratives is their invisibility. They descend on readers in a silent and often unrecognised fashion, sometimes unbeknownst to both deliverer and recipient. Another characteristic of schematic narrative templates is their persistent staying power as, unlike specific narratives that might be refuted on the basis of rational argument and contradictory evidence, narrative templates are notoriously resistant to counter-argument and generally impervious to evidence.⁷²

Partly because such narrative templates are often employed unconsciously by their users, they are difficult to recognise, let alone change, and for this reason they have powerful conservative tendencies in collective memory. Stories told in the form of schematic narratives are likely to remain hidden to casual observation. This is true even, or especially, for those using them.⁷³

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PART II

Ideology and Practice: Perceptions
and Uses of the Religious Past in the
Wider Irish Community,
*c.*1700–1980

Preaching History, 1749: The Belfast Sermons of Gilbert Kennedy and James Saurin

Raymond Gillespie

Most of those who lived in mid-eighteenth-century Ireland showed little interest in taking up their pens to discourse on the history of the country. It was not until the second half of the century that many began to realise the possibilities that Irish history offered for the underpinning of political debate and demonstration of patriotic sentiments. A few hankered after a more irenic ‘philosophical history’ in the modern style of the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment to draw the various groups in the fractured Irish polity together, although their hopes were to be in vain.¹ This does not mean that those who lived in mid-eighteenth-century Ireland had no interest in history. They certainly purchased, and possibly even read, historical works, many of which were reprints of works by seventeenth-century antiquarians, such as Geoffrey Keating or Sir James Ware. The 1774 library list of one Cork clergyman, James Higston, contained historical works, many of which had contemporary relevance for Protestant Ireland, and book subscription lists suggest that others also acquired such works.² Indeed one of those whose sermons will be examined below, the Presbyterian Gilbert Kennedy, subscribed to a twenty-volume *Universal*

R. Gillespie (✉)

National University of Ireland Maynooth, Maynooth, Ireland

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history from the earliest times to the present, reprinted in Dublin in 1745. He also subscribed to a Belfast reprint in 1743 of a translation by Richard Spenser of Bossuet's *An introduction to or a short discourse concerning universal history*. From a different confessional position the Drogheda Dominican John Donnelly found a place in his library of the late 1740s for a manuscript copy of Geoffrey Keating's history and a history of monastic Ireland.³ In the case of the professionally religious it is not difficult to understand why history played an important part in their understanding of the world. From a confessional point of view history explained why one confession rather than another was the true church. For example, James Ussher, the seventeenth-century Church of Ireland archbishop of Armagh, had explained, in a variant of an argument used widely across Europe, that the Church of Ireland was not a schismatic body created at the Reformation but rather the true successor to the early church, purged of its corruptions by the reformers. Thus the historical and confessional St Patrick could happily be appropriated by the Church of Ireland as its own founder and, more improbably, Presbyterians were prone to the same temptation.⁴ Thus an understanding of history lay at the heart of a confessional position.

Such an explanation does not exhaust the possible uses of history to the Church of Ireland in the eighteenth century. For historical reasons the Irish church in that century tended towards what has been described elsewhere as 'low church'. One facet of this was a strong tendency towards a providentialist interpretation of the world and events in it. If, as many maintained, God's will could be seen unfolding in the everyday world as He actively intervened to reveal His will, then considering what God had done in the past could provide a revelation and a guide for the future. History was therefore an important devotional and theological tool as well as a confessional one. It is not, of course, possible to separate out these functions of history into neat packages since they interacted to form a coherent whole. Those Protestants who read Richard Cox's history of Ireland, written 1689–90, absorbed not only a political argument about relations between Catholics and Protestants, and the untrustworthiness of the former, but also a theological one about how God had protected the Protestant population of Ireland during the 1640s and again in the 1680s.⁵

The various uses of history to the Church of Ireland in the eighteenth century did not cohere at the scholar's desk or in the written word but in other ways. The most important place in which the relevance of history

could be demonstrated was in the pulpit, where providentialist devotion and theology intersected with politics and local identity on particular occasions. Throughout the eighteenth century the state ordered both annual and occasional celebrations at which clergy were required to preach, reflecting on the past and giving thanks for or repenting of past events. Most obviously commemorations on 23 October, the anniversary of the rising of 1641, were occasions of reflection on those events and, as the liturgy for the day stated, repentance so that such judgement might not recur. Thus the sermons preached on that day tended to historical rumination.⁶ While the proclamation of days of fast and thanksgiving only related to the clergy of the established church, their dissenting brethren, many even more committed to a providentialist interpretation of the world, increasingly followed the example of the state church, determined not to be outdone in displays of loyalty. Dissenting clergy, mainly Ulster Presbyterians, thus developed their own particular view of history and its importance in the articulation of political and religious identity, and this they delivered to their own communities from their pulpits. Hence, a comparison of Presbyterian and Church of Ireland preaching on state occasions should serve to highlight the distinctive features of both the Church of Ireland and Presbyterian views of history in the eighteenth century.

This comparison is not as simple as might first appear. There are very few examples of sermons by both Presbyterians and Church of Ireland clergy preached on the same day in the same place, which would permit a meaningful comparison to be made. However, one event does allow such a comparison. On 18 October 1748 the signing of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle brought the War of the Austrian Succession to an end. A proclamation of 27 March 1749 appointed a general thanksgiving to be held on 25 April 1749.⁷ In Belfast on that day the vicar of the parish, James Saurin, preached a sermon in the parish church that he described as being ‘upon the peace’. Saurin never published his sermon but it does survive as part of a collection of his manuscript sermons, now in St Anne’s cathedral, Belfast.⁸ On the same day, less than half a mile away, the minister of Second Belfast Presbyterian church, Gilbert Kennedy, mounted his pulpit to preach a sermon, it ‘Being the Day of Public thanksgiving for the PEACE’. His sermon was duly published ‘at the Desire of some of the Hearers’ by a group of Belfast booksellers a few weeks later.⁹ The survival of these two sermons, both engaged in what was essentially an analysis of recent history, allows some tentative conclusions to be drawn about the understanding of the past and its uses by each of these preachers.

PREACHERS AND HEARERS

The two preachers who discoursed in 1749 on the merits of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle were, in many respects, remarkably similar men. At the time of the sermons they were both in their twenties, with only three years separating them. Both came from clerical lineages. Saurin's father was a Huguenot minister who had fled from France in 1685 and made his way first to London and then to Ireland, ending his career as dean of Ardagh and precentor of Christ Church cathedral, Dublin. Kennedy's father was Presbyterian minister of Tullylish in County Down, but rose to be moderator of the synod of Ulster in 1720. Finally, both men were recent arrivals in Belfast. Kennedy had become minister of Second Belfast in 1744 while Saurin was appointed as vicar of Shankill, in which parish Belfast lay, in 1747. Kennedy was certainly of a liberal tradition and was sympathetic toward the non-subscribers in the debate about conformity within Ulster Presbyterianism. Over the course of his life he subscribed to a number of recently-published Enlightened books, including the 1755 reprint in Belfast of Francis Hutcheson's *A system of moral philosophy* and the 1753 Belfast reprint of David Fordyce's *Dialogues concerning education*, both works from the cutting edge of Enlightenment thought. He had also read, and quoted approvingly in a sermon, Locke's second *Treatise on government*.¹⁰ Saurin seems to have been rather more conservative in his theological position, although much of the surviving sermon evidence for his position is rather ambiguous. He certainly thought that the greatest religious problem of the age was not Catholicism but deists and free thinkers and those who would have morality without religion, which might suggest a more conservative cast of mind founded on revealed religion.¹¹

Like the two men themselves the sermons they preached have similarities as well as differences. Saurin's sermon was about 3,500 words while Kennedy's in its printed form is nearly twice the length. Nevertheless the two sermons have common themes reflecting the underlying whig assumptions held by both men, with their fear of tyranny and absolutism linked to Catholicism and their desire for an ordered society underpinned with liberty and civil rights. The similarities were not coincidental since from the early eighteenth century, enlightened Ulster Presbyterians were moving away from an older contractual theory of society based on the Solemn League and Covenant to a more modern idea of civil society promoted by agents of the confessional state.¹²

If there were similarities and differences between the two preachers there were also points of comparison and contrast between their congregations. Both congregations were part of the wider community of Belfast, a port town that had expanded dramatically in the late seventeenth century, but in the early eighteenth century had fallen victim to a trade depression. The absence of a landlord worsened the situation since the Chichester family, earls of Donegall, had retreated to their English property after a fire in Belfast castle in 1708. Moreover the fourth earl, the landowner at the time of the sermons, was held to be 'feeble minded' and the estate was managed by inactive trustees in the court of chancery, leading to the dilapidation of the town.¹³ Such shared problems among the hearers of the sermons were countered by their differences. The two congregations were of markedly different sizes. Saurin's hearers were drawn from a relatively small Church of Ireland community. In 1738 it was estimated that there were just over 1,000 houses in the town. In 1754 Archdeacon Pococke guessed there were sixty Church of Ireland families and that is broadly in line with a 1713 list that named seventy-eight Church of Ireland families in Belfast.¹⁴ The bulk of the town and its environs was composed of Presbyterians, the hearers of Kennedy's sermon. By 1708 it was estimated that there were some 3,000 people in the Belfast Presbyterian congregation.¹⁵ In that year it was said that the recently constructed Presbyterian meeting house was too small and that 120 families in Belfast could not attend services because of the restricted space available in the church.¹⁶ The congregation was divided and by 1722 there were three Presbyterian congregations, all on the Rosemary Street site. According to a list of 'catechisable persons' produced by the third Presbyterian congregation in 1726, there were some 1,313 individuals, not including children, in that congregation alone.¹⁷

Economically and socially there were significant differences between hearers. The Presbyterians controlled much of the wealth of the town. As the Presbyterian minister James Kirkpatrick put it in 1713, 'there are indeed very few in Belfast of the communion of the established church who are considerable dealers.' There were a few 'of the best station in town' but most 'follow the handicraft trades of tobacco spinners, tailors, shoemakers, smiths, saddlers, glovers, butchers, carpenters etc.'¹⁸ Archdeacon Pococke agreed, noting of the Church of Ireland community that 'most of them [are] of the lower rank'.¹⁹ Economic power lay in the hands of the Presbyterian merchants. However, that Presbyterian merchant community had not been able to translate its economic power into political influence.

After 1704 the imposition of the sacramental test in Ireland and the control of the corporation by the Donegall family, worried about the power of Presbyterian merchants in the town, ensured that no Presbyterian would be a member of the corporation. In Belfast, as in Ulster generally, this gave rise to a debate within Presbyterianism about how economic power might be translated into a demonstration of social status through participation in local political life, and, particularly, in the corporate existence of Belfast. This prompted discussions about the nature of loyalty, the status of Protestant dissent and the workings of the social order that reverberated through the early eighteenth century.²⁰ The basis of that debate was historical, resting on the political behaviour of Presbyterians over the previous century, and its influence can be detected in the approach of Presbyterians to their past, and the Church of Ireland's wariness to become involved in such debates in mid-eighteenth-century Belfast.

SERMONS

The Presbyterian Gilbert Kennedy chose as the text for his 1749 sermon the apparently uncontroversial verse from II Kings 20:19: 'Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken; and he said, Is it not good if Peace and Truth be in my Days?'²¹ As was typical of a dissenting sermon, the preacher set his text in its historical situation, explaining the biblical context and the nature of the story he was about to dissect. He moved unusually quickly from the text to its application to immediate events and their history. There was no doubt in Kennedy's mind that history was a providential unfolding of God's will. The celebrations of the peace were possible because of the actions of God 'by whose good Providence we are still in possession of these valuable Interests [religion and liberty] notwithstanding the repeated Attempts of our Enemies to undermine and destroy them'.²² This assumption that events were taking place within a providential history led to the two main heads of the sermon: the meaning of the two key ideas of peace and truth, and the preservation of those ideas that served as a foundation for gratitude and thankfulness to God. Public peace, explained Kennedy, came about when people followed the common good, 'when all in their several Stations with Zeal and Integrity discharge their respective Duties' and preferred the general interest to private considerations, protecting loyal subjects' rights and liberties within the bounds of law. It was the function of magistrates to ensure that this took place. However, it could only occur

in the context of truth, or ‘true and pure Religion’, and this his hearers still had ‘by the good Providence of God’ despite the war in Europe. The Jacobite faction at home had tried to destroy civil liberty but God’s ‘wise and kind Providence’ had prevented that. The preservation of that peace ordained by God was of great value, in financial and human terms, as the war had demonstrated, and without it art and industry would not flourish.²³ Here Kennedy introduced an important proposition: that no people could ‘be said to enjoy Peace who are subject to Tyranny’. To understand tyranny the preacher took an historical turn, following the history of tyranny in England and the struggle against it. As he put it, ‘Who can read the History of those Times but with the highest Indignation and Abhorrence of the Tyrants, and their cruel Proceedings against Men, whose only Crime was their Honesty and Integrity?’²⁴ Here he became more specific in identifying tyrants. They were those who collected ship money, raised subsidies without parliamentary authority, granted monopolies to the ruin of trade and imprisoned people against the law: in short, violated the principles of the constitution and perverted civil government. There can be little doubt to whom Kennedy was referring: Charles I. Men had a duty to resist such tyrants, as the English Puritans and the Scots had done in the late 1630s; and the Church of Ireland doctrine of passive obedience that had worked to the benefit of James II was nonsense and should be resisted. Dissent was not a steady state, but a struggle that could be traced historically.²⁵ This was a theme that Kennedy had dwelt on at some length in a Belfast sermon of 1745, on the Jacobite rebellion, in which he traced in some detail the despotic rule of the Stuarts from James I to the Restoration and then to James II. There was certainly an overlap between his congregation on that occasion and that in 1749 and so the significance of his comments would not have been lost on the congregation.²⁶

Inevitably absolute power in temporal affairs led to the assumption of similar power in the spiritual realm, and this prompted thoughts by Kennedy about the idea of religious dissent. ‘Dissenters ... when they look back upon former Times, and consider the Hardships their Forefathers suffered in every Reign from the *Reformation* to the *Revolution* certainly have special Reason to rejoice and be thankful for the Freedom and Tranquility they enjoy.’ However, not all was yet well, as they were still regarded as traitors ‘upon a level with the *notorious* and *avowed Enemies* of the constitution’ and were legally disqualified from serving the crown in places of trust.²⁷ It was this attitude that prevented the wealthy Presbyterian merchants from demonstrating their status and fitness for

office by occupying civic and national positions. Kennedy also urged remembrance of those who in the past had resisted tyranny, including the members of the Long Parliament of the 1640s and the supporters of William III whose accession to the throne ‘cannot but be looked upon as a most remarkable Interposition of Divine Providence in [sic] behalf of Liberty and Truth’.²⁸ Thus the victory over the Jacobite invasion in 1745 was only the last in a long line of remarkable interventions of God’s providence that would undoubtedly protect civil and religious liberty. It was important to remember, as Kennedy pointed out, that other European powers once had liberty but had lost it because of ambition and indolence, whereas God had chosen the British ‘for his *peculiar People*’. It was therefore the duty of Kennedy’s hearers to reflect on history and to see in it God’s favour and mercy and to give thanks for the workings of providence.²⁹ Giving thanks involved not only praise to God but an active defence over time of liberty; being good subjects to a gentle government, and practising the privileges of religious liberty such as reading the bible and seeking after truth, which gave rise to practical religion.³⁰

In contrast to Kennedy’s historical analysis of the problems of the mid-eighteenth century, James Saurin’s sermon was a much more low key affair.³¹ Saurin also took an Old Testament text but not from an historical book, such as II Kings, but from a devotional one, Psalms 30: 11–12: ‘Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing, thou hast put off my Sack-cloth and girded me with gladness. To the End that my Glory may sing praise to thee & not be silent; O Lord my God I will give thanks unto thee for ever.’ For Saurin the twin thrusts of the sermon, as set out in the first paragraph, were to act in accordance with the ‘Wisdom & Authority of our Governors’ and to ‘celebrate the goodness of Almighty God in his seasonable deliverance of these Nations from the Dangers & calamities with which they were threatened’. In contrast to Kennedy’s address, this sermon took for granted the approbation of the confessional state: unlike dissenters, Saurin did not have to struggle as an outsider to preserve liberty. For Saurin there was no Church of Ireland historical narrative of persecution in defence of liberty against tyranny such as defined Presbyterian confessional identity. Like Kennedy, he laid out his assumption that all the events that had recently occurred were part of a providential scheme. War, he declared, was a judgement from God, ‘this Messenger of God’s wrath’, but equally God protected his people from that wrath and divine judgement. That protection required a response from his hearers in terms of turning again to God. Saurin then laid out the European crisis as it had impacted on the British Isles, and Ireland in particular. This began

with the Jacobite rising of 1745: ‘the Remembrance of this is still fresh in your minds & the memory of it too new to need any repetition’. What this created, Saurin contended, was civil war until that memorable day ‘in which God himself appeared on our side and stretched out his powerful arm to our assistance’ in the defeat of the Jacobite army.³² These events on a European scale were portrayed by Saurin as an attempt by Catholic powers to deprive others of religion and liberty, but the fatherly care of George II, with the assistance of God’s providence, had prevented that. Thus the ‘bountiful interposition of Heaven’, in the words of his text, turned mourning into dancing. Nevertheless, ‘war is a Judgement from God big with the most dire & dreadful consequences’, and the preacher outlined some of the evils that had befallen the countries involved in war, its human and financial cost, the decline of trade and the possibility of the ‘Loss of our Religion & the Destruction of the Protestant Faith’.³³ Here Saurin briefly looked back to the reign of James II, when popish superstitions were established by law, the courts directed the consciences of the people, and preferment was controlled by conformity to ‘the Idolatrous practices of the Church of Rome’.³⁴ All this would have returned had not allied forces won the war, and for proof of this assertion there was a very brief backward glance to the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary, the gunpowder plot of 5 November 1605 and the 1641 rising in Ireland; but these were only passing references.³⁵ This preservation of the Protestant religion and the monarchy was, according to Saurin, God’s doing as part of a judgement, and required a response from his listeners. The peace and plenty that had been granted was not an excuse for licentiousness or luxury, or to use freedom for impious writings or atheistical discourses. It required his hearers to ‘turn unto God with a lively & hearty Repentance, endeavour to shew ourselves worthy of the Blessings we receive & engage the Continuance of his favour & protection to us and our Country’.³⁶ Hearers were required to pray for the royal family, praise God and ask for a greater sense of God’s mercies. They should also praise Him for these and Saurin provided a selection of appropriate biblical extracts strung together as a conclusion to his sermon.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

What is striking about these two sermons, preached on the same theme, in the same town, on the same day, is their strong contrasts. Saurin’s is the more devotional work, trying to evoke a religious response from his hearers to the

political and military events that they had recently experienced. Kennedy, by contrast, set out a more analytical and historical approach to the same events, although operating within the same providential mindset as Saurin. For Saurin it was the moment that mattered, while for Kennedy it was the unfolding of God's will in history that was the key to understanding present events. It is, of course, possible that these differences simply reflected the personalities of the two preachers, and indeed the surviving sermons of James Saurin do tend to be about social themes and the need to accept God's ordering of society and to give thanks. However such personal preferences will not explain everything.

Part of the explanation for the Church of Ireland's lack of engagement with history while the Presbyterians revelled in it may lie in the political debate that had taken place in Belfast, and indeed across Ulster, forty years earlier. In 1709 William Tisdall, the vicar of Belfast, took up his pen to attack Presbyterians in his *A sample of true-blew Presbyterian loyalty* (Dublin, 1709). He followed this with *The conduct of the dissenters of Ireland, with respect both to church and state* (Dublin, 1712) and *A seasonable enquiry into that most dangerous political principle of the kirk in power* (Dublin, 1713). Not surprisingly Tisdall's accusations of disloyalty and the operation of tyranny among Presbyterians drew replies from both John McBride, minister of First Belfast, in his *A sample of jet-black prelatick calumny* (Glasgow, 1713) which seems to have quickly gone through three editions, and the minister of Second Belfast, James Kirkpatrick, in his massive *An historical essay upon the loyalty of Presbyterians in Great Britain and Ireland* ([Belfast], 1713). This was different from earlier debates between Presbyterians and members of the Church of Ireland that had focused mainly on ways of worshipping as a means of defining the community. McBride, Kirkpatrick and Tisdall were more concerned with questions of political loyalty. Each of the pamphlets was grounded, to some extent, on history, but it was Kirkpatrick's massive volume that attempted a full historical description of the emergence of Presbyterianism and its migration to Ireland in the seventeenth century. Underpinning Kirkpatrick's analysis was an understanding of the evolution of a radical Presbyterian identity that arose from the interaction of Stuart tyranny and resistance to that tyranny. The resistance was depicted not as a revolution but rather as the restoration of rights under an ancient constitution. As Kirkpatrick pointed out, the civil war of the 1640s was not the result of one action but 'a constant series of maladministrations, to the endangering of the Protestant religion, the subverting of the privileges of parliament and the overthrow

of the liberties and properties of his [the king's] subjects' and only after exhausting constitutional remedies had the English Presbyterians taken up arms.³⁷ It is not difficult to trace a straight line between this argument of whiggish civic resistance against tyranny and the views of Gilbert Kennedy in the 1740s, who grafted this older story on to a more modern view of the workings of civil society.

In contrast to the legacy of Kirkpatrick and McBride, with its story of heroic dissenting resistance against the tyranny of the seventeenth-century confessional state, on which Kennedy was drawing, the Church of Ireland saw the historical tradition as less important. Saurin saw social and political order from the perspective of an insider of the confessional state. For him social order was not the result of a long historical process of resistance to tyranny, but rather was created in the present as a response to immediate need. As he commented in another sermon 'All Society is founded upon a mutual compact & agreement, a reciprocal trust & confidence in each other, which is the true & only cement that keeps us together, No intercourse [sic] can be carried on among Men but upon such a supposition.'³⁸ Difference was not the result of historical patterning but was accidental: 'For tho' the Distinctions of this World be indeed highly useful to answer the ends & purposes of Human Society, yet is it manifest that those are accidental & arbitrary differences, fitted to the present State of Mankind.'³⁹ What held society together was morality and religion, trust in the actions of others. The civil power was central to ensuring that order was to be maintained:

those, who are endued with a Civil & Legislative power, [are] appointed to watch over the welfare & prosperity of that Community, to which they belong. Because without some authority, to inflict punishment upon those, who disturb its peace & quiet, Society could not subsist, but must necessarily fall into confusion & disorder. Every one in a low rank would become liable to the insult of those above him, & power & wealth might range [sic] lawless & uncontrolled thro' the World, whence in Scripture are Magistrates represented, as the Vice-Regents of God upon Earth.⁴⁰

This is a rather different approach from the Presbyterian preacher whose condemnation of passive obedience and the rejection of kings as rulers by divine right had been central to the understanding of a necessarily radical past.

CONCLUSION

Comparing the 1749 Belfast thanksgiving sermons of James Saurin and Gilbert Kennedy highlights how two confessional groups used history in the middle of the eighteenth century. While both men believed in providential history, and applied that belief to their understanding of the past, they took rather different approaches to the human history that they used to explain the world around them. For the Presbyterian Gilbert Kennedy, his dissenting community was defined and shaped by their history. Drawing on ideas inherent in both the whig settlement and the political narrative of James Kirkpatrick, he read history as the story of the defence of liberty, blending Covenanter resistance to tyranny with more modern theories of civil society. James Saurin, however, was more cautious about an appeal to the past that could be disruptive, being more concerned with social stability in the present. Church of Ireland identities were less bound up with the past and more with the present confessional state, which was concerned to create stability both through codes of morality and through the actions of magistrates who were to be obeyed as part of the confessional state. Thus each preacher, with similar political assumptions, shaped his sermons to be delivered to his own community and in doing so used history to craft a sense of belonging to a shared but distinct past.

NOTES

1. For a survey of historical writing in eighteenth-century Ireland see Bernadette Cunningham, 'Historical writing, 1660–1750' and Deana Rankin, 'Historical writing, 1750–1800' in Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (eds), *The Oxford history of the Irish book, iii: the Irish book in English, 1550–1800* (Oxford, 2006), pp 264–81 and pp 281–300.
2. T. C. Barnard, 'A clerical library in County Cork, 1774' in Martin Fanning and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *Print culture and intellectual life in Ireland, 1660–1941* (Dublin, 2006), pp 24–52, pp 38–40.
3. Hugh Fenning (ed.), 'The library of a preacher of Drogheda: John Donnelly, OP (d. 1748)' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, nos 18 and 19 (1976–7), pp 72–104, p. 84.
4. John McCafferty, 'St Patrick for the Church of Ireland: James Ussher's *Discourse*' in *Bullán*, iii, no.2 (1997–8), pp 87–102; Bridget McCormack, *Perceptions of St Patrick in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000); Robert Armstrong, 'Of stories and sermons: nationality and spirituality in Presbyterian Ulster in the later seventeenth century' in Robert Armstrong

- and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin (eds), *Community in early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), pp 215–31, pp 219–21.
5. Richard Cox, *Hibernica Anglicana* (2 vols, London, 1689–90).
 6. T. C. Barnard, ‘The uses of 23 October 1641 and Irish Protestant celebrations’ in *English Historical Review*, cvii (1991), pp 889–920.
 7. James Kelly with Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *The proclamations of Ireland, 1660–1820* (5 vols, IMC, Dublin, 2014), iii, no.217.
 8. Raymond Gillespie and Roibeard Ó Gallachóir (eds), *Preaching in Belfast, 1747–72: a selection of the sermons of James Saurin* (Dublin, 2015), pp 152–61.
 9. Gilbert Kennedy, *The great blessing of peace and truth in our days: a sermon preached at Belfast on Tuesday, April 25th 1749* (Belfast, 1749).
 10. Gilbert Kennedy, *The wicked ruler or the mischiefs of arbitrary power* (Belfast, 1745), p. 16.
 11. This relies on the introduction to Gillespie & Ó Gallachóir (eds), *Preaching in Belfast, 1747–72*; for Saurin and Kennedy see *DIB* sub nomine.
 12. Ian McBride, ‘Ulster Presbyterians and the confessional state, c.1688–1733’ in D. G. Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan (eds), *Political discourse in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp 169–92, pp 182–4.
 13. Raymond Gillespie, *Early Belfast: the origins and growth of an Ulster town to 1750* (Belfast, 2007), pp 151–6.
 14. James Kirkpatrick, *An historical essay on the loyalty of Presbyterians in Great Britain and Ireland* ([Belfast], 1713), pp 434–5; John McVeagh (ed.), *Richard Pococke’s Irish tours* (Dublin, 1995), p. 38; Raymond Gillespie and Alison O’Keeffe (eds), *Register of the parish of Shankill, Belfast, 1745–1761* (Dublin, 2006), pp 26–8.
 15. *Records of the General Synod of Ulster from 1691 to 1820* (3 vols, Belfast, 1890), i, 146.
 16. *Ibid.*
 17. ‘List of catechisable persons’, 1726 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, MIC 1P/7/2).
 18. Kirkpatrick, *Historical essay*, pp 435, 436. For the merchant community see Jean Agnew, *Belfast merchant families in the seventeenth century* (Dublin, 1996).
 19. McVeagh (ed.), *Richard Pococke’s Irish tours*, p. 38.
 20. Raymond Gillespie, ‘Religion and politics in a provincial town: Belfast, 1660–1720’ in Salvador Ryan and Clodagh Tait (eds), *Religion and politics in urban Ireland, c.1500–c.1750* (Dublin, 2016), pp 173–92, pp 189–90.
 21. Kennedy, *The great blessing of peace and truth in our days*, p. 3.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

23. Ibid., pp 7–9.
24. Ibid., p. 13.
25. Ibid., pp 13ff.
26. Kennedy, *The wicked ruler*, esp. pp 21–5.
27. Kennedy, *The great blessing*, pp 18–19.
28. Ibid., p. 21.
29. Ibid., pp 22–3.
30. Ibid., pp 24–5.
31. Gillespie & Ó Gallachóir (eds), *Preaching in Belfast, 1747–72*, pp 152–61.
32. Ibid., pp 152–4, p. 155.
33. Ibid., pp 156–8.
34. Ibid., p. 158.
35. Ibid., p. 159.
36. Ibid., p. 160.
37. Kirkpatrick, *Historical essay*, p. 173.
38. Gillespie & Ó Gallachóir (eds), *Preaching in Belfast, 1747–72*, pp 207–8.
39. Ibid., p. 138.
40. Ibid., p. 126.

Bishop O’Beirne and his Church-Building Programme: The Church of Ireland and Pre-Reformation Christianity

Caroline Gallagher

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Lewis O’Beirne was bishop of Ossory (1795–8) and Meath (1798–1823). A convert from Roman Catholicism, he was viewed with suspicion by many of his time and came to be ridiculed as nothing other than a pamphleteering polemicist. As subsequent authors generally relied upon contemporary comment, his pastoral work remains largely ignored. O’Beirne pursued a particularly energetic church-building programme in Meath before the strongly polarised outlook of the nineteenth century had taken hold. The new churches, glebe houses and schools of his episcopate, though not accompanied by an openly polarised message, made their own very definite statement that the Church of Ireland was visibly rooted in every parish of the diocese. Most of the seventy-seven churches built, rebuilt or substantially improved occupied pre-Reformation sites, and the new or much improved churches on six of the eight early monastic episcopal sees of Meath may be viewed as a powerful reminder of the established church’s proclaimed link with that early church.

C. Gallagher (✉)

National University of Ireland Maynooth, Maynooth, Ireland

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An almost lifelong relationship with his Roman Catholic counterpart in Meath, Bishop Patrick Plunkett, was not matched in any other diocese. Owing to the manner of its inception it cannot be put forward as a typical relationship between established and titular bishops of the time. Nonetheless, the amicability between the two men is significant, despite O'Beirne's surreptitious use of the friendship to gauge the stance of the Roman Catholic hierarchy regarding political and religious issues of the day. While keen on certain measures of emancipation which he considered humanitarian, and regardless of his long connection with the whigs, to whom he owed his place on the Irish episcopal bench, O'Beirne guarded his own view on full emancipation for Roman Catholics. His conversion, subsequent Cambridge education, political attachments and personal experience in the American War of Independence gave him a fierce loyalty to monarchy, government and the established church. His early life in a European seminary, the Concordat (1801) between Pope Pius VII and Napoleon Bonaparte, brought for him, a dread, not of ordinary Roman Catholics, but of the rationale that rendered them subservient to the power of popery. His reforms were set around ensuring the primacy and visibility of the Church of Ireland in his diocese and attempting to have his template brought to bear on the established church throughout the country. The shifting political developments of the early part of the century drove his mission. Changes close to home both facilitated and frustrated his work. While much of his career is of interest, this chapter will examine the forces that shaped the bishop's early life, and provided context for his church-building programme.

O'BEIRNE'S EARLY LIFE

O'Beirne was born into a farming family at Farnagh in Longford in the late 1740s.¹ Records of his parentage and their connections are limited, but the careers and marriages of his siblings, excepting that of one brother, Fr Denis O'Beirne, a Roman Catholic parish priest, indicate that they too were Protestant. Following some years at a French seminary, possibly the Irish College of the Lombards, O'Beirne left for England, where his attachment was first formed with Charles James Fox and William Henry Cavendish Bentinck, third duke of Portland. He attended Trinity College Cambridge, was ordained in the Church of England and embarked on a career that took him to America during its War of Independence. He was a noted scholar, orator and political writer, who sought and gained the confidence and friendship of leading political whigs of the day.

Contemporary and subsequent biographers, with whom O'Beirne did not disagree, refer to an education at the Jesuit college of Saint Omer. However, a letter of introduction written by his tutor, Fr Patrick Joseph Plunkett, casts considerable doubt on the assertion, as Plunkett was attached to the Séminaire des Clercs Irlandais in Paris and is not known to have had any connection with St Omer at that time. Wherever first acquainted, their friendship was lifelong and when O'Beirne became Church of Ireland bishop of Meath in 1798, Plunkett was Roman Catholic bishop of the same diocese. They lived only two miles apart, Plunkett in Navan and O'Beirne in the palace at Ardbraccan. They were socially and openly friendly and even took the waters together at Bath.² However, their friendship did not extend to loyalty in matters of politics. The two bishops discussed the stance of the Roman Catholic hierarchy relating to the act of union (1800), the ongoing question of Catholic emancipation and the influence a Catholic priest might have held over his flock. O'Beirne had no hesitation in passing on all he had heard from Plunkett.

In 1801 O'Beirne requested that all foreign and foreign-educated priests be barred from Irish parishes, as 'one of their own bishops has agreed with me ... in the likelihood of the Foreign Priests standing best with the People, and having the greatest Influence with them'.³ Had this suggestion come to law, his friend Plunkett and brother Denis, both educated abroad, would have been divested of their duties. Claiming to have 'spoken with one of their own', O'Beirne asked that the thesis of every Maynooth seminarian be most closely inspected and censored where necessary. One might speculate about the inter-episcopal conversation that led him to advise the chief secretary that some attempt ought be made to stem the flow of correspondence between lower Catholic clergy and to forbid official correspondence between all Catholic clergy and 'the Court of Rome, or any of the Apostolical Legates in other Countries, unless it first passes through the Chief Secretary's office'.⁴

During the 1770s O'Beirne had formed close political associations in England and owed the entire progression of his career to a circle of prominent whigs. In 1782 when the Rockingham party came to power his friend the duke of Portland was appointed lord lieutenant in Ireland. O'Beirne served as his chaplain and private secretary.⁵ When Portland became prime minister and first lord of the treasury in 1783, O'Beirne returned to London to serve the same position. This earned him the two valuable English livings of Whittingham and Stamfordham in Northumberland at £700 a year.⁶ Throughout his time as rector there, he kept close contact with the duke, often offering advice on Ireland and other matters.

Owing to a bout of ill health in the winter of 1785, around the time of the controversial royal marriage at which he may or may not have officiated, O'Beirne moved to the Continent. Then, resigning his English livings, he returned to his home parish in Longford and awaited succession to the living of Templemichael and Mohill, where his brother Denis was Roman Catholic parish priest. In 1791, on a longstanding promise from Portland, O'Beirne received the appointment. He was not content to live out the remainder of his life as a rural clergyman of lower rank. Correspondence with his political allies never lapsed, particularly with Portland and Earl Fitzwilliam. He kept the duke abreast of local and national events. Extant letters from O'Beirne to Portland, who was Pitt's home secretary, and Earl Fitzwilliam in 1794, indicate he was privy to dealings of the London government that were not publicly known. Maintaining those political relationships probably made him the most informed rural rector in Ireland. His letters to Fitzwilliam, as the earl was about to become lord lieutenant of Ireland, reveal O'Beirne's political and religious ambitions and indicate his awareness that employment in the former would lead to advancement in the latter. When Fitzwilliam became Ireland's lord lieutenant in December 1794 O'Beirne was his first chaplain and private secretary. This position gained him a place on the Irish episcopal bench and he became bishop of Ossory in 1795.

CONCERN FOR THE PASTORAL DIRECTION OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

During his time in Ossory, O'Beirne's concern for the pastoral condition of the Church of Ireland came clearly to the fore. He was shocked by the theological ignorance of his lower clergy and instigated regular sessions in bible studies and significantly, ecclesiastical history, under the auspices of his rural deans.⁷ He never supported the Hibernian Bible Society, founded in 1806, and launched a vigorous counter attack against it by opening a branch of the Diocesan Bible Society in each rural deanery. As bishop of Ossory and Meath he favoured the Association for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting the Practice of Religion and Virtue, which he described as 'pouring a stream of religious instruction into the cottages of the poor and the schools of trading, mechanical and labouring youth'.⁸

O'Beirne believed in the importance of a versed and vested clergy, the necessity of a proper religious education for the upcoming generation of clergy and laity and the conversion of Roman Catholics. However, the

contemporary zeal and revival movement of the neighbouring Dublin diocese was not encouraged in Meath, where no quarter was given to non-conformists or over-enthusiastic preachers of any denomination. In other words, O'Beirne was a strong upholder of the institutional status of the established church: preaching and education were important, but only under the aegis of the Church of Ireland clergy. He abhorred the charity style of preacher Dean Walter Blake Kirwan, a former seminarian, who raised thousands of pounds preaching sermons which were said to shake one world with the thunder of the other. From the beginning he cautioned his clergy against imitating Kirwan's 'false and tinsel school of pulpit eloquence'.⁹ The bishop had a talent for turning anomaly on its head to serve his purpose. While warning against the style of Kirwan, he advised following the style of Roman Catholic priests who were 'indefatigable [sic] and their labours unremitting'. 'If we hope to succeed in our good cause, we must come down to an emulation with them.'¹⁰

Although there is no evidence that O'Beirne ever publicly voiced a direct claim regarding Church of Ireland ownership over Irish Christianity, he charged his clergy to practice the simplicity of the early Christian faith, which he believed the Roman church had lost for itself by placing idolatry, pomp, decoration and public ceremony above all else.¹¹ Incumbents and curates were encouraged to make converts of the Catholics in their parishes and promote the reading of the bible to Catholic children in schools. However, it is clear he did not support the emerging forceful form of evangelicalism or promote the securing of converts by any means. He promoted a gentle and holistic approach to conversions; 'If you want to convert the Roman Catholics you must get to know them, visit them inside their humble roofs, attend their sick beds ...'¹² He instructed his clergy to lead by expressions of kindness and good example and by the most basic forms of interaction:

Making converts, is a matter of another nature. As it is generally managed, it is a bustle of silly vanity or self interest, to encrease [sic], by every artifice, and by every method however unlawful, or unbecoming, the number of disciples [sic], without any endeavours to better their morals – it is to proselyte, and not to reform. This belongs not to the temper of our church ... we exercise no tyranny over any man's conscience: We make no monopoly of the blood and merits of Christ, nor contract those arms that were expanded for the redemption of the human race.¹³

O'Beirne brought the same religious philosophy to the diocese of Meath in 1798.

O'BEIRNE'S REFORMATION IN MEATH, AND HIS CHURCH-BUILDING PROGRAMME

As a churchman, O'Beirne was acutely aware of the historical shortcomings of the Church of Ireland at the most local level and determined to ensure its visibility and effectiveness in every parish of his diocese. At that time his jurisdiction encompassed all of counties Meath and Westmeath, a great portion of King's County and a small pocket of Cavan. He arrived in Meath at the end of the turbulent year 1798 to discover less than half his incumbents in residence. Many resided on other livings in other dioceses. Half the Meath benefices had no glebe house and seventeen had no glebe land whatever.¹⁴ He did not permit this situation to continue.

The act of union (1800) brought the loosening of treasury purse strings, and thousands of pounds each year were gifted or loaned to the Church of Ireland through the Board of First Fruits for the building of churches and glebe houses. The bishop insisted that every incumbent and every vestry take full advantage. When O'Beirne died in 1823 the full extent of his success was evidenced in the returns of the following year which indicated the compliance of eighty-six incumbents, an increase of sixty-one. Of the thirteen who did not reside, only three did so without permission. Kilbride Veston in County Westmeath was the one parish described as 'not competent to support a clergyman', yet, even there the congregation was served by a curate from an adjoining parish.¹⁵ There were eighty-five glebe houses, seventy-two of which were new. Twenty-five glebes had been extended.¹⁶ Twenty-seven livings had been restructured and seventy-seven churches had been built, rebuilt or substantially repaired. O'Beirne feared the influence of Catholic nuns and rural schoolmasters over not only Roman Catholic children, but also the middling and lower orders of the Protestant faiths. He insisted that every incumbent should establish a school in his parish. If it was claimed that a schoolmaster could not be found, the clergyman was instructed to teach school or Sunday school himself.¹⁷ With or without a parochial school, he was expected to catechise children. By 1826, there was a school in most parishes of the diocese.¹⁸ The built and pastoral landscapes had been comprehensively transformed.

Churches of the O'Beirne period, with few exceptions, were not as architecturally impressive as what followed in later years. Nonetheless the new vista embodied a statement on what Martin Maguire has described as the 'landscape of belief'.¹⁹ This landscape had effect at both ends of the religious spectrum. For Roman Catholics, the appearance of a new

Church of Ireland church, a new glebe house, a school and the presence of an active clergyman in almost every parish, made it clear that despite historical shortcomings, regular and recent rebellion and the gradual abolition of penal law, the Church of Ireland was asserting a physical and pastoral prepotency as never before. For members of the Church of Ireland, the new vista embodied a statement of continuity and belonging. This was coupled with a sense of security and cohesion, in the wake of the departure to London of some of the ruling class, following the demise of the Irish parliament brought about by the act of union.

Meath churches of the early nineteenth century did not in any way reflect the impressive churches of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Dublin and Belfast. Neither can they be compared with the later, more decorative churches of Semple and Son, mainly in the Dublin archdiocese (which were deliberately modelled on an early Christian style), nor those of Joseph Welland or the partnership of William Welland and William Gillespie.²⁰ Except in a few cases where the local landowner proved generous or where the parish church was built as part of a new town landscape, churches of the O'Beirne period were simple and modest in size, generally two (Fig. 9.1) or three (Fig. 9.2) bays and of the hall and tower type. Few were originally built as they appear today. In later years before and after disestablishment in 1869, enhancements such as projecting chancels, vestibules, robing rooms and transepts were added in accordance with contemporary fashion or fervour (Fig. 9.3).

While the Board of First Fruits may well have had pattern books, there is no evidence to suggest that new churches were built to accord with any particular agenda. Some might claim the simplicity of the buildings harked back to Reformation theology. However, vestry minutes, parish accounts and episcopal correspondence indicate that, in reality, the style and form were determined by finance and materials available close to or already on the site. First Fruits monies did not go a long way towards the completion of any church, and materials from the previous building were reused. This limited the scale of most new buildings, regardless of architectural plans. In the majority of cases recycling of door and window arch-stones determined architectural style, which differed from parish to parish in line with what had gone before. Some churches were Romanesque, some neo-Gothic, some a mixture of all styles and none. Many boasted round or pointed-arched window openings to the south and east only. A blank north wall was not just a means of conserving heat, but also a saving in capital outlay. It was cheaper to build an uninterrupted limestone rubble



Fig. 9.1 St Kieran's church, Ballymaglasson, County Meath (1809) (Photograph by Caroline Gallagher)



Fig. 9.2 St Seachnall's church, Dunshaughlin, County Meath (1814) (Photograph by Caroline Gallagher)



Fig. 9.3 St Etchen's church, Killucan, County Westmeath (1811) (Photograph by Caroline Gallagher)

wall to the cold north side, than to enhance it with windows and expensive glass. The chancel was incorporated into the hall, perchance emphasising the importance of the Word over the ritualistic.

Style or square footage was not of great importance to O'Beirne. His main concern was that the church should possess what he considered necessary for divine service: a resident, competent clergyman; a building in good repair; cloths, table and plate for Communion; pulpit; a folio bible and prayer books. Canon 81 of the English canons of 1604 stipulated the necessity of a stone baptismal font in every church. O'Beirne went his own way on this and the absence of a font did not prevent the consecration or licensing of any church. As late as 1826 the churches at Killallon and Lemanaghan had no font. At Clara and Loughcrew all baptisms were conducted in private houses. Where a font was available, its use was not a strict requirement. If the rubric was observed, a baptism could take place anywhere. For example at Ballyboy, Clonmacnoise and Stackallan some baptisms took place at the church font and others in private houses.²¹

LINKS WITH IRELAND'S EARLY CHRISTIAN PAST

Throughout the country, the Church of Ireland held claim to the old pre-Reformation religious sites. As the established church, its claim was religious and political. The political significance was magnified by the penal laws and the fact that the state church was that of the minority. A tower was necessary to command the landscape and very few churches were built or improved without one. It was the singular expense that O'Beirne made much of in his 1818 visitation. He described St Mary's, Kentstown as having been 'handsomely finished with a steeple'.²² At Forghney, Lady Rosse had 'highly ornamented the church & added to it a handsome steeple of cut stone'.²³ In the parish of Rathconnell the new church was 'ornamented with a copper covered steeple'.²⁴ The steeple of the church in Tyrrellspass was left unfinished until Mr Boyd, husband of the Dowager Lady Belvedere, built 'a very handsome one'.²⁵ The incumbent of Newtown Fertullagh, Reverend Henry Rochfort, fell foul of his bishop. Although the church had been 'rebuilt by the parishioners', the rector did not have 'influence enough with them, although wealthy, to ornament it with a steeple'.²⁶

A spire over steeple was of course the most impressive crowning for any church, but the expense was prohibitive. Of the buildings from the period still standing, only five rural churches have a spire and no more than nine village or town churches. Even at Tullamore, County Offaly where Lord Charleville undertook extensive rebuilding of the town, the new and imposing St Catherine's was not adorned with a spire.

The Church of Ireland building in the village of Duleek, County Meath (Fig. 9.4) is a startlingly crisp example of how the early nineteenth-century parish church issued a reminder of the established church's ownership over the landscape of belief. The entire history of Irish Christianity is clearly visible within this fifth-century monastic enclosure which was the see of St Cianan who died in 489CE. It is said that St Cianan received the appointment from St Patrick. It has long been believed that the first stone church in Ireland was built here by Cianan.²⁷ The site retains a squat ninth-century High Cross depicting the crucifixion, scenes from the early life of the Virgin Mary and the Evangelist symbols of the eagle and the ox. The boss decoration has become widely used in a variety of contexts and is known as the Duleek knot. Ruins of the twelfth-century Augustinian priory are dwarfed by the sixteenth-century post-Reformation tower house, which still bears the impression of a round tower in its north wall. The



Fig. 9.4 St Cianan's church, Duleek, County Meath (1817) (Photograph by Caroline Gallagher)

most recent building is the First Fruits church of 1817. In keeping with the site's early Christian history, it was dedicated to St Cianan. While it is an unremarkable plain three-bay building, its location served O'Beirne's purpose very well. Its spire, which can be seen for miles around, is a fitting adornment for one of the early Christian episcopal sees of Meath.

Although O'Beirne made use of early sites where possible, nineteen churches were built on new sites. His primary intention was to furnish every parish with a decent place of worship and when a new site was offered, or deemed necessary, he readily gave permission. Some formed part of a landlord's improved streetscape, as at Tullamore and Castlepollard, County Westmeath. The small two-bay church at Ballymaglasson, County Meath was built to serve a small congregation which, until then, had no house of worship at all. In the union of Reynagh and Gallen, King's County, a new site was required as the old one was 'so small and crowded with graves, that the present church is scarcely approachable'.²⁸ A new site was found at Gallen.

During O’Beirne’s time Roman Catholic churches remained largely out of sight, though some new buildings were erected in tandem with Church of Ireland churches and in visible locations. It is possible to speculate that they may have been the result of an agreement between O’Beirne and Plunkett. At the very least, their existence indicates that the former did not launch open opposition to the latter. For example the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland churches at Ballivor in County Meath have equal prominence opposite each other in the village and have a date of 1821. The churches in the villages of Dunshaughlin and Clonard, both early Christian episcopal sees, overlapped in time of construction. In both parishes the Roman Catholic building had prominence in terms of location on the main thoroughfare and route to Dublin, while the Church of Ireland retained the more secluded and doubtless, more coveted, pre-Reformation site.

In conclusion, there were various ways in which O’Beirne made an important contribution to ensuring that the Church of Ireland was in a position to assert its claim as not merely the state church, but a church with the capacity to fulfil its mission as the national church of Ireland.²⁹ Not the least of these was his church-building programme, which was the most conspicuous and tangible outcome of his time as bishop of Meath.

NOTES

1. Patrick M. Geoghegan, ‘O’Beirne, Thomas Lewis’ in *DIB* (accessed 19 Jan. 2016).
2. Jane Ormsby O’Beirne to Anne Caroline Tottenham La Touche, 28 Sept. 1803 (MS in the possession of David A. La Touche, New York).
3. T. L. Meath to Charles Abbot, Apr. 1801, Charles Abbot, first Baron Colchester papers, 1799–1814 (The National Archives, PRO 30/9/163), f. 139.
4. *Ibid.*, ff 140, 144.
5. Richard Phillips (ed.), *Public characters of 1799–1800* (London, 1807), p. 158; Henry Longden, *Northants and Rutland clergy* (London, 1941), p. 107.
6. Phillips, *Public characters*, p. 161.
7. Samuel Madden, vicar general of Ossory to T. L. Ossory in T. L. O’Beirne, *Charge to the clergy of the diocese of Ossory, 1796* (Dublin and London, 1797), p. 3.
8. W. A. Phillips, *History of the Church of Ireland from the earliest times to the present day* (3 vols, London, 1933), iii, 259.

9. T. L. O'Beirne, *Charge to the clergy of the diocese of Meath, 1810* (Dublin, 1810), p. 11.
10. O'Beirne, *Charge to the clergy of Ossory*, p. 44.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
14. *Papers relating to the established church in Ireland, No. 5, diocese of Meath, 1806*, pp 76–7, H.C. 1807 (78), v.
15. *Returns to an order of the honourable House of Commons, dated the 10th of February 1824;—for A list of the parishes in Ireland, with the names of their respective incumbents; and distinguishing those parishes in which the incumbent is not resident*, pp 59–61, H.C. 1824 (246), (436), xxi.
16. Archbishopal visitation of the diocese of Meath, 1826 (Representative Church Body Library, MS D7/1/2*), pp 1–42.
17. John Healy, *History of the diocese of Meath* (2 vols, Dublin, 1908), ii, 143.
18. Archbishopal visitation, 1826, pp 1–42.
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20. See Cormac Allen, 'The church architecture of John Semple and Son' (M.Arch.Sc. thesis, 2 vols, University College Dublin, 1995); 'Welland, William John' (Irish Architectural Archive, Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720–1940, www.dia.ie/) (accessed 19 Jan. 2016).
21. Archbishopal visitation, 1826.
22. Kentstown VMB, 1801, 1815, 1816 (RCB Library, MS P. 441.5.1, pp 97, 115, 117); T.L. Meath visitation notes, 1818 (RCB Library, MS D7/157), pp 19–20, 109.
23. T. L. Meath visitation, 1818, pp 89, 109.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 66; Rathconnell VMB, & accounts, 1800–2, 1811, 1815, 1818 (RCB Library, MS P. 240.5.1, pp 1, 5–7 at end of book).
25. T. L. Meath visitation, 1818, pp 72, 109.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
27. Peter Harbison, *Guide to the national and historic monuments of Ireland* (Dublin, 1992), p. 258.
28. T. L. Meath visitation, 1818, pp 101–2.
29. See Joseph Liechty, 'Irish evangelicalism, Trinity College, Dublin and the mission of the Church of Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century' (PhD thesis, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1987), pp 478–9.

Negotiating the Middle Ground: Thomas Moore on Religion and Irish Nationalism

John B. Roney

INTRODUCTION

While many members of the Society of United Irishmen lost their fervour after Robert Emmet's death in 1803, Thomas Moore continued to pursue their ideals (through non-violent means) to create a non-sectarian republic inspired by the American and French Revolutions. In both cases political ideas and actions were intertwined with questions about the place of religion in society. The huge obstacle that lay in Moore's path, however, was the centuries-old impasse between the interpretation of the rights and primacy of the established Church of Ireland (which had produced the Protestant Ascendancy) and the Roman Catholic church in Ireland. While some polemical writings were published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, once the question of Catholic emancipation was raised in the late eighteenth century, a surge in polemics became a means to claim the rights of one side over the other. Moore's goal was to break this impasse with a new examination of the history of Catholicism and Protestantism.

Already established as a well-known poet, novelist, and singer, Moore was able to reach audiences who might not have had any interest in

J.B. Roney (✉)
Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, CT, USA

reading existing histories of religion. His method was not to avoid conflict, but to use it to expose the strengths and weaknesses on both sides. His direct attack on English bigotry and ignorance of Irish culture came through clever and sometimes scathing verbal attacks. Moore's method is captured in Seamus Heaney's poem 'Digging': 'Between my finger and my thumb, The squat pen rests; as snug as a gun.'¹ In the end, perhaps Moore's method had more lasting influence and effect than the attempts at open rebellion. Yet his seemingly neutral position between two sides raises the question about his own religious commitments. It was indeed rare in the early nineteenth century to claim objectivity in an evaluation of religion, since religious commitment and patriotism were so closely linked. Thus Moore's writings are unique, not in his objectivity but in the way he confronted the polemical arguments of the day. But at the time, Moore's goal to undermine English bigotry was not obvious to everyone in Ireland, since the popularity of his *Irish melodies* and his ability to entertain the British establishment made him an unlikely liberator of Irish Catholics and advocate of Irish independence.² Daniel O'Connell, by contrast, was 'the Liberator', credited with obtaining Catholic emancipation in 1829. While most Irish nationalists could not really reach the English, it will be argued that Moore's writings, performances, and anonymous pieces in the *Morning Chronicle* had the capacity to sway popular opinion.

THE CONTEXT OF MOORE'S ENDEAVOUR: THE OTHER

Many recent studies of 'the Other' have shown the importance of a reciprocal relationship between two sides, even the need to have the Other as the means of self-identity. Interpretation of religious history is connected with the author's own history and experience. Bruce Nelson has analysed how the English used the Irish to place themselves in an advantageous position: 'Irish vice made them all the more certain about English virtue, and the propagation of an Anglo-Saxonist creation myth only added to their certainty.'³ Thus, the Irish problem in the nineteenth century was a complex matter of race and religion. Nelson goes on to say that '... the process of identity formation seems to require the creation, and demonization, of a colonized Other whose vices serve to highlight the virtues of the colonizer.'⁴ Douglas Hyde also underlined this point of response to the Other in his 1892 famous essay on 'The necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland', declaring:

It has always been very curious to me how Irish sentiment sticks in this half-way house – how it continues to apparently hate the English, and at the same time continues to imitate them; how it continues to clamour for recognition as a distinct nationality, and at the same time throws away with both hands what would make it so.⁵

The vision and interaction of the Other works from both sides.

Throughout the history of Christianity, the development of theology has often come when opposition emerged that countered long-term assumptions and practices, challenging the centre. Theological language was forged in a dialogue between two or more articulations. No doubt an increase in nineteenth-century proselytism raised further fears and hostilities; an attempt to mix elements that had for long been separated.⁶ One of the problems for historians of nineteenth-century Ireland is in defining Protestantism. Surely one should at least separate the Church of Ireland from dissenters, who could be Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, and a few others. Such distinction is not always made. Also, contemporary Protestants frequently called all Catholics ‘papists’, since the international political role of the pope appeared to be a powerful force that had the potential to override English influence and sway politics.⁷ There was rarely a fight about finer theological doctrines. Before mid-century, the reality was that few Irish Catholics had real connections to Rome and its politics or even to Tridentine rituals. Some reform, however, had begun to take root among many urban middle-class Catholics thanks to the work of Bishop James Warren Doyle.⁸ For the growing middle-class that followed the Catholic church more closely, their commitments remained focused within Ireland. Indeed, Daniel O’Connell, their champion, claimed: ‘I am sincerely a Catholic, but I am not a papist.’⁹ Many United Irishmen realised that Catholics could indeed act independently of the pope when they saw the results of the French Revolution. This is born out in Theobald Wolfe Tone, who saw Catholics as allies, and he claimed that ‘From their failure we are taught this salutary truth, that no reform can ever be obtained, which shall not comprehensively embrace Irishmen of all denominations: The exclusion of the Catholics left the question under circumstances, that must have otherwise carried it against all opposition ...’¹⁰ Thus, reducing Protestants and Catholics to different sides has no heuristic value. Not every developing nation-state in Europe, where substantial numbers of Catholics and Protestants lived, became primarily defined by an antagonism between religions. Ireland, for example,

might have taken the route of the Netherlands, where in the absence of a state church, a compromise was established in a ‘pillarisation’ (segregation of society on politico-denominational lines), and by the nineteenth century Dutch Catholics and Protestants often combined forces for moral reforms or freedom of education.¹¹

Moore’s *Irish melodies* was marketed to an English audience hungry for stories and song, yet the underlying motivation for his musical compositions was strongly political.¹² Rather than pit Irish nationalism against the union with Britain, Moore refused to take the side of the colonised; his goal had more transnational interests. He wanted to expose the history and feelings of the Irish and the British to the international community, to widen the discussion of issues of church and state, and highlight the uniqueness of Celtic culture. Karen Tongson claims that

... cultural transnationalism simultaneously engages and undermines colonialism by using cultural particularity itself – the ‘native beauty’ and ‘charm’ of the melodies, as Moore refers to it – to appeal affectively to a consumer base that extends beyond the colonizer, and engages with an *international* aesthetic community.¹³

Thus Moore often stood between two worlds of Catholic and Protestant, British and Irish; each side needed the Other for self-identity. In an article in 1911 entitled ‘Thomas Moore as theologian’, John Eglinton wrote: ‘What the disputants in this controversy seem never to have perceived was that Protestantism and Catholicism are necessary to one another; that the one without the other is as inconceivable as Liberalism or Conservatism without its rival.’¹⁴ This need was not always perceived by the militants who became part of Irish nationalism after the 1860s, despite a brief respite when Charles Stewart Parnell succeeded for a few years in uniting all parties in his call for a fervent Irish nationalism. One could suggest, however, that Moore was well aware of this relationship of dependence. In some ways he was ahead of his time, but since he was so attuned to his public, his expressions, poems, and writings spoke more to their dreams than to reality. Emer Nolan has claimed that Moore captured the ambivalence of many Irish leaders who walked a fine line between ‘insurrection and constitutional politics ... O’Connell could outrightly condemn the Whiteboys and yet willingly represent them in the law courts ... This ambivalence is also central to Moore’s text.’¹⁵ Moore was negotiating a middle way between two sides.

MOORE'S RELIGION: WHERE DID HE REALLY STAND?

Moore grew up in a Catholic household in Dublin. His father appears to have been a nominal Catholic, while his mother demonstrated a deeper piety. Charles Kent, in his 1879 introduction, described Moore's experience: "Twice a year for half a dozen years, from the time when he was an ingenuous little fellow of eleven, he went to the sacrament of penance ... So "irksome", however (this being Moore's own word), did the practice at length become, that somewhere about the age of seventeen "I ventured", he says, "to signify to my mother a wish that I should no longer go to confession, and after a slight remonstrance she sensibly acceded to my wish."¹⁶ No doubt Moore's greatest exposure to Protestantism came when he attended Trinity College in 1795, and there is some reason to think that as one of the few Catholic students he experienced a sense of intimidation throughout his time there.¹⁷ He became friends with several Protestant students, although it is difficult to determine exactly the impact they had on him. What is known is that he remained a life-long Catholic, at least in name and culture, and developed an interest in the history of theology. Whatever the important differences he perceived between Catholicism and Protestantism, he married a Protestant and had his children baptised and raised as Protestants. Likewise, Edmund Burke, recognised as Protestant, had a Catholic mother and Protestant father, while his second wife was Catholic. Moore's friendship at Trinity with Robert Emmet, whom he first met in the College Historical Society, is proof that however important it was to defend the freedom of religion, he was ready to accept that Protestants as well as Catholics had a stake in Irish independence. When Emmet took his radical stand in the 1798 rebellion, Moore, at the urging of his parents, avoided active participation in armed rebellion; he never joined the United Irishmen, yet encouraged them in his writing. Spurred by Emmet and by Edward Hudson, who belonged to the United Irishmen, Moore wrote an emotional appeal to his fellow students to resist the act of union with England. His letter 'to the Students of Trinity College', published on 2 December 1797 in *The Press*, the voice of the United Irishmen, was signed 'A Sophister'. Moore challenged his fellow students,

Is not hatred to Catholics the *Established Religion* of government, and the oath of extermination their only sacrament? ... At a period like this, then, when neutrality should alone be counted treason, in the name of our

country – our liberty – our God – let us not, my friends, by a silent and criminal apathy, sanction the rivetting of chains, which perhaps may be indissoluble forever.¹⁸

Once Catholic emancipation came in 1829 it appears Moore felt that his direct defence of Catholicism could be relaxed; his famous phrase, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, was: ‘Thank God! I may now, if I like, turn Protestant’, yet he continued his critique of the role of religion in society.¹⁹ In 1833 he at last found the time to present the labours of his long study of historical theology in his *Travels of an Irish gentleman in search of a religion*, which he felt would make Catholicism respectable.

Was Moore irenic, ecumenical, or an agnostic, simply playing around with religion? None of these designations appear really to fit him.²⁰ Moore might be seen, in the language of the day, as more latitudinarian, since he was not very interested in attending Mass, receiving sacraments, nor any daily devotional activity, yet he did maintain a deep interest in Catholicism. The overwhelming opinion of scholars from the nineteenth century on is that Moore was a nominal Catholic; but there is very little demonstration of what this really means. While ‘nominal’ might help explain his attachment to an ecclesiastical institution, it may miss his devotion to a more general Christian spirituality. Nominal may be as problematic a term as secularisation. It seems that where there is a dominant state church and a non-voluntary culture of compliance, more nominal laity appear. What nominal does not evaluate is the degree of individual spirituality, which may have a life of its own beyond collective practices.²¹ Another way to describe Moore’s Catholicism might be ‘conciliatory’. While this may suggest appeasement, which may have a negative connotation, his conciliatory approach could be identified with the goal of peacemaking. If this was the case, his conciliatory nature has not endeared him to many. His songs, in the phrase of Seamus Heaney, were ‘too light, too conciliatory, too *colonise*’.²² For Heaney, perhaps, Moore’s approach had too high a price. What can be established is that Moore demonstrated a Gallicanism that played down the authority of the papacy over the Irish Catholic church.²³ He was ready to cede temporal powers to the British government while maintaining full religious freedom for Catholics. He praised Gallicanism as the best solution to church and state relations:

Indeed, the example of the Gallican church, so long free and so long illustrious, sufficiently proves the full compatibility of liberty with reverence, of

independence with orthodoxy. From the conflict, which her enlightened divines maintained against the pretensions of Rome, your religion rose purer and firmer than it had stood for many ages before, and those slavish notions of papal authority, which had been taken up in times of darkness, and clung to during the storm of the Reformation, were cast off as insulting alike to piety and common sense. The deposing power of the Pope, his personal infallibility, and all those absurd attributes, which degraded the Church much more than they elevated the Pontiff, were then indignantly rejected from your belief, and consigned to that contemptuous oblivion, from which even the malicious industry of your enemies has been unable to call them up in judgment against you.²⁴

MOORE'S WRITING ON RELIGION

Several prose writings speak more directly to Moore's sense of religion, such as his *Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin*, 1810, and *Travels of an Irish gentleman in search of a religion*, 1833.²⁵ Prior to Catholic emancipation, Moore appears to argue for how Catholicism should be seen as a loyal partner for Great Britain, whereas after 1829 he felt that he could more directly attack the validity of Protestantism (in *Travels of an Irish gentleman*). In this way he not only wanted freedom for Catholicism, but was prepared to argue for its theological validity in the modern world. If many anti-Catholics saw Irish Catholicism as backward and uncivilised, Moore challenged this by showing that indeed it was much older and had more continuity with historic and patristic Christianity.

While Catholic emancipation was absolutely necessary, Moore warned the Irish that there was grave danger in any goal to make Catholicism the new state church in Ireland. In 1823 he wrote a sort of travel log in which he identified certain 'fables' existing throughout Europe. In 'Fable V: Church and State', he began with a quotation from Soame Jenyns, an eighteenth-century English writer: "The moment any religion becomes national, or established, its purity must certainly be lost, because it is then impossible to keep it unconnected with men's interests; and, if connected, it must inevitably be perverted by them".²⁶ This is followed by Moore's own poetic explanation:

This, this it is – Religion, made, 'Twixt Church and State, a truck, a trade –
This most ill-match'd, unholy Co., From whence the ills we witness flow –
The war of many creeds with one – Th' extremes of too much faith, and
none – The qualms, the fumes of sect and sceptic, And all that Reason,

grown dyspeptic By swallowing forc'd or noxious creeds, From downright indigestion breeds.²⁶

Already by 1810 it appears that Moore had concluded that a mixture of church and state could never benefit Catholicism. Moore's *Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin* was a response to a recent controversy over the British government's role in the appointment of bishops. When a group of ten bishops (under government pressure following the rebellion of 1798) had temporarily agreed to give the king of England a veto in the appointment of bishops, it split Catholic opinion and created the veto controversy.²⁷ Moore was careful to avoid solutions using rebellion; he was convinced that his whig friends would bring emancipation, and tensions were high in England owing to involvement in the Napoleonic wars.²⁸ He warned Catholics to avoid the folly into which the British had fallen: 'In the very act of curing the folly of your adversaries, you were suddenly seized with the infection yourselves, and the senseless cry of "the church is in danger" was just dying away upon the lips of Protestants, when it was caught up by Catholics, and echoed with emulous vociferation.'²⁹ No doubt Moore's reference to 'the church is in danger' echoed the well-known French excuse for demonstrative action in 1792 against opponents of the revolution with the warning *la patrie en danger*. The *Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin* demonstrates a conciliatory Catholicism. Moore wanted to dispel fears on both sides and allow full political rights for Catholics.

For Catholics who opposed any role that the government might have in ecclesiastical affairs, Moore wanted to dispel their main objections. His trust that there was enough support in Britain for Catholic emancipation led him to chastise those who could not see the new relationship developing. He could accept a role for well-managed, aristocratic, earthly government. Aligned with many whig lords of England, Moore believed that this was the only way to maintain order and progress. In some ways he may have been threatened by the 'Terror' of the French Revolution – like his fellow countryman Edmund Burke. Thus, the strength of the Catholic church must come from inside; from its own integrity. Catholicism in Ireland had survived so well, despite penal laws and opposition from Britain, not because it controlled its governing and earthly power, but because of its integrity and faith at the parish level.³⁰ Similar arguments would be made later in the century by Catholic bishops about why God might have allowed the Famine/*An Gorta Mór*. In 1845, for example,

Archbishop MacHale, who clearly supported a more Gallican Irish church, warned his flock that the Famine might have come as a result of their sins.³¹ Perhaps God had sent the Famine as a means to purify the church? In this earlier argument Moore suggested that a purified church could only be established by separating religion from politics, an almost impossible thing to conceive of in the 1820s, let alone achieve. Long before Ireland was more fully integrated with Rome, he argued, Irish Catholicism had relied on its own governing structures:

as late a period as the 12th century, the Pope had not exercised a legatine authority in Ireland, nor taken any share in the election of her bishops or archbishops; and how little inclined your ancestors of those days were, to abide by a papal decision, even in matters of canonical regulation, appears by their obstinate dissent from the Romish observance of Easter – a schism, in which they were encouraged by some of your most celebrated Saints, whose anti-canonical boldness is, however, sufficiently justified by their canonization.³²

If Moore was able to convince some Irish Catholics of this historical argument, it must have been more difficult to have them see their role in the contemporary conflict. He urged Catholics to consider how Protestants might see them:

... consider, whether a Protestant government is not abundantly warranted, in its suspicion of papal influence, by the jealous apprehension, with which Roman Catholic sovereigns have, at all times, endeavoured to controul [sic] and resist its inroads; and whether you are not guilty of something worse than charlatanry, in recommending to others, as harmless and even salutary, what you have constantly rejected, as unnerving and poisonous, yourselves.³³

The recent predictions of Pastorini (aka Bishop Charles Walmsley, 1771) increased Protestant anxieties about what Ireland could look like if Catholicism was given more autonomy and freedom. Although O'Connell downplayed their significance, Pastorini's prophecies claimed that Protestantism in Ireland would fail by 1825 and the Catholic church would emerge as the national power. This Catholic millennial expectation took firm root among many poor peasants, and evidence suggests that it inspired the Munster Rockite riots. James Donnelly has found that '... politically conscious Catholics of the middle and upper classes found Pastorini's prophecies to be deeply embarrassing at a time when they were

giving their wholehearted support to a campaign aimed at gaining admission to parliament for some of their wealthy coreligionists.’³⁴ While Moore found no merit or credence in Pastorini, he recognised that Pastorini’s writing fanned the flames of agrarian violence indirectly. First published in 1824, Moore’s *Memoirs of Captain Rock* implicitly legitimised agrarian resistance, while at the same time his picture of non-violent Irish peasants tried to persuade the English public of their passive acceptance of good parliamentary rule.³⁵ Timothy Keane maintains that ‘the impressive feat of *Memoirs* was that the rehabilitation of Ireland took place through an ingenious act of ventriloquism; the voices of the historians responsible for consolidating the prevailing interpretations of the Irish were used to justify Irish rebellion.’³⁶ This point again establishes the paradox of Moore’s conciliatory goal to negotiate the middle ground.

In 1833 Moore published *Travels of an Irish gentleman in search of a religion* to indulge his long-held love of history, the classics and ancient languages. Terence White asserts that Moore wrote *Travels* as ‘... a profession of faith in his Catholicism ... Moore who was so anxious to please!’³⁷ In essence White argues that Moore was nervous that his writings and friendships with English whigs might damage his reputation with Irish Catholics, and even though he disagreed with O’Connell on many issues, he still wanted his approval. Well acquainted with Geneva in his own travels, perhaps Moore’s *Travels* follows upon the famous travels of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who also searched for religion once he rejected the faith of his Reformed city and became a Roman Catholic under the influence of his patron and mistress Madame de Warens. Moore’s narrator, the Irish gentleman, is a student at Trinity College (no doubt Moore himself), who considered converting to Protestantism, since he had heard that it was far superior to Catholicism. Swayed by contemporary Protestant rhetoric of its superiority and purity to the early church, the student came to realise just the opposite: it was closer to Gnosticism and ancient heresies than to the patristic fathers, the mark of orthodoxy. Surprised by this exposure, the student is curious about the Reformation period, and discovers that even more dangerous, seductive, rationalist ideas had flowed from Martin Luther. The real purpose of Moore’s work, however, is indeed difficult to interpret. A piece in the *Westminster Review* underlines interpretative difficulties in its summary: ‘... half the book by a poet, half the book by a priest ... one intended to produce conviction without a laugh, the other to raise a laugh without conviction’.³⁸ One may conclude that Moore was quite interested in theology academically, at least, but not many contemporary scholars took him very seriously.

The effect of *Travels* appears to be that while his English readers either ignored this work or became disappointed, in Ireland, Catholics searching for a champion saw him as the new defender of their faith. An uncertain picture of Moore's real feelings about the merits of Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity remains, but his writing throughout the 1820s did expose long-held prejudices on both sides and challenged the role of Catholicism and Protestantism in modern Ireland. Perhaps White uncovered the real spirituality of Moore: he found that at the end of Moore's life, when he was an invalid, his wife Bessy struggled to keep things together; Moore would say to her 'Lean upon God, Bessy; lean upon God.'³⁹

CONCLUSION

Moore's conciliatory Catholicism had some influence on nineteenth-century Ireland, and he spoke to the present realities and warned of what was to come. Of course, he was not alone in suggesting that neither Catholicism nor Protestantism should be a state church and the sole representative of Irish national identity. Thomas Davis and William Smith O'Brien, through Douglas Hyde, Charles Stewart Parnell, and Patrick Pearse, were to centre Irish identity on a social and cultural nationalism without promoting one church over another. At the same time, Moore was well aware that Catholicism was the religion of the majority, had contemporary relevance, and had an important role in modern Ireland. His greater influence, however, may be seen in England, where he was able to present an argument for religious freedom in a less political and more social way through his poetry, prose, and song.

NOTES

1. Seamus Heaney, 'Digging' in *Opened ground: selected poems 1966–1996* (New York, 1998), p. 3.
2. Thomas Moore, *Irish melodies*, first published in Dublin 5 Apr. 1808, containing twelve airs (nos 1–4), and he increased the collection in 1813–18 (nos 5–7), 1821–4 (nos 8–9), and 1834 (no.10 and supplement).
3. Bruce Nelson, *Irish nationalists and the making of the Irish race* (Princeton, 2012), p. 6.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
5. Douglas Hyde, 'The necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland', delivered before the Irish National Literary Society in Dublin, 25 Nov. 1892 (<http://www.gaeilge.org/deanglicising.html>) (accessed 2 Aug. 2013).

6. See Irene Whelan, *The bible war in Ireland: the 'Second Reformation' and the polarization of Protestant–Catholic relations, 1800–1840* (Madison, 2005).
7. Critics of the Catholic Association ridiculed and dismissed the 'Roman Catholic Popish Parliament of Ireland'; see Sir Thomas Wyse, *Historical sketch of the late Catholic Association of Ireland* (2 vols, London, 1829).
8. See S. J. Connolly, *Priests and people in pre-famine Ireland, 1780–1845* (Dublin, 2001).
9. Daniel O'Connell, *The selected speeches of Daniel O'Connell, M.P., edited, with historical notices by his son, John O'Connell* (Dublin, 1854), p. 447. He went on to say, 'I deny the doctrine that the Pope has any temporal authority, directly or indirectly, in Ireland; we have all denied that authority on oath, and we would die to resist it. He cannot, therefore, be any party to the act of parliament we solicit, *nor shall any act of parliament regulate our faith or conscience.*'
10. Theobald Wolfe Tone, *An argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* (pre-printed on behalf of the Society of United Irishmen, Belfast, 1791), p. 16.
11. See John B. Roney, *Cultures and customs of the Netherlands* (Westport, 2009); P. C. M. van Schendelen (ed.), *Consociationalism, pillarization and conflict management in the Low Countries* (Meppel, 1984).
12. See Harry White, *The keeper's recital: music and cultural history in Ireland, 1770–1970* (Cork, 1998), p. 37.
13. Karen Tongson, 'The cultural transnationalism of Thomas Moore's *Irish melodies*' in *Repercussions*, ix, no.1 (spring 2001), pp 5–31, p. 9.
14. John Eglinton, 'Thomas Moore as theologian' in *Irish Review*, i, no.6 (Aug. 1911), pp 261–8, p. 267.
15. Emer Nolan, 'Thomas Moore: *Irish melodies* and discordant politics: Thomas Moore's *Memoirs of Captain Rock* (1824)' in *Field Day Review*, ii (2006), pp 41–54, p. 18.
16. Charles Kent, 'Introduction' in *The poetical works of Thomas Moore*, edited with memoir and notes by Charles Kent (London, 1879).
17. In Moore's *Travels of an Irish gentleman in search of a religion* (Philadelphia, 1833), p. 2, he says '... I felt – as many other high-spirited young Papists must have felt before me – that I had been not only enslaved, but degraded by belonging to such a race; and though, had adversity still frowned on our faith, I would have clung to it to the last, and died fighting for Transubstantiation and the Pope with the best, I was not sorry to be saved the doubtful glory of such martyrdom; and much as I rejoiced at the release of my fellow-sufferers from thralldom, I rejoiced still more at the prospect of my own release from *them.*'

18. Thomas Moore, reprinted in *The Celtic Union: A Weekly Periodical of Irish National Literature* (July 1858), pp 86, 88.
19. Moore, *Travels of an Irish gentleman*, p. 2.
20. James Flannery, *Dear harp of my country: the Irish melodies of Thomas Moore* (Nashville, 1997), p. 71, sees Moore as ‘a living example of ecumenism in action’ since he married a Protestant and raised his children Protestant, while remaining Catholic and working toward emancipation. It is not clear that this use of ecumenism is what is normally meant, but the attempt to balance the two is instructive.
21. In reflecting on Catholicism in contemporary Ireland, Eamon Maher expressed the hope that ‘The problems that are besetting the Catholic Church in Ireland will ultimately lead to a new, more theologically informed, open and charitable institution’: see Maher, ‘Where to now for Irish Catholicism?’ in *Reality*, lxxviii, no.8 (Sept. 2003), pp 10–12.
22. Seamus Heaney, ‘Introduction’ in David Hammond (ed.), *A centenary selection from Moore’s melodies* (Dublin, 1979), p. 9.
23. C. D. A. Leighton, ‘Gallicanism and the veto controversy: church, state, and Catholic community in early nineteenth-century Ireland’ in R. V. Comerford, Mary Cullen, Jacqueline R. Hill, and Colm Lennon (eds), *Religion, conflict and coexistence in Ireland: essays presented to Monsignor Patrick J. Corish* (Dublin, 1990), pp 135–58, p. 140, argues that Gallicanism appeared in Ireland in the early nineteenth century, where it was less doctrinal and more political. It supported the Irish Catholic church’s effective control of selecting bishops, with minimal involvement from either Rome or Britain.
24. Thomas Moore, *A letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin* (Dublin, 1810), pp 12–13.
25. Moore’s *Memoirs of Captain Rock, the celebrated Irish chieftain with some account of his ancestors, written by himself* (London and New York, 1824) is another lengthy history of religion in Ireland framed within a satire.
26. Thomas Brown [Thomas Moore], ‘Fable V: Church and State’ in Thomas Brown, the Younger, Secretary of the Poco-Curante Society, and author of the Fudge Family, and the Two-Penny Post-Bag, *Fables for the holy alliance, rhymes on the road, and miscellaneous poems* (London, 1823), p. 29.
27. See Leighton, ‘Gallicanism & the veto controversy’.
28. See Ronan Kelly, ‘Another side of Thomas Moore’ in *History Ireland*, xi, no.3 (autumn 2003), pp 39–43, pp 41–2: ‘England was a state at war, and any disloyalty was severely punished. As regards Ireland, Catholic opposition was a leaderless mess after the veto controversy, and only a madman would publically advocate rebellion.’
29. Moore, *Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin*, p. 5.
30. Moore’s argument about the strength of the Gallican church tradition in Ireland supports this point.

31. See Bernard O'Reilly, *John MacHale, archbishop of Tuam: his life, times and correspondence* (New York, 1890), p. 612, where part of this sermon is quoted.
32. Moore, *Letter to the Roman Catholics of Dublin*, pp 15–16.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
34. James S. Donnelly Jr., *Captain Rock: the Irish agrarian rebellion of 1821–1824* (Madison, 2009), p. 121.
35. See Moore, *Memoirs of Captain Rock*.
36. Timothy Keane, 'Thomas Moore's address to England: *Memoirs of Captain Rock* and the Irish Question' in Francesca Benatti, Sean Ryder, Justin Tonra (eds), *Thomas Moore: texts, contexts, hypertext* (*Reimagining Ireland*, xxiv, ed. Eamon Maher, Oxford, 2013), pp 61–79, p. 64.
37. Terence de Vere White, *Tom Moore: the Irish poet* (London, 1977), p. 232.
38. Cited by Ronan Kelly, *Bard of Erin: the life of Thomas Moore* (Dublin, 2008), p. 498.
39. White, *Tom Moore: the Irish poet*, p. 263.

Using the Irish Language to Further the Aims of Bible Societies: An Analysis of Irish Bibles in the Russell Library, Maynooth

Barbara McCormack

Alongside the early printed books, manuscripts and archival documents housed in the historic Russell Library at St Patrick's College Maynooth is a rich collection of bibles deposited by the Hibernian Bible Society (HBS)¹ in the 1980s, containing approximately 2000 bible translations in nearly 600 languages. Readers may be surprised to learn that such a vast collection of scriptural works, many of which reflect the efforts of evangelical missions in the nineteenth century, resides in a seminary for the education of Irish Catholic priests. However, the Hibernian Bible Society itself was established in 1806 as a non-denominational body concerned with the distribution of the scriptures without commentary or interpretation, and its archive is a living testament to this.

The HBS was formed at a time of renewed evangelicalism in Ireland from the 1790s to the early 1800s, in keeping with trends in Britain and America. Several evangelical bodies were formed, some of which, such as

B. McCormack (✉)
Special Collections and Archives, Russell Library, National University
of Ireland Maynooth, Maynooth, Ireland

the Society for the Irish Church Missions (ICM),² actively engaged in a system of proselytism aimed at converting Irish Catholics to Protestantism.³ Other groups such as the Kildare Place Society⁴ were established as multi-denominational educational bodies but attracted controversy owing to their connections with proselytising missionary societies. Much like its parent body the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), the HBS became acutely aware of the potential benefits of translating scripture into the language of the native speaker and initiated numerous translations of the bible into the Irish language. Seventeenth-century translations had made little impact, and the BFBS now took the lead, issuing the New Testament in Irish in 1810, albeit with roman characters as opposed to Gaelic, and despite earlier discouragement from Irish Protestants regarding use of the language.⁵ Although this made the bible more accessible to the general population, several impediments limited its impact, notably the low levels of literacy in nineteenth-century Ireland and a lack of standardised Irish spelling and grammar, which made translation problematic. Yet both the HBS and the BFBS persevered, issuing several revised editions of the scriptures in the Irish language from 1810 down to the mid-twentieth century, despite being plagued with accusations of proselytism arising from the evangelical fervour of some auxiliary branches.

This chapter considers the Irish-language scriptures in the HBS collection at Maynooth, with a view to highlighting the main periods when such works were produced for distribution (particularly the periods from 1810 to 1829, and from 1830 to 1849, with another minor peak after Irish independence) and exploring the reasons for these trends.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Bible societies in Ireland have been the subject of considerable scholarly attention in recent years, especially in relation to the Irish language. Outlining early attempts to translate the bible into Irish, Marc Caball suggests that the delay in publishing a complete bible in Irish ‘arguably reveals the limits of Anglo-Irish cultural interaction and highlights English Protestant fears of the disruptive potential of Gaelic culture’.⁶ Niall Ó Ciosáin provides a useful overview of printing in Irish in the nineteenth century, arguing that Protestant evangelical societies, embarking on ‘religious crusades’ following the 1798 Irish rebellion and the French Revolution, endeavoured to circulate copies of the scriptures in the Irish language.⁷ Elizabethanne Boran suggests that successive English monarchs

had varying attitudes to the use of the Irish language for proselytising purposes, highlighting the contrast between Henry VIII's firm opposition to using Irish and Elizabeth I's willingness 'to initiate printing in Irish of the texts necessary for Reformation'.⁸ Toby Barnard argues that the failure of Irish Protestants to use Irish for communicating with the Catholic majority can be traced to divisions within the Church of Ireland itself, particularly the varying experiences of church leaders and those at parish level.⁹

The Hibernian Bible Society was formed in the years immediately after the act of union (1800) which established the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and amalgamated the Protestant churches of England and Ireland into one entity. Catholic emancipation did not come about until 1829, while the unification of the Irish and English churches remained in place until the Irish church act of 1869 which formally disestablished the Church of Ireland. The HBS was founded to increase the number of bibles in circulation (initially, its publications were in English), and to address 'a grievous shortage of Scriptures in all parts of Ireland'.¹⁰ It hoped to build on the efforts of societies such as the Dublin Association for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion, which had issued copies of the scriptures in English since its foundation in 1792 but was impeded by a lack of resources.¹¹ Others, however, were acutely aware of the power of distributing the scriptures in Irish. Dr Whitley Stokes (1763–1845), regius professor of medicine, Trinity College, Dublin, was a strong advocate of this as evidenced in his work *Observations on the necessity of publishing the scriptures in the Irish language* (Dublin, 1806). De Brún suggests that the idea 'received powerful support from the Bible Society's [the British and Foreign Bible Society] founder, the great proponent of Bible-teaching in Welsh, the Rev[d]. Thomas Charles (1755–1814)'.¹² Stokes edited St Luke's gospel and the Acts of the Apostles in 1799. His 1806 edition of the four gospels and Acts of the Apostles was issued with support from the Dublin Association for Discountenancing Vice.

The HBS had the same aims as its parent body, the British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in 1804 to increase the number of bibles circulating throughout Britain and the rest of the world and aiming to issue this material, without interpretation or commentary, through a network of branches drawing on various Protestant denominations. The HBS was established by Church of Ireland clergyman Reverend B. W. Mathias in 1806, following his move from the diocese of Dromore to the Bethesda chapel in Dublin. Originally known as the Dublin Bible Society, it had the

support of several Church of Ireland bishops. It was renamed in 1808 as part of the formal establishment of the HBS in order to encompass the whole of Ireland. Dudley Levistone Cooney suggests that inclusion of the word ‘papists’ in HBS reports indicates an exclusively Protestant administration.¹³ A number of rules underpinned the activities of the HBS. It was solely concerned with the circulation of scripture in Ireland and aimed to work with similar societies to this end. This was to be achieved through membership fees and collections from congregations. Members could be appointed to the HBS committee, which met bi-monthly and consisted of twenty-one members, and all society members could purchase its publications at reduced prices.

In the Irish context, not only was a majority of the population Catholic, it was also predominantly Irish-speaking, and this had implications for both bible-ownership and the relevance of English-language editions. According to comments by observers in Ireland, published in a BFBS report in 1805, up to a third of Protestant families owned a bible, but only one in five hundred Catholic families possessed a copy.¹⁴ Crucially, the HBS was to circulate copies of the scriptures *without comment*, a rule that had particular significance when it came to distributing bibles to the Catholic population. The only English language version of the scriptures authorised by the Catholic church at this time was the Douay bible (first published in 1610 with extensive commentary and notes). Eighteenth-century English-language versions of this bible were also issued with notes and commentary, ensuring the retention of a Catholic perspective. The English-language scriptures issued by the HBS in its early years of existence included the entire bible, the Old and New Testaments, and portions of the bible.

Although the HBS initially enjoyed support from the Church of Ireland hierarchy after its foundation in 1806, by 1821 this seemed set to change when several bishops publicly declared their dissatisfaction with the focus and practice of the society. According to Whelan this condemnation reflected the stance of leading Church of England theologians, who objected to the BFBS’s dissemination of scripture without commentary: ‘bishops acting as vice-presidents of the BFBS (the majority of whom were Irish) were obliged to resign’ owing to the Church of England’s stance, and the same departure occurred in the HBS.¹⁵ As James Edward Jackson explained in his *A vindication of the reasons for withdrawing from the Hibernian Bible Society* (Dublin, 1823), ‘the Society’s principles were no longer those we had set out.’¹⁶ Whelan suggests that there may have been

fears amongst the bishops of the Church of Ireland that evangelical societies would threaten their church.¹⁷ The archbishop of Armagh and primate of All Ireland, William Stuart, withdrew his support for the HBS in 1821 owing to apparent changes in the society's constitution, particularly regarding circulation of the bible without commentary or discussion.¹⁸ Some auxiliary branches of the HBS also became increasingly involved in 'aggressive Protestant propaganda' owing to the threat of Catholic emancipation during the 1820s.¹⁹

The day-to-day work of the HBS was carried out by a number of auxiliary branches in towns throughout Ireland. The ladies' auxiliary societies played a key role in furthering the aims of the society, particularly through the generation of membership subscriptions. In 1812–13, for example, the Ladies' Auxiliary Bible Society in Dublin city raised £227 11s. from weekly subscriptions of one penny.²⁰ Twenty-seven new branches of the HBS emerged during this year, many of them in the northern counties.²¹ Within ten years of its foundation the HBS had successfully distributed a total of 200,000 volumes throughout Ireland.²² The society's income was supplemented by proceeds from the sale of bibles at reduced prices. During the period 1825 to 1828 alone its publications comprised five English-language versions of the scriptures, including the New Testament, the bible, and the Book of Psalms.²³ Indeed, the success of the HBS necessitated the recruitment in 1846 of colporteurs to distribute its publications.²⁴

Less than a century later the Bible House in Upper Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) was destroyed during the Irish Civil War, forcing the society to relocate to premises on Dawson Street. One of the greatest losses to the society was the library, which was devastated during the conflict. The Reverend Thomas Byers suggests that it 'contained editions of the Scriptures in hundreds of tongues, many being rare copies dating back to the sixteenth century'.²⁵ The HBS relied heavily on donations from individuals and groups in order to replenish this material. In 1927 the BFBS donated several Irish-language bibles, including the 1830 edition edited by Edward O'Reilly and the 1818 edition of the New Testament.²⁶ This was supplemented with material from other individuals and societies, including the Trinitarian Bible Society. Eventually the HBS library grew to the extent that in 1986 a collection of approximately 2,000 works published by the HBS, BFBS, and other bible societies was given on permanent deposit to the Russell Library in Maynooth.²⁷ Each bible retains the original HBS number in addition to the BFBS (HC) number where

applicable. A set of sheaf catalogues accompanied the collection when it was deposited in the library; these are invaluable for provenance details and other copy-specific information.

INTERPRETING THE PROPORTION OF IRISH-LANGUAGE MATERIAL HELD IN THE HBS COLLECTION

Valerie Seymour suggests that the HBS collection in the Russell Library ‘represents the Protestant missionary endeavour to give access to the Bible to all in their own language’.²⁸ This is certainly true in relation to material in the Irish language. In a small printed work produced to mark the centenary of the HBS the author states:

It may be well to state here the great interest the B. & F.B.S. has shown to our Irish Bible Society ever since its formation in 1804, and its unceasing solicitude for the welfare of our people in the matter of the original language of the country.²⁹

However, there are just twenty-nine items in the Irish language (either solely in Irish or a mixture of both Irish and English) which represents less than 1.5 per cent of the entire collection, a figure that appears to contradict the sentiments expressed above regarding ‘the original language of the country’. Yet, it must be remembered that the library of the HBS acted as an archive, retaining just one copy of each work published by the HBS, BFBS and other bible societies. Therefore, each item in the Irish language may in fact represent thousands in circulation at any particular time.

THE BFBS’S LEAD IN PRODUCING SCRIPTURE IN IRISH, 1810–1829

The period from 1810 to 1829 in Ireland was characterised not only by widespread evangelical activity but also by the growing campaign and pressure for Catholic emancipation, which resulted in many bible societies engaging in ‘aggressive Protestant propaganda’.³⁰ In respect of Irish-language editions of scripture, it was noted above that it was the BFBS that led the way. Four important editions were published during this period, namely the New Testament and complete bible in roman characters (published in 1810 and 1817 respectively) and the New Testament

and complete bible produced using Irish characters (in 1818 and 1827 respectively). These landmark editions were supplemented with various reprints, culminating in the publication of approximately twenty Irish-language versions of the scriptures during this period. The frequency with which these editions were reprinted is evidence of a concerted campaign by the BFBS to distribute the bible in the native language of the Irish people. De Brún suggests that it was the London Hibernian Society which ‘induced the British and Foreign Bible Society to issue the New Testament in Irish’.³¹ The BFBS responded by issuing 2,000 copies of the New Testament in Irish:³² these were printed and stereotyped (a process that made it more convenient to reprint at a later date) by London publisher Thomas Rutt in 1810.³³ This edition was reprinted in 1813 (with a print run of 3000 copies) and again in 1815, 1819, and 1824 (with minor changes),³⁴ indicating that the stereotyping process was a worthwhile investment.

In 1812, fewer than ten years after the formation of the HBS, and two years after the BFBS published its first Irish-language version of the New Testament, an observer noted (in a letter to the *Belfast Monthly Magazine*) that the rule relating to the dissemination of scripture without commentary was effectively denying Catholics the benefits offered by the society.³⁵ The author of this letter, ‘A. Z.’, argued for the amendment of this rule to facilitate the distribution of the Douay bible. Failing this, the writer urged the Catholic church to permit distribution of the bible without commentary. Whelan has noted that when Catholic authorities in Dublin approved a new English translation of the Douay bible in 1820, many copies were, in fact, produced by Catholic printers.³⁶ However, it was not until a full century later that the Catholic church itself would publish the first fully authorised edition of a complete Irish-language bible.³⁷ Meanwhile, in 1899 the rules of the HBS were amended to permit the distribution of the Douay version in the English language in special circumstances.³⁸

In 1817 the BFBS issued its first edition of the complete bible in the Irish language, which Greenslade believes was a revision of an earlier edition produced in 1690 by Robert Kirke.³⁹ The BFBS commissioned 5000 copies of this bible, edited by James McQuige, a Methodist clergyman, who was authorised ‘to adapt the textual corrections of the English version in places manifestly erroneous, such textual corrections being rendered into Irish and previously submitted to Mr. Pratt and Dr Clarke’.⁴⁰ Quigley suggests that this approach ‘brought the text nearer to the Authorized Version’.⁴¹ The Russell Library copy of this bible features endpapers with

a watermark dated 1823, indicating that it was bound six years after it was printed, suggesting a low demand for this work in 1817.

In 1818 the BFBS issued a New Testament edited by McQuige using Irish characters (as opposed to the roman characters used in the earlier edition). This work was printed and stereotyped by Richard Watts in 1818, with 3000 copies issued.⁴² It drew criticism from many quarters owing to errors in the text, and attempts were made to rectify these in later printings (this work was reprinted in 1821, 1823, 1827, and 1828). A copy of the 1828 reprint in the Russell Library was once owned by the Reverend James E. H. Murphy, professor of Irish at Trinity College, Dublin (1896–1919), and was bound with interleaved pages of blank paper, designed to facilitate corrections, notes and other commentaries penned by the owner.⁴³ The BFBS continued its efforts to translate the scriptures into Irish with the publication of the bible in 1827 using Irish characters.⁴⁴ For this edition McQuige was instructed to limit his corrections and revisions of the text to typographical errors.⁴⁵ The bible reportedly followed the text of Bedell's Old Testament (with some amendments) and the earlier 1818 New Testament,⁴⁶ and was printed by Dublin-based printers George & John Grierson and Martin Keene.⁴⁷ A total of 5,000 copies were printed, one of which resides in the Russell Library and features handwritten annotations in pencil and black ink.

THE HBS COMMENCES PRODUCTION OF IRISH-LANGUAGE TEXTS, 1830–1849

The period 1830 to 1849 saw a renewed commitment to Catholic conversion through a focus on church history, which Jacqueline Hill has described as both 'an obstacle and an opportunity' for the Church of Ireland.⁴⁸ In 1830 the BFBS issued another edition of the bible in the Irish language which was printed by Watts.⁴⁹ This was followed in 1839 by the gospels of St Matthew and St Mark⁵⁰ and Romans to Revelation⁵¹ printed in Irish by Walter McDowall for the BFBS. An Irish translation of the Acts of the Apostles and Life of Joseph was printed by Richard Watts in 1840.⁵² Four years later the BFBS published an edition of the New Testament in Irish which was printed by Harrison and Co., London.⁵³

After issuing copies of the scriptures in English during the 1820s the HBS began its own foray into Irish-language printing in 1830 with the publication of the bible by Goodwin, Son & Nethercott.⁵⁴ This was edited

by Roman Catholic scholar Edward O'Reilly and overseen by Dr Henry Monck Mason, founder of the Irish Society.⁵⁵ Vivian Mercier suggests that 'the preservation of the Irish language was aided, though not exactly in good faith, by the evangelically inspired Irish Society'.⁵⁶ A noted lexicographer and Irish scholar, O'Reilly was reportedly paid two shillings for each page of the bible he translated.⁵⁷ Monck Mason had previously commissioned O'Reilly to catalogue Gaelic manuscripts held in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, although this work was later criticised by other Irish scholars for errors and inaccuracies.⁵⁸ The decision of the HBS committee to enlist a Catholic scholar as editor of this bible is significant as it indicates a strong desire to correct errors in earlier translations and prevent further discrepancies. The plates and sheets of this edition were unfortunately destroyed in 1922 during the burning of the Bible House in Upper Sackville Street.⁵⁹ The New Testament was reprinted by the HBS in 1849, and in 1852 Hardy & Sons reprinted the complete bible for the HBS, containing the Old Testament (pp 1–1188) and New Testament (pp 1189–1574).⁶⁰ The proliferation of Irish bibles issued by both the BFBS and the HBS in the period 1830 to 1849 suggests a concerted effort to utilise the Irish language to further their aims.

IRISH-LANGUAGE BIBLE PRODUCTION IN INDEPENDENT IRELAND

Following the intensity of Irish-language bible production during the first half of the century, the period after mid-century saw fewer editions published. There was something of a new burst of energy during the post-Irish independence era, which was characterised by strong Protestant attempts to assert their 'Irish' identity in southern Ireland. This may have precipitated a rise in the production and distribution of material in the Irish language. The gospel of St Mark⁶¹ in the Irish language was published by the HBS in 1932, followed by the gospel of St Matthew in 1934.⁶² These works appeared following a decision made by the committee of the HBS in 1931 to issue the New Testament in both Gaelic and roman characters, which constituted 'a form suitable to present day students in Irish'.⁶³ The gospel of St Mark was printed by Tempest, Dundalk and issued in both Gaelic and roman type at a cost of 6*d*.⁶⁴ The HBS also published the gospel of St Luke in 1935⁶⁵ and Acts of the Apostles in 1937.⁶⁶ The New Testament, translated by Ernest E. Joynt, was published by the HBS in 1951.⁶⁷

TEXTS IN CONTEXT: CRITICISM AND CONTROVERSY

These texts were produced against a backdrop of often heated criticism and controversy in relation to the HBS's dissemination of scripture without commentary in the course of its evangelical activities. The HBS was drawn into a public debate in September 1906 when it was forced to deny allegations of proselytising through the distribution of bibles in the Irish language. The catalyst for this debate was a request in May of that year by the Dublin Public Libraries Committee to the society for complimentary copies of the bible in Irish.⁶⁸ The society granted this request and deposited the bibles with the Public Libraries Committee. However, the suitability of this transaction raised questions from members of Dublin Corporation at a meeting in September 1906, with many calling for the books to be returned. Mr Harrington MP regretted any connection between the Books committee and what he described as 'an avowedly proselytising society' which 'had lived on the lies it had sold to the Irish people'.⁶⁹ Many feared that an acceptance of this work by the Dublin Public Libraries was an authorisation of the HBS's work. Yet the controversy surrounding the donation did not damage HBS bible sales. A report in the *Irish Independent* quoted the Reverend David Henry Hall of the HBS, who declared that the publicity 'led to the sale of more Bibles in the last fortnight than in the previous year'.⁷⁰

The proliferation of Irish language works published by the BFBS and HBS in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was part of a wider evangelical mission which saw the translation of the scriptures into many languages worldwide. However, such bodies built on previous (if very limited) attempts in earlier centuries to publish Irish editions of the scriptures. The 1810 New Testament printed by the BFBS, for instance, was based on O'Donnell's 1681 translation.⁷¹ Likewise, the 1827 bible was printed using 'the published copies with the MS. copy of Bedel's (sic) Bible in the library of St. Patrick's, Dublin [Marsh's Library]'.⁷² Mercier argues that the HBS 'came to resemble a proselytising agency', despite its original aims to issue copies of the scripture as a non-denominational body, suggesting that:

Given the traditional attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards unguided reading of the Bible, an organisation that proposed to supply what were in effect Protestant bibles ... in Irish or English to any who wanted them was bound to cause friction between the two religious communities.⁷³

Both the BFBS and the HBS recognised the importance of using Gaelic rather than roman characters for Irish translations of the bible. As mentioned earlier, the BFBS issued a New Testament using Irish characters in 1818, just one year after publishing an edition with roman characters, and the HBS produced the bible using Gaelic characters in 1830. It is possible that the BFBS and HBS recognised that issuing the bible in the traditional Irish script perhaps promoted an association between Protestantism and Irish cultural heritage. Hempton and Hill suggest that ‘an even closer identification with the Gaelic tradition was established when the use of the Irish character as well as language was adopted’.⁷⁴

Of course Irish-language bibles produced by the BFBS were not just distributed in Ireland. The 1818 New Testament in the Russell Library, for example, contains a bookplate with the following inscription: ‘Presented by the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society to the Ladies’ Branch of the Liverpool Auxiliary Bible Society, for the Library of the Charitable Institution House’.⁷⁵ The Liverpool Auxiliary Bible Society aimed to distribute copies of the scriptures ‘to the poor inhabitants, the seamen be-longing to the port, and to foreigners’⁷⁶ in Liverpool, which undoubtedly included Irish-speaking emigrants.

CONCLUSION

The HBS collection in the Russell Library provides ample material for research, particularly concerning the use of Irish by bible societies. Although founded in 1806 as what Whelan describes as an ‘inter-denominational body’,⁷⁷ the HBS may have at least tolerated the proselytising activities of controversial groups such as the London Hibernian Society through donations of bibles. By the mid-nineteenth century the HBS relied upon a complex system of auxiliaries and colporteurs to distribute copies of the scriptures and in doing so it relinquished some control over its day-to-day operations. The conduct of certain auxiliary groups may have been at odds with the general ethos of the society, and the withdrawal of support from the archbishops of Dublin and Armagh in 1821 suggests discrepancies between the rules of the society and the activities of the auxiliary branches.

Both the BFBS and HBS recognised the merits of translating the bible into the language of the general population. The HBS was not only concerned with producing and archiving its own editions of Irish-language bibles but also those of its parent body, the BFBS, and of others such as the Trinitarian Bible Society and the Society for Promoting Christian

Knowledge (SPCK). Although there is no scope here to develop the point, many of the Irish-language bibles in the HBS collection were, in fact, aimed at non-Irish speakers, perhaps those involved in teaching or ministering to Irish speakers. The fact that several of these bibles contain handwritten annotations including English definitions of Irish words and phrases, dictionaries, alphabets, contractions and mute letters intimates that the target reader was not fluent in Irish. Furthermore, annotations that appear to be corrections and revisions of the printed text indicate that the reader was involved in the translation of a new version. However, the HBS was ultimately unsuccessful in its attempts to use the Irish language as a means to further its aims. Whelan argues that the main obstacle ‘was the traditional association between the Protestant religion and the foreign oppressor’, even when the bible was issued ‘through the pleasing medium of Irish’.⁷⁸ Therefore, despite the religious fervour surrounding its activities, in this respect the HBS failed to achieve its goals.

NOTES

1. Now the ‘National Bible Society of Ireland’.
2. Founded in March 1849 by Reverend Alexander Dallas.
3. See Irene Whelan’s valuable account of Protestant evangelism and the Irish language, particularly in relation to the Hibernian Bible Society, in *The bible war in Ireland* (Dublin, 2005).
4. The Kildare Place Society or ‘The Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland’ (est. 1811) was a non-denominational body.
5. According to Platt’s history of translations noted in Pádraig de Brún, *Scriptural instruction in the vernacular* (Dublin, 2009), p. 3.
6. Marc Caball, ‘The bible in early modern Gaelic Ireland: tradition, collaboration, and alienation’ in Kevin Killeen et al. (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the bible in England, c.1530–1700* (Oxford, 2015), pp 332–49, p. 348.
7. Niall Ó Ciosáin, ‘Print and Irish, 1570–1900: an exception among the Celtic languages?’ in *Radharc*, v–vii (2004–6), pp 73–106.
8. Elizabethanne Boran, ‘Printing in early seventeenth-century Dublin: combating heresy in serpentine times’ in eadem and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550–1700* (Aldershot, 2006), pp 40–65, p. 58.
9. Toby Barnard, ‘Enforcing the Reformation in Ireland, 1660–1704’ in Boran & Gribben (eds), *Enforcing Reformation*, pp 202–27, 210–11.
10. Robert Wyse Jackson, ‘The starting point: how the Hibernian Bible Society began’ in idem and Thomas Byers, *The unfinished task ... the story of the Hibernian Bible Society* (Dublin [n.d.]), pp 3–10, p. 5.

11. For a detailed overview of the history of the HBS see Dudley Levistone Cooney, *Sharing the word: a history of the Bible Society in Ireland* (Dublin, 2006).
12. De Brún, *Scriptural instruction*, p. 5.
13. Cooney, *Sharing the word*, p. 27.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
15. Whelan, *Bible war*, p. 138.
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25. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
26. 'National Bible Society of Ireland Catalogue I–K, no. 4' (Russell Library, HBS collection).
27. Valerie Seymour, 'The bible' in Agnes Neligan (ed.), *Maynooth Library treasures: from the collections of Saint Patrick's College* (Dublin, 1995), pp 64–90, p. 65.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Byers, 'Expansion & development', p. 11.
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History and Destiny in the Making of the Irish Catholic Spiritual Empire

Irene Whelan

When President John F. Kennedy delivered his famous address to Dáil Éireann on 28 June 1963, he spoke of the Irish, at home and abroad, as a community that enjoyed a unique reputation internationally. Taking special pride in their historic reputation for military valour as well as more recent contributions to education and politics, he was proud to acknowledge that the dream of independence had been realised and the country could now function as an inspiration to others. After its long struggle for self-government, Kennedy stressed that Ireland's greatness now would be found as a 'maker and shaper of world peace', a role it was supremely able to fulfil because of its capacity to be 'the protector of the weak and the voice of the small'.¹ For the great majority of his Irish listeners who were Catholic, there could be no doubt that their country's elevated status was rooted in a collective identity that was both global and Catholic. Beyond a reference to 'traditional cultural values', however, Kennedy did not mention religion or the Catholic church. He hardly needed to. Being part of the international Catholic world was such an integral part of being Irish that it did not need explicit assertion, almost as if it was organic in character or a law of nature.

I. Whelan (✉)
Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY, USA

This sense of belonging to a global Catholic world was rooted in a diaspora that was the result of massive outmigration endemic to Irish society since the early nineteenth century. With its vast array of churches, schools, hospitals and charitable agencies, the Catholic church had provided the institutional glue that held this community together. Constantly replenished by clergy recruited and trained in Ireland, by the time of Kennedy's address the Irish Catholic church internationally was a veritable missionary army, ministering to millions of non-Irish in the developing world as well as the Irish of the diaspora. This celebrated 'spiritual empire' that occupied a unique place in the Irish national psyche had no equivalent in other countries with missionary outreach. Its ideological origin lay in the belief that it was the special destiny of the Irish to carry the faith worldwide, and to lead the crusade that would return the world to the Catholic fold. Devotion to this ideal provided for spiritual uplift as well as national pride, and it was central to the way the Irish saw themselves internationally. Like many of the great myths that owed their origin to the period of nation-building in the nineteenth century, however, Ireland's 'spiritual empire' was no organic phenomenon but a constructed or 'invented' belief system, the product of a convergence of cultural and political trends. This chapter examines the origins of the concept, traces the path through which it was fashioned into a coherent national myth, and evaluates its legacy for Irish political culture in the twentieth century.

THE CASE FOR IRELAND'S 'SPECIAL DESTINY'

Given the sheer scale of emigration from Ireland and the multi-dimensional character of the social and religious life of immigrant communities, it is only to be expected that 'spiritual empire' has more than one definition.² Here the focus is on an ideological dimension that developed in the 1880s in connection with the settlement of Irish immigrants on the newly opened territories of the Great Plains that were then being incorporated into the United States. The prospect of settling Irish immigrants on the land opened up an opportunity which allowed the creation of an idealised agrarian community to be linked with the destiny of spreading the faith. The most famous and influential exposition of this synthesis was made in 1880 by Reverend John Lancaster Spalding, bishop of Peoria, Illinois, in a book appropriately entitled *The religious mission of the Irish people, and Catholic colonization* (New York, 1880). Both the author and the date of publication are significant.³ Spalding was considered one of the country's

leading Catholic intellectuals, and he was writing at a time when the pace of social and economic change appeared to threaten moral collapse. In a world undone by the modernising forces of industrial capitalism, urbanisation and the breakdown of traditional morality, he argued that a return to the original spiritual and moral values of the Catholic faith was the only hope for preserving civilisation.⁴ His position was in line with Catholic thinking generally on the rampant and destructive greed of the modern world. What distinguished his argument was his remarkable claim that the Catholic Irish had a divine sanction to provide leadership of a movement that would return the world to the Catholic fold. Spalding was of English descent, a scion of a Catholic family of Kentucky who had been pillars of the Catholic establishment in the United States since the colonial period. His claim was a mark of acceptance as well as recognition of what the Catholic Irish had accomplished in the rapidly-changing world of the late nineteenth century.⁵

The core of Bishop Spalding's case for the 'special destiny' of the Irish was based on providentialism (the belief that the hand of God is evident in human affairs and that worldly events develop in accordance with a divine plan). More commonly associated with the Jewish and Protestant traditions, it was not entirely absent from Catholic history, and had certainly been used to justify colonial expansion in the great age of Iberian conquest in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁶ By the late eighteenth century, however, providentialism had become the almost exclusive preserve of the Protestant world, the Anglophone countries in particular. Many of the great visionaries of social and political reform such as Thomas Paine and Thomas Clarkson interpreted the message of the New Testament in terms of the radical egalitarianism they hoped would redress the evils of the contemporary world, and looked to establish the New Jerusalem on the ruins of absolutism and aristocracy. This idealism did not survive the excesses of the French Revolution, and a conservative interpretation of Christianity with its emphasis on order, tradition and deference to authority quickly reasserted itself. This was nowhere more true than in Britain. By the time of Napoleon's defeat a full-blown moral revolution was underway in Britain, underpinned by a belief that the country had been spared the catastrophe of revolutionary France because of its embrace of the Reformation and the benefits that Protestantism was seen to have conferred, notably constitutional government and a free market economy.⁷

The triumph of conservative Protestantism was especially important in Ireland where the union presented the challenge of integrating and

assimilating a population that was overwhelmingly Catholic into what for the first time would be a truly United Kingdom. For a vanguard of moral reformers inspired by evangelicalism, the ideal solution was to convert the native population to the reformed faith through a campaign of education and evangelisation. Popularly known as the ‘Second Reformation’ this movement was given episcopal sanction by Archbishop William Magee of Dublin in 1822 at his inauguration, when he called his clergy to take up the challenge to make Ireland Protestant. The reply from the Catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, Dr James Doyle, was the cue for opening an ideological conflict that spanned the 1820s and provided the backdrop for the emancipation campaign. Doyle used every force at his disposal to make his case for political equality for the Catholic Irish, but the one that produced consternation among Protestants was his invocation of the power of miracles. Using evidence of the powers of a German priest in producing miraculous cures through long-distance intervention in Ireland, he assured his followers that this was a sign that God was on their side; their cause would prevail because they were ‘special in the eyes of God’ on account of all they had suffered and endured for the faith.⁸ This was a deliberate use of the ‘providential’ understanding of worldly affairs and it was aimed squarely at the moral supremacy implicit in Magee’s charge. It was a pointed and overt gesture on Doyle’s part to reclaim the high moral ground of Christian righteousness for the Catholic Irish, a classic expression of the ‘bent twig’ syndrome employed by Isaiah Berlin in his study of the origins of romantic nationalism in Germany.⁹ If British Protestants enjoyed a providential destiny because they had embraced the reformed faith, the Catholic Irish had done the exact opposite: they had suffered and endured to preserve their faith and for this they had been elevated to become the Catholic equivalent of a ‘chosen people’. The context of their endurance and suffering, it need hardly be said, was the country’s history during the centuries of conquest and colonisation. This appeal to history, the record of suffering and endurance, would become central to the construction of Catholic Irish identity as it took shape in the nineteenth century. Steadfastness through centuries of persecution would become embedded as a fundamental characteristic. It was for this loyalty that they were being recognised and rewarded, as Doyle emphasised; why they were being lifted up by God and why his church on earth was coming forward as the agent of their deliverance.¹⁰

Doyle’s contribution to the emancipation movement was fundamental. At a critical point in the campaign his defence of Catholic rights convinced leaders and followers of the movement of the justice of their cause. Doyle’s

vindication of their demands for political liberty and his elevation of their qualities as a people set the tone for the century that followed. In the decades after emancipation the Irish Catholic church internationally would successfully construct the edifice that so impressed Bishop Spalding. The dominating characteristic of this assertive clerical culture was loyalty to Rome. Even before the winning of emancipation there were clear signals that Irish Catholicism was becoming more 'Roman' in orientation. The trend is commonly associated with the influence of Paul Cullen, but he was as much a symptom of the process as a cause. The intensity of the Catholic Irish devotion to Rome may well have naturally followed their emergence from the penal era, but it was intensified in the early nineteenth century by ultra-Protestant emphasis on 'popery' as the source of the country's political unrest.¹¹ The protracted and often bitter tone of the emancipation campaign and the open involvement of Catholic clergy in the 1820s only added to the hostilities. Once emancipation had been won, Catholic clerical leaders showed themselves determined to exert influence over their own interests, particularly in the field of education. Evidence of this could be seen in the rise of new religious teaching orders whose focus would be international as well as domestic. It would be in the Irish Catholic world overseas that the church could really effect the control it wanted, especially because the areas that the Catholic Irish were flooding into were those in which Protestant moral crusaders stood ready to gather them into their own machinery of self-improvement and moral reform.

No one understood this better than Paul Cullen, then rector of the Irish College in Rome. His policy was to use his influence in Rome to promote the appointment of bishops of Irish extraction in every vacant diocese in the Anglophone world. By virtue of his language, education, and connections, he knew that world in a way that the Italians, and indeed Catholic Europeans generally, could not. In this he was carrying on a tradition that went back to the original dispersal of the Catholic Irish in the early 1600s. The timing was significant. Cullen's ascendancy in Rome coincided with a period of unprecedented globalisation driven by industrialisation and its accompanying movement of goods, technology, and people across continents and oceans. This would pave the way for the emergence of a new age of empire in the latter half of the nineteenth century, for which Christian missions had laid foundations. This was especially true in the case of Britain's overseas possessions, and also of its archrival, France. Following the defeat of Napoleon, Catholicism once again became resurgent and was soon answering the Protestant challenge in the international mission field. By the 1840s there were Irish priests working with the Holy Ghost fathers

in West Africa.¹² But their presence was never really consequential, at least until the late nineteenth century. The real driver of the Irish Catholic mission internationally was the service of its own people.

Pushed by economic rationalisation at home and attracted by industry's need for unskilled labour abroad, the emigrant Irish by mid-century had become a mobile army of canal diggers and railroad workers, as well as filling the ranks of more settled occupations as dockworkers, factory hands and domestic servants demanded by the new economy. The reality that massive emigration was going to become a permanent feature of life in Ireland was clear by the 1830s, and already it was being interpreted as providential by influential churchmen such as Archbishop John MacHale of Tuam. But the tone was of passive acceptance that the trend was indicative of the will of God who had some greater, though yet unknown, end in view. It did not carry the strident tone of Protestant providentialism, then undergoing a radical revision as a result of the ascendancy of dispensational premillennialism, an interpretation of millenarian belief that stressed biblical literalism and apocalypticism.¹³ This development actually had serious implications for Ireland as it provided a theological basis for the opinion that the Famine was the design of God. Nothing caused more anger among the Catholic clergy, and no one spoke more forcefully against it than Bishop John Hughes of New York.¹⁴ It was one reason Hughes disavowed the ambitions of secular Young Irelanders who wanted Irish Americans to engage in the settlement and colonisation of the west. Hughes was an archetype of what would become Cullen's Hiberno-Roman episcopal imperialism; he was willing to embrace a passive interpretation of Irish destiny but steered well clear of the more assertive secular one.¹⁵ This was in sharp contrast to the views of the hierarchy in the 1870s and 1880s, a number of whom would strongly support the inclusion of Irish immigrants in the settlement of the west. Two developments help account for the change. The first was rooted in Ireland itself. The second was the impact of the Civil War on the Irish immigrant community.

CATHOLIC REFORM, HISTORY WRITING AND THE 'SPECIAL DESTINY' OF IRISH CATHOLICS IN THE UNITED STATES

The convening of the synod of Thurles in 1852 is generally recognised as the catalyst that set in train the reforms that led to the 'devotional revolution' of the latter half of the nineteenth century. There was an ideological as well as a practical dimension to this revolution. Cardinal Cullen was

supremely conscious of the ideological conflict that drove the Protestant–Catholic dialectic and the role of historical interpretation in the argument. He was aware that Catholic history had not received the attention it merited and he had the perfect scholar to remedy the deficit in his brilliant nephew, Patrick Francis Moran.¹⁶ The issue that dominated Irish history at this time was which denomination could claim ownership of St Patrick and the ancient Celtic church. Moran would branch out in more modern directions and produced seminal works that laid the foundation for popular knowledge about the fate of Irish Catholics in the early modern period.¹⁷ His work built on Doyle’s earlier references to the centuries of oppression and gave rise to a whole new emphasis on the recent history of the Catholic Irish in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It did not so much replace the emphasis on St Patrick and the early Celtic church as add a modern component to it. Both were fused into a continuum that formulated a holistic view of the history of the Catholic Irish, from the glory of their evangelistic record in the early Christian period, through the heroic record of resistance and suffering to a present imbued with a sense of deliverance as well as expectation of a glorious future. This theme was taken up in newspapers and journals and accordingly conveyed throughout the diaspora. It was a constant theme in St Patrick’s Day sermons that were often carried whole in local Irish newspapers and discussed for days alongside glowing accounts of the progress of the immigrant Irish.¹⁸

In the United States the onward march of Irish American progress was given an enormous boost by the Civil War. Military service was a path through which Irish-Americans could prove the loyalty for which they were celebrated. The values of chivalry that were central to military culture also fostered a new appreciation of the medieval Catholic world, and this was enhanced by the presence of Catholic chaplains on the battlefields of the Civil War. When the war concluded in 1865 and the issue of slavery and expansion was settled in favour of the union, the decks were cleared for the westward expansion that would give real substance to the vision of manifest destiny. Within a decade the United States was part of a group of countries defined by territorial and commercial expansionism as the new age of empire began. This was the point where the concept of destiny as understood by the Catholic Irish went from a passive to an active understanding of the term. The transition owed everything to the influence of a group of bishops within the Catholic hierarchy who were labelled ‘Americanists’ for their promotion of the idea that the Catholic church generally, and the immigrant Irish in particular, should be fully integrated and

assimilated to life in the United States.¹⁹ The group included Archbishop (later Cardinal) James Gibbons of Baltimore, Maryland; Bishop John J. Keane of Richmond, Virginia, and Archbishop John Ireland of St Paul, Minnesota, their chief spokesperson. Their plan was to move Irish immigrants from the poverty-ridden slums of the industrial cities and settle them in healthy and wholesome colonies on the Plains. It was to support this movement that Spalding produced his ideological argument.

Spalding was crystal clear in his understanding of the current situation of the Catholic church in the United States. Its survival, he claimed, was practically a miracle, and this he attributed to the influence of the Catholic Irish. At the beginning of the century he stressed that the Catholic tradition had practically been destroyed by the triumph of the Enlightenment and the rise to power of Protestant countries. The opinion of Catholicism that prevailed at this time was that it was anachronistic, timeworn if not barbaric, and based on ignorance and superstition. The only group that had held fast to the truths of Catholicism was the native Irish. They had not been contaminated by the barbarian invasions, and they had likewise been spared the connections with kings and emperors that had done so much damage to the faith in continental Europe. When faced with the incursions of the modernising English state and the Reformation, they dug deeper and held ever more firmly to their faith. Like the Christians of ancient Rome they huddled around the cross with nothing to sustain them except their faith.²⁰ This 'faithfulness' above all else became a key marker of their identity. When dispersed from their homeland by the modern evils of political economy they took their faith with them and positioned themselves worldwide. For Spalding, everything about the history and religious culture of the Irish suggested that divine providence had selected them to lead the crusade to return the world to a moral order in line with Catholic principles.

Spalding's understanding of this order was based on a rejection of the modern world of cities and industry and the excesses of capitalism, and a return to the purity and wholesomeness of life on the land. It was a vision of agrarian idealism that combined the virtues of rural life with a glorious destiny of serving the cause of Christian evangelisation. It also needs to be understood in a wider context. Land settlement had been at the heart of the imperial enterprise since the seventeenth century.²¹ As a new page opened in the drive for empire after 1870 the elevation of life on the land as a morally superior form of existence was a powerful contributor to an ethos that combined expansionism with political conservatism. It had a

natural appeal to aristocrats displaced by the rise of democracy and eager to transfer their need for social hierarchy to the colonial world. It also appealed to certain constituencies in search of their own unique goals, such as German promoters of 'lebensraum' and Zionist supporters of agricultural settlements in Palestine. Clearly it appealed to the Irish regard for life on the land with its patriarchal culture and respect for traditional moral values. Above all, the addition of the 'special destiny' of leading the Catholic crusade worldwide facilitated Irish membership in the club of imperial powers, even if that membership was of a 'virtual' nature.

Bishop Spalding's vision of an idealised agrarian community of Irish immigrants on the western Plains was shot through with some remarkable contradictions, not the least of which was the reality that the world created by Cullen's episcopal imperialists in the United States was largely an urban phenomenon, with a power base in the industrial cities. Cities were also, of course, the locus of Irish-American political power. There was a vast difference between the myth, so to speak, and the reality. This contradictory vision that coupled an embrace of rural simplicity with a futuristic fantasy of returning the world to the Catholic fold was not unique in the late nineteenth century. In Germany, for example, the mythical world of an idealised Wagnerian past was embraced as the country sped towards a future where technology and science would create a superior modern society. Mythical visions of past and future were not the only areas that the two countries had in common; in both cases necessity had also compelled the search for sources of identity and cohesion in something other than a central state. For Germans it was the army that was seen to have provided the discipline and efficiency that had brought them through centuries of division and conflict to the point where they were able to build the world's most successful industrial power.²² In much the same way as the Germans looked to their military, the Catholic Irish valued their church as the institution that had held them together across centuries of oppression, and had provided their values and sense of social solidarity. If the self-image of Catholic Ireland in the late nineteenth century was that of 'the wretched of the earth' now come into its own to claim its patrimony as the true inheritor of ancient Christian truth, adversaries saw something else entirely, namely the power of Rome and its remarkable (if not diabolical) ability to survive and threaten those outside its fold. The emergence and the definition of an international Irish Catholic empire, even a virtual or 'spiritual' one, gave real substance to Irish Protestant fears concerning the power of Rome. Such fears would fuel the anti-home rule movement and

bring Ireland to the brink of civil war as the prospect of home rule became a reality on the eve of the First World War.

The growth and aspirations of Ireland's spiritual empire may have been threatening to the country's Protestant loyalists, but the British political establishment had no difficulty in tolerating, indeed in actively supporting, what it recognised as a valuable ally in the imperial enterprise.²³ Secular nationalists were likewise comfortable with its progress. And secular nationalism, while it included many devout Catholics within its ranks, had the advantage of extending its reach to include the diversity of religious traditions on the island. This was a measure of the latitude that characterised nationalist culture in the years before 1914. The leaders of the Celtic revival were nearly all Protestant, and many fervent Catholics were to be found in the labour and socialist camps. There was no reason for this situation not to continue as the new century opened with an intellectual and cultural flowering already underway, and the promise of economic modernisation and home rule seriously within reach. What tipped the balance towards fusing the two streams of the secular and the religious into a single nationalist channel was the outbreak of war in 1914 and the placing of 'destiny' front and centre in the consciousness of all who supported change.

The jubilation with which the outbreak of war was welcomed throughout Europe was a measure of how it was seen as a 'moment of destiny' by all who dreamed of a new order arising from the violent destruction of the old. Much of this was informed by apocalyptic thinking that had been developing for decades across Europe, on the left as well as the right. It held out the promise of total and immediate change either by military victory over rival powers seen to be inhibiting full realisation of potential, or by sweeping away decadent and corrupt social and political elites and replacing them with new and idealistic future-oriented alternatives. This mindset was nowhere more powerful than in Germany, where barriers of class, religion and ethnic difference collapsed during the early weeks of the war, and the country united behind the expectation that its moment of destiny had come.²⁴ In Ireland the apocalyptic mindset had entered political culture from the Protestant tradition, reflecting the emphasis on prophecy and the new birth that was the hallmark of premillennialism. It was mirrored in the Catholic understanding of destiny with its emphasis on endurance and redemption through suffering. Both traditions were present in the unique genius of Patrick Pearse, who combined his vision of the immediate and apocalyptic with sacrificial martyrdom in his pursuit of

Ireland's 'moment of destiny'. From this would come the spiritual inspiration for the Easter rebellion. In the wake of the executions that followed the rebellion the sense that the fulfilment of Ireland's destiny was finally at hand would spread like a slow burning fuse throughout the country and among all classes. It would spread with even more fervour to the far-flung diaspora, where its recipients had been 'nationalised' as thoroughly as any in Europe through the interconnected world of political, cultural and sporting activities, and decades of St Patrick's Day sermons on the unique history of the Irish and their glorious destiny.²⁵

DANIEL MANNIX, EAMON DE VALERA AND THE IRISH CATHOLIC COMMUNITY WORLDWIDE

If there was a person whose career was a barometer of what was happening with the convergence of secular and religious nationalism in the Irish Catholic community worldwide, pride of place would certainly go to Daniel Mannix, formerly president of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, and bishop of Melbourne since 1913. In some respects Mannix was an unlikely candidate for this endowment. As president of Maynooth in 1911 he had welcomed George V and Queen Mary with great fanfare, exhibiting the sense that the Catholic establishment would be comfortable in a home rule Ireland. At Maynooth he had also been famously symbolic of the difficulties that the Catholic hierarchy had in its dealings with secular nationalism and the Irish-Ireland ambitions of the Gaelic League.²⁶ With his move to Melbourne in 1912 this passionate and ambitious cleric was cut loose from a world in which deference to Westminster was a necessity, and transferred to an environment where he came into first-hand contact with the power of mass politics in the diaspora. Trade union organisation, the labour movement and democratic politics generally formed the heart and soul of political life for the immigrant Irish in Australia as it did in the United States. Something fundamental happened to Mannix's consciousness in the years between 1914 and 1917.²⁷ He became involved in one of the great issues in Australian politics, the question of government funding for Catholic schools, and in the conscription crisis of 1917 he took a strongly oppositional position to the government. The impact of the Easter rebellion and its aftermath was clearly transformative for him, and he quickly became a spokesman for the cause of Irish nationalism.²⁸ As a leader he was intuitive as well as highly intellectual and his understanding of mass politics and

crowd psychology clearly showed him to be in line with the challenge and opportunities cast up by the new age of mass democracy.²⁹ Following the Sinn Féin electoral victory of 1918 and the formation of the first Dáil he decided to undertake a speaking tour in the United States. Ostensibly this was to be part of a scheduled visit to Rome but in reality it was to lend support to Eamon de Valera who had been in the country since August 1919.

That tour in the summer of 1920 was one of the most remarkable manifestations of Irish diasporic power in the twentieth century. Mannix landed in San Francisco and made a series of scheduled appearances in railhead cities where he would be guaranteed large crowds of Irish supporters. Eamon de Valera had already been in the country for almost a year and had been campaigning to raise support for Sinn Féin and the republican cause. The two men knew and admired each other before their paths crossed during that summer. In June they met in Omaha, Nebraska, the nearest urban centre to Greeley County, the jewel in the crown of Bishop Spalding's rural settlement. Also present at that encounter was the much-loved Fr Edward J. Flanagan of Boys Town – the personification of the vision and purpose of the spiritual empire. The meeting was an almost perfect iconic representation of the birth of the new Irish nation.³⁰ It was in this crucible of diasporic nationalism that the designation of de Valera as Ireland's 'man of destiny' was born. In a telling admission during a famous speech at a public meeting in Madison Square Garden on 18 July, Mannix described de Valera as a kind of non-politician, as being above politics, 'a statesman on a different plane': the kind of messianic leader who alone would deal with the truth and the sacredness of the national ideal.³¹

It can hardly be surprising that de Valera returned to Ireland imbued with an awareness of himself as a spiritual leader empowered to lead his people in the fulfilment of their destiny. It was a designation that suited his austere personality and serious affect. Although a graduate of the Holy Ghost Order's school in Blackrock, he had come to nationalism through the Gaelic League. His sense of the importance of religion to the nationalist cause was strengthened and deepened during the American tour of 1919–20, and it became increasingly evident in the tone of his public speeches.³² His understanding of his role as a political leader was perfectly suited to a spiritual and visionary ideal. All the ideological components of the 'special destiny' ethos – the agrarian idealism, the emphasis on the spiritual rather than the material, the moral purity of the Irish race and its commitment to spread the Catholic faith – would coincide when he took power as leader of the Fianna Fáil party in 1932.³³

CULTIVATING THE 'SPECIAL DESTINY' ETHOS IN INDEPENDENT IRELAND

In spite of the breakdown of nationalist unity with the disastrous split over the treaty, the place of religion in Irish life and culture was hardly affected. Indeed, if anything, its stature and importance increased. This was especially apparent with the plans undertaken to commemorate a number of highly significant anniversaries scheduled to fall within ten years of the birth of the Free State. The most important of these by far was the anniversary of St Patrick's arrival in Ireland in 432 AD. For the fifteen hundredth anniversary in 1932, Dublin was selected to host the thirty-first international eucharistic congress. The tone of the week-long extravaganza was the confidence and exuberance of Catholic Ireland and its awareness of its place in the global universe. The planning and organisation that went into the event sent a clear signal that Ireland was the equal of any developed country and its self-image was that of a modern international nation.³⁴ For the huge crowds that listened to John McCormack singing the *Panis Angelicus* in the Phoenix Park on the last day of the festival, however, the message being sent implied a different kind of modernity: for them devotion to the Christian ideals of 'pauper, servus, et humilis' was a badge of pride that set them apart in the modern world. They were indeed the *insula sacra* of the west now poised to realise their true destiny of leading the world back to the eternal truths of the Catholic faith. As a commentator in the popular *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* put it so succinctly: 'Ireland's destiny is in the making.'³⁵

As de Valera had acceded to power as chief executive of a minority government only six months earlier, he was able to take advantage of the atmosphere generated by the eucharistic congress to reinstate his reputation with church leaders alienated by his leadership of the anti-treatyite cause. A snap election called six months later gave his Fianna Fáil ('Soldiers of destiny') party a clear majority. The combination of the cultural boost of the eucharistic congress and the political victory of Fianna Fáil cemented the Catholic identity of the new state and allowed the ethos of the 'special destiny' to gain unrivalled ascendancy. On the positive side this provided for a sense of a collective unity in the face not only of the vicious divisions unleashed by the civil war but the worsening impact of the Great Depression. On the negative, it ushered in an age of moral and cultural totalitarianism that drowned out opposing voices and traditions, and locked the country into an anti-modern mindset that would last for decades. The most significant losers were members of other faiths and

none. Protestants were clearly not part of this picture. Their participation in contemporary cultural and intellectual life was relegated to the margins, and their contributions to the discovery and revival of Ireland's cultural heritage effectively airbrushed out of recent history. The 'special destiny' ideology was no kinder to secularists who had hoped for a modern European-style social democracy. Its ethos was not disposed to engage political leaders in a rational evaluation of how to develop the economy or prioritise the building of a practical material infrastructure demanded of a modern nation. The ideal held up for the youth of the country was to devote themselves to the religious life, to instil the values of conservative Christianity at home and, above all, to spread the Catholic faith throughout the world. The success of this was soon to be seen in the increase in religious vocations and the extraordinary growth of the foreign missions. De Valera's vision found its clearest expression in the famous 'dream speech' broadcast on Radio Éireann on St Patrick's Day, 1943, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Gaelic League.³⁶ His invocation of athletic youths and happy maidens dancing at the crossroads was often the butt of criticism and ridicule in later decades. What was lost sight of was the fact that this ideology owed its origins to the world of the diaspora and the age of empire: in its essence it was the purest distillation of the agrarian idealism of Bishop Spalding. Perhaps the most serious loss that resulted from its hold on Irish society was the disavowal of foreign influence in art, literature and intellectual culture generally. This inhibited an awareness and appreciation of what was happening in other countries, especially those with comparable histories and political experiences. Among the many other contradictions – given Ireland's role in the Empire, the worldwide diaspora of its emigrants and, not least, the fact that the spiritual empire was focused on the international missions – the triumph of the 'special destiny' ideology drew an exclusionary curtain around a country that was one of the most international in the world.

NOTES

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21. John C. Weaver, *The great land rush and the making of the modern world, 1650–1900* (Montreal, 2006).
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Religion as Identity: The Church of Ireland's 1932 Patrician Celebrations

Ian d'Alton

INTRODUCTION

In one reading, southern Irish Protestant history from independence in 1922 through to the 1960s is one of relentlessly being on the back foot, whether this be measured by the Protestant population's demography, its relative economic position, its political powerlessness, or its apparent cultural marginalisation in an Ireland largely defined by Daniel Corkery's national Catholicism and the 1932 *Official handbook* of Saorstát Éireann.¹ This skewed vision was bolstered by what the *Irish Times* called in 1929 'too frequent suggestions' that southern Protestants had 'an alien creed, an alien culture and alien aspirations'.² The reality, though, is more nuanced. This chapter aims to demonstrate that nuance by reference to a particular episode in the life of the Church of Ireland – its celebration, in 1932, of the 1500th anniversary of St Patrick's reputed arrival in Ireland.

Not all southern Protestants opposed the new political order. Some of the die-hards in the ex-unionist ranks found that the conservative and landed 'Ireland that we made', in Arthur Balfour's somewhat smug phrase,³

I. d'Alton (✉)

Centre for Contemporary Irish History, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: iangdalton@hotmail.com

was not entirely uncongenial. What perhaps has been underestimated is their willingness to accept the prevailing wisdom of the 'Catholic' state (for instance, in the areas of education *management*, protectionism and budgetary orthodoxy).⁴ In the 1920s and 1930s southern Protestantism frequently seemed, in public at any rate, to foster amicable relations with the state authorities, going well beyond the necessary minimum and careful declarations of loyalty made by Archbishop John Gregg of Dublin and the *Church of Ireland Gazette*.⁵ Indeed, as demonstrated in the Patrician celebrations, it could often be more conservative than the state authorities. In the arena of new ideas, many southern Protestants were as suspicious as their Catholic neighbours of *any*. This is reflected in Dean Victor Griffin's semi-ironic reaction to the controversial essayist Hubert Butler: 'God, he'll get us into trouble.'⁶ Beyond the religious sphere an innately conservative Protestantism, condemnatory of socialism and suspicious of statism, sometimes found itself, perhaps to its surprise, on the side of the counter-revolution.⁷ If figures like Butler, Yeats, George Russell and Stephen Gwynn – never mind editors of the *Irish Times* – imagined that they led an army, it was in the main a conscript one, reluctant and uncomprehending.⁸

Yet to many Protestants, the new state had a colonising feel about it. Kate Alcock, feisty heroine of Lennox Robinson's 1926 play *The Big House*, articulated that with her combative 'Ireland is not more theirs than ours ... we've spent so much time sympathetically seeing theirs that we've lost sight of our own.'⁹ Kate's assertiveness raised the essential question facing Protestants in the new political dispensation – how could *their* Free State be *our* Free State as well? The Church of Ireland's commemoration of St Patrick in 1932 offers an insight into how it might be answered.

PRECURSORS AND PREPARATIONS

The results of the censuses of 1926 in the Free State and Northern Ireland¹⁰ (both published in 1929) and the celebration of the centenary of Catholic emancipation are instructive when examining how southern Protestants were to approach the Patrician commemoration. The census results were stark, showing a 33 per cent decline in the Protestant population in the south since 1911,¹¹ while in Northern Ireland the total Protestant population increased both in absolute and relative terms. The differences in experience between Church of Ireland communities in north and south were particularly marked. The emancipation centenary was met with silence by southern Protestants. The reality was that there was nothing much to

say apart from emphasising the significant support for emancipation by individual Protestants one hundred years earlier. Roman Catholic triumphalism was all-pervasive in 1929, heavily weighted towards public sectarianism, a persecution narrative and Roman Catholicism as an essential badge of a superior form of Irish nationalism.¹²

Silence, however, was not Gregg's way of doing things;¹³ as early as June 1929, he was writing to Walter Alison Phillips, the Trinity College historian, about a suitable commemoration to be held in 1932.¹⁴ In this, Gregg was true to his assertion on his election as archbishop of Dublin in 1920 that 'one thing is certain, the Church of Ireland must never let itself be a stranger in Ireland.'¹⁵ The church's Patrician commemoration must thus be examined in the light of that assertion and of the public polemics and disputations that had arisen in 1929.¹⁶ What was the commemoration's ostensible purpose? Archivist Susan Hood suggests that

The pitch was clearly about boosting the confidence of the Church at large, making connections north and south, and embedding in the hearts and minds of the people that they belonged to the nation.¹⁷

Insofar as it was a confidence-booster, it was a temporary one. It emphasised the divisions between north and south,¹⁸ and certainly raised questions about what nation southern Anglicanism in particular was supposed to be a member of. Preparations began in earnest in 1930. In November a committee led by Gregg and representative of all the Irish dioceses was formed to plan the commemoration.¹⁹ In February 1931 an episcopal statement and joint letter from the archbishops of Armagh and Dublin emphasised that the commemoration should not '... merely be an occasion for remembering the past, but a time of spiritual inspiration for our Church in the present'.²⁰ The sum of £1000 (about €75,000 in 2016 money) was sought to be raised specifically for the commemoration; in the event, this was exceeded by a third.²¹

Early in 1932 the *Irish Times* set out the commemorative arrangements to the wider Protestant community. A handbook, produced by the Church of Ireland's organising committee, was made available, detailing those arrangements.²² 'Lantern lectures' with slides (including such as 'Connection of the Parishes of the Church of Ireland with the ancient Irish Church'²³), a book on the life and work of the saint²⁴ and a series of colourful penny pamphlets were to be produced.²⁵ A service would be held on St Columba's Day (9 June) in Armagh, and a three-day conference in Dublin's Mansion House in October dealing with the church from the earliest times

to the present day. An indoor pageant, directed by Lennox Robinson of the Abbey Theatre, was to be performed after the conference.²⁶ A season ticket to all the events would cost 5 shillings (or about €16 today).²⁷ Visual and aural symbols were not neglected. The red saltire of St Patrick on a white background, perhaps significantly a component of the union flag, was the emblem of this Protestant Ireland, its appropriation emphasised by the accompanying instruction that it was '... for flying on church towers and in private grounds on national holidays or feast days'. The Protestant nation had its own anthem – Sir Cecil Spring-Rice's *The two fatherlands* (colloquially known as 'I vow to thee my country'). Gregg's interpretation of it was that '... it expresses the readiness of every true Irishman to contribute of his best to the well-being and true building-up of his land'.²⁸

The archbishop issued a circular letter to his diocesan clergy on 14 February 1932, exhorting them to preach suitable sermons associated with the commemoration.²⁹ Thus, the principal purpose of the dean of Christ Church, preaching in the cathedral on 17 March 1932, was to demonstrate that Patrick was a Catholic – but not a Roman one. He asserted that Patrick was consecrated a bishop in the Gallican church which, he claimed, was then independent of Rome.³⁰ The 'independent Celticism' of the pre-invasion church was a well-worn path, dating from at least the time of Archbishop James Ussher, and a staple of historians of the Church of Ireland well into the mid-twentieth century.³¹ He went on to recount how the Reformation in the sixteenth century cast off the yoke of foreign (meaning papal) authority that had been imposed upon the Irish church by King Henry II.³²

The Church of Ireland's Patrician celebrations were designed to counter the 1932 Dublin eucharistic congress, seen as a celebration of the Roman Catholicity of the Free State, exemplified by the production of stamps and the passage of a special parliamentary act, the involvement of the institutions of government, and mass mobilisation of a significant part of the population.³³ The congress was generally ignored by the Protestant community³⁴ – the *Church of Ireland Gazette* gave it just one mention, and that a rather derogatory one.³⁵ There is little doubt that the congress inflamed Patrician polemics. In December 1931 Cardinal MacRory claimed that the Church of Ireland had 'no right to pose as the heirs of St Patrick, and of the early Irish Church'.³⁶ When he followed this up in his lenten pastoral in 1932, he provoked responses from Gregg, Reverend T. C. Hammond of the Irish Church Missions and the Presbyterian theologian William Russell,³⁷ which culminated in a magisterial exchange of correspondence between Gregg and MacRory in the *Irish Times*.³⁸

THE NORTHERN CELEBRATION

In his assessment published six years later, A. A. Luce wrote that ‘the problem confronting the Primate [Charles Frederick d’Arcy] was how to keep an undivided church in a partitioned land’.³⁹ D’Arcy – one of the first to sign the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant in September 1912 – did not seem particularly interested in doing so. This was made obvious during the Patrician celebrations. At an announcement of the final arrangements, his speech was entirely northern-centric, complaining of the lack of churches in Belfast, and issuing a plea for attendance at the Armagh service on 9 June. Historian David Kennedy pointed out that, during the 1930s, ‘In its relations with the Government of Northern Ireland the Church of Ireland had stepped easily into the position a state church would have occupied.’⁴⁰ Thus, the Armagh service and associated socialising was as much a state occasion in Northern Ireland as the eucharistic congress was to be in the Free State some weeks later. This was a Protestant Patrick for a Protestant people. Some 2,100 filled the cathedral and its grounds, together with strategically-placed robed clergy; loudspeakers helped broadcast the proceedings.⁴¹ The governor of Northern Ireland, the duke of Abercorn, attended, as did Senator H. B. Armstrong, his majesty’s lieutenant for County Armagh. The prime minister, Lord Craigavon, was listed amongst the attendance, as was at least one other Northern Ireland government minister.⁴² There was a guard of honour from the Royal Irish Rifles. The service was broadcast live on BBC radio.⁴³ The attendance was dominated by the northern aristocracy and gentry, with a heavy presence on the British side of the Anglican communion in the persons of the archbishop of Canterbury, and the heads of the churches in Wales and Scotland.

After the service, at which Canterbury preached on the dangers of paganism and secularism, and not much on St Patrick, there was an official lunch, at which there was a rendering of the first verse of ‘God Save the King’.⁴⁴ Eight hundred people were invited to the archbishop of Armagh’s garden party after the meal.⁴⁵ D’Arcy clearly felt that all this represented what he called ‘a great central celebration’ – his 1934 memoir devotes only one sentence to the Dublin conference, in contrast to three-and-a-half pages on the northern celebrations.⁴⁶ This was not how it was presented in the official report of the commemoration, which merely had it as one of many in a list of activities organised by the dioceses.

THE SOUTHERN CELEBRATION AND CONFERENCE

If those northern celebrations exhibited the Church of Ireland as practically the official church of Northern Ireland, the southern conference, held in Dublin between 11 and 14 October 1932, was a very different affair. There was no official Free State involvement or recognition; neither was there the extra-Ireland dimension that had characterised the Armagh service. The *Church of Ireland Gazette* said that while some had decried the lack of speakers from Great Britain, the organisers countered that ‘... this year we are concentrating on the work and witness of the Church of Ireland itself, on our own intimate, and often peculiar, problems ...’⁴⁷ In reality, Patrick was somewhat peripheral to the business in hand – only one session of seven was devoted specifically to the saint⁴⁸ – and the most that Gregg could claim was that the conference (characterised as the latest in a series since 1868) would have ‘... a quite definitely Patrician feel’. Instead, the principal purpose was to establish, as Gregg put it at the conference’s closing service, and *contra* the eucharistic congress, that the Church of Ireland was ‘the most Irish thing there is in Ireland’.⁴⁹

The opening sermon, delivered by Henry Patton, bishop of Killaloe,⁵⁰ was much less theological than the one supposed to have been given by the indisposed bishop of Durham. Reading both, Killaloe’s panoramic survey of the southern Irish Protestant condition probably struck a greater resonance than Durham’s earnest erudition.⁵¹ Killaloe characterised the conference as ‘... a happy reunion of those who naturally feel isolated at times’, while recognising that the church in the south and west, as an organisation, was practically powerless – ‘If our Church is to be effective in this land it can only be by the work of individuals.’⁵²

The content of many of the papers presented at the conference confirms what it was really about. Anti-Romanism was a feature, neither surprising nor unusual in the age. Doubtful histories of the Celtic church and the Reformation were recounted by clerical historians,⁵³ including Oulton, Jourdan and Meissner, who would later controversially feature in Alison Phillips’s *History of the Church of Ireland*. The independence of the Irish church was a constant theme, contrasted with the foreignness of Roman Catholicism. These scholars rehearsed the mantra that Patrick’s church was not under Roman sway and was the lineal descendant of the pre-Reformation Celtic church; and that, in the Reverend W. S. Kerr’s words, ‘By every test we can apply, the teaching of Patrick is seen to be in harmony with the main doctrines of our Reformed Church of Ireland.’⁵⁴ (Kerr,

archdeacon of Dromore, was author of the polemical *The independence of the Celtic church in Ireland* (London, 1931). The book ends: 'Is the day far off when patriotic Irishmen will unite in a Church self-governing, independent, released from foreign jurisdiction, and reviving the freedom and evangelical traditions of the church of St Patrick?'⁵⁵) Canon Jourdan asserted that papal agents in Ireland during the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth were 'emissaries of a foreign jurisdiction'. The dean of Derry defended the property of the church, especially post-disestablishment.⁵⁶ Canon N. J. White was content to assert that 'The Church of Ireland was founded by St Patrick'.⁵⁷ And so on, although this polemic was countered by neutral scholarly contributions from David Chart and Robin Flower.⁵⁸ Even Gregg's level of historical ignorance is revealed by his biographer George Seaver. Gregg had approved a poster showing St Patrick wearing a mitre. At a meeting of the commemoration organising committee, this infelicity was condemned by the archbishop of Armagh as completely ahistorical, while 'Archbishop Gregg remained silent, with his gaze fixed on a distant part of the ceiling ...' According to Seaver, Gregg's enthusiasm for St Patrick '... was untempered by historical criticism'.⁵⁹

Concurrently with the attempt to portray, through historical analysis, the Church of Ireland as native and independent, was a presentation of Irish Protestantism as modern and relevant to contemporary Ireland – in the dean of Ross's words '... there is vision for the Ireland that we love and for whose welfare we claim our right to live and work ...'.⁶⁰ There were two striking organisational manifestations of this. One was that, in the *Irish Independent's* slightly patronising tone, '... more than half of the large attendance was composed of women'.⁶¹ Another was a session of the conference wholly in Irish, presided over by the eminent Protestant nationalist UCD academic Osborn Bergin, and printed in its entirety.⁶² As the *Report* put it, the session was '... very well attended, especially by young people'.⁶³ Looking backwards was not an option – in the words of Reverend R. M. Gwynn, in his talk on 'Social services': 'I propose to say nothing about the past ...'.⁶⁴

There were sessions on 'The moral witness of the church' and 'The church today'. Two southern Protestant politicians featured. Senator Sir John Keane analysed 'Tolerance', pointing out its asymmetric nature in Ireland – 'It seems to me that when the tiger is placed in proximity with the lamb the tiger, not menaced, may well be indulgent, and the lamb – he has no alternative but to lay low and hope he is unnoticed'.⁶⁵ William Thrift, university professor and Independent TD representing the

University of Dublin, speaking on 'Church and state', internationalised Irish Protestantism:

The function of the State is to secure its well-being of its people. The function of the Church is to show that such well-being is involved in that of the rest of the world. The State tends to become national. It is the duty of the Church to combat this tendency ...⁶⁶

The moral superiority of Protestantism was a constant theme. The dean of Christ Church expounded at length on the Church of Ireland Purity Society,⁶⁷ while one closely-argued paper – headlined by the *Irish Independent* delicately as '... an attack on gambling'⁶⁸ – was a ferocious onslaught on the place of the hospitals' sweepstake in Irish life.⁶⁹

Bishop Frederick MacNeice's talk on 'War and peace' echoed Thrift's in placing Irish Protestantism's moral position within a broader, universal context.⁷⁰ Miss S. C. Harrison's paper on 'Poor Law administration' was also broad in focus, and included a warm tribute to the Society of St Vincent de Paul – '(loud applause led by the Chairman, Most Rev. Dr. Gregg)'.⁷¹ There were two contrasting talks on education. The principal of the Church's college for training primary school teachers argued that, in the context of the contemporary compulsory Irish language issue, '... on the whole, the compulsion involved has been mercifully exercised'.⁷² It was perhaps rather ironic that Reverend C. B. Armstrong, the warden of St Columba's College (an institution founded in part to teach Irish to landlords and Anglican clergy)⁷³ regretted that '... in the Free State everything educational is at present subordinate to the attempt to Gaelicise the youthful population'. Despite being complimentary about the reforms to examinations and school inspections instituted by the Free State government, he went on to excoriate the inward-looking nature of the State – 'Until now young Irishmen had been freemen of a world-wide Commonwealth. They had had wide horizons before them ...' Compulsory Irish was the symbol of this introversion – 'If it [all teaching ultimately through Irish] succeeded it meant goodbye to scholarship and goodbye to the modern world.' In tandem with this went an unapologetic cultural irredentism: 'We are rapidly losing ... our birthright and heritage of British tradition and culture which I am not ashamed to regard as the finest in the world.'⁷⁴

'The conference bore every outward sign of success', remarked the official *Report*.⁷⁵ The attendance numbered over 1,000 and overflow accommodation had to be provided. The report of the conference was produced quickly, in December 1932, just two months after its end. Its length and

comprehensiveness – 211 pages of thirty essays, including nineteen pages in Irish – contrasted with the six essays and sixty-two pages, one in Irish, of the Catholic Truth Society's commemoration volume on St Patrick published earlier in 1932.⁷⁶ This was indeed 'working at Irishness'. The report's provocative title 'The Church of Ireland AD 432–1932' and the preface, which laid a determined claim to her Patrician descent and Catholicity as she '... enters upon the sixteenth century of her history'⁷⁷ went much further than the anodyne entitling of the conference literature, tickets and other ephemera.⁷⁸ The *Irish Times's* editorial advice in June 1932 that 'Members of any Church in Ireland who seek at this time to advertise points of Christian difference rather than points of agreement incur a heavy responsibility' and its challenge that 'Rich in that common heritage, can we dare to diminish it by [a] quarrel amongst ourselves?' had been largely ignored by the Church of Ireland.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION: A PROSPECTUS FOR A 'PROTESTANT FREE STATE'

The 1932 Patrician celebrations in the south were, in effect, the prospectus for a 'Protestant Free State', challenging the Roman Catholic version set out in the contemporaneous *Official handbook* of Saorstát Éireann. In this alternative universe, southern Protestants could be 'Irish' in their own way, creating a primary and fresh narrative, avoiding a sort of second-hand Englishness. What the celebrations did not reflect was the cloying loyalism that characterised the northern commemorations, and which, to an extent, emphasised, after a decade of independence, the divergence that partition had fostered, if not initiated; in Gregg's words about the Church of Ireland in 1932, 'Today the Church of Ireland turns neither to Windsor nor to Rome for the appointment of its bishops ... It is an Irish, self-governing organisation, as free from the intervention of Britain or of the Vatican as the Celtic Church was in the days of Columba.'⁸⁰ The southern Protestant attempts to create a space in the *patria* – articulated in the Dublin conference – utilised a sense of religious continuity to prove the legitimacy of the Protestant community in southern Ireland. Following a 'religious Irishness' avoided the pitfalls of current politics; tracing a line from St Patrick skated over the inconveniences of conquest, plantation and penal laws; above all, Protestantism could claim to embody the moral nation. In sum, this was an attempt to re-imagine a community⁸¹ so that it could better sit with the contemporary realities, while not wholly jettisoning its historic identity. In that, it was not unsuccessful.

NOTES

1. Daniel Corkery, *The hidden Ireland* (Dublin, 1924) and idem, *Synge and Anglo-Irish literature: a study* (Cork, 1931); Saorstát Éireann/Irish Free State, *Official handbook* (Dublin, 1932), 'Introduction', p. 15. Apart from one (for Trinity College), all the advertisements (pp 1–130) for schools, hospitals and charitable bodies were for Roman Catholic institutions.
2. *Irish Times*, 22 June 1929, quoted in Susan Hood, 'The Church of Ireland commemoration of St Patrick in 1932', online presentation and digital archive, at <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/165> (accessed 22 July 2013).
3. Blanche Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour first earl of Balfour K.G., O.M., F.R.S. etc., 1848–1905* (London, 1939), p. 138; also Catherine Shannon, *Arthur J. Balfour and Ireland, 1874–1922* (Washington, 1988), p. 281.
4. Ian d'Alton, 'Southern Irish unionism: a study of Cork unionists' [the Alexander Prize essay] in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., xxiii (1973), pp 71–88; see also a refreshing synthesis by Eugenio Biagini, 'The Protestant minority in southern Ireland' in *Historical Journal*, lv, no.4 (Dec. 2012), pp 1161–84; also *The Church of Ireland A.D. 432–1932: The report of the Church of Ireland conference held in Dublin 11th–14th October 1932, to which is appended an account of the commemoration by the Church of Ireland of the 1500th anniversary of the landing of St Patrick in Ireland* (Dublin, 1932), p. 218.
5. Clare O'Halloran, *Partition and the limits of Irish nationalism* (Dublin, 1987), pp 79–85; Kenneth Milne, 'The Church of Ireland since partition' in Brendan Bradshaw and Dáire Keogh (eds), *Christianity in Ireland: revisiting the story* (Dublin, 2002), pp 220–32, p. 222.
6. Robert Tobin, *Minority voice: Hubert Butler and southern Irish Protestantism, 1900–1991* (Oxford, 2012), pp 98, 154.
7. J. M. Regan, *The Irish counter-revolution, 1921–1936: Treatyite politics and settlement in independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999).
8. Lionel Pilkington, 'Religion and the Celtic tiger: the cultural legacies of anti-Catholicism in Ireland' in Peadar Kirby, Luke Gibbons and Michael Cronin (eds), *Reinventing Ireland: culture, society, and the global economy* (London, 2002), pp 125–33; Daithí Ó Corráin, *Rendering to God and Caesar: the Irish churches and the two states in Ireland, 1949–73* (Manchester, 2006), pp 97–9; R. F. Foster, *The Irish story – telling tales and making it up in Ireland* (London, 2001), p. 190; Colin Reid, *The lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn: Irish constitutional nationalism and cultural politics, 1864–1950* (Manchester, 2011), pp 198–216.
9. Christopher Murray (ed.), *Selected plays of Lennox Robinson* (Gerrards Cross, 1982), p. 196.
10. See <http://www.cso.ie/en/census/historicalreports/census1926reports/> (accessed 23 Jan. 2013); Saorstát Éireann, *Census of population, 1926*, 46;

Government of Northern Ireland, *Census of population of Northern Ireland 1926. General report* (Belfast, 1929), li, table xxviii. For a discussion on the census results in both jurisdictions, see Malcolm Macourt, *Counting the people of God: the census of population and the Church of Ireland* (Dublin, 2008), pp 77–99.

11. ‘... for while antagonistic forces have driven many of our people out of Southern Ireland, we are holding our own in the north ...’: see C. F. d’Arcy (archbishop of Armagh, 1920–38), *The adventures of a bishop. A phase of Irish life: a personal and historical narrative* (London, 1934), p. 245. It was specifically noted by the bishop of Killaloe, in his opening sermon at the October conference: ‘... perils which peculiarly beset us outside Ulster, of reduced and reducing numbers ...’: see *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 14.
12. Miriam Moffitt, “‘Ireland’s destiny is in the making’”: the impact of the anniversary celebrations of 1929 and 1932 on the religious character of Ireland’ in Mel Farrell, Jason Knirck and Ciara Meehan (eds), *A formative decade: Ireland in the 1920s* (Sallins, 2015), pp 225–46.
13. As an instance, see his *The primitive faith and Roman Catholic developments. Six sermons delivered in St Fin Barre’s cathedral, Cork, Lent, 1909* (Dublin, 1957), a polemic still in print fifty years later. The sermons were triggered by the visit to Cork of the recently-converted (to Roman Catholicism) Robert Benson, son of Archbishop Edward Benson of Canterbury.
14. Gregg to Phillips, 22 June 1929 (RCB Library, MS 30/46); Gregg to Phillips (‘confidential’), 1 Oct. 1929 (RCB Library, MS 60/37). It is likely that the emancipation centenary, as well as the forthcoming Catholic eucharistic congress, spurred Gregg into commencing the process that ultimately led to the publication of W. Alison Phillips (ed.), *History of the Church of Ireland* (3 vols, Oxford, 1933–4), i. I am indebted to Dr Miriam Moffitt for this reference, as well as to much relating to the section above.
15. George Seaver, *John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg, archbishop of Dublin* (Dublin, 1963), p. 105.
16. See an exchange of letters between Reverend Myles Ronan, a historian, and Canon Hugh Thompson, rector of St Catherine’s in Dublin: *Irish Times*, 22 July–1 Aug. 1929.
17. Hood, ‘Commemoration’, p. 12.
18. In that regard, d’Arcy mentioned a shadowy ‘Northern Dioceses committee of the Church of Ireland’ which had sought to meet him. He declined, stating that he knew nothing about it: see *Irish Times*, 10 May 1932.
19. *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 255.
20. Letter from Gregg and d’Arcy, 25 Feb. 1931 in Hood, ‘Commemoration’, p. 3.
21. Hood, ‘Commemoration’, p. 4; *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 263.
22. *Irish Times*, 20 Feb. 1932.

23. Hood, 'Commemoration', p. 7.
24. G. A. Chamberlain, *St Patrick: his life and work* (Dublin, 1932).
25. *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 256.
26. *Irish Times*, 15 Oct. 1932; Hood, 'Commemoration', pp 10, 14.
27. *Irish Times*, 20 Feb. 1932.
28. *Ibid.*, 15 Oct. 1932.
29. *Ibid.*, 20 Feb. 1932.
30. See J. B. Bury, *Life of St Patrick and his place in history* (New York, 1905, 2008 edn), p. 59.
31. 'Declan' [W. Phelan], *The case of the Church of Ireland stated in a letter respectfully addressed to His Excellency the Marquess Wellesley, and in reply to the charges of J.K.L.* (Dublin, 1823), pp 30–41; G. T. Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic church: a history of Ireland from St Patrick to the English conquest in 1172* (1886); (7th edn, London, 1928), pp 93, 314–15.
32. *Irish Times*, 18 Mar. 1932.
33. See UCC's *Multitext project in Irish history*, at http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/The_31st_International_Eucharistic_Congress_Dublin_1932 (accessed 23 Jan. 2013).
34. All that Archbishop d'Arcy, in *Adventures*, p. 284, wrote was that 'The year 1932 was an epoch in the history of Ireland, as the fifteen-hundredth anniversary of the coming of St Patrick to begin his missionary labours'.
35. *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 24 June 1932.
36. *Morning Post*, 19 Dec. 1931.
37. For Gregg's sermon – a riposte to Cardinal MacRory's lenten pastoral of 1932 – see Robert MacCarthy (ed.), *Preached at St Patrick's* (Dublin, 2004), pp 100–8; T. C. Hammond, *Protestants and the Church of Christ: a reply to Cardinal MacRory's lenten pastoral, 1932* (Dublin, 1932); William Russell, *Cardinal MacRory's claims for the church of Rome, and reply* (Belfast, 1932).
38. *Irish Times*, 18 June (MacRory); 9 July (Gregg); 26 July (MacRory); 13 Aug. (Gregg).
39. A. A. Luce, 'Charles Frederick D'Arcy 1859–1938' in *Proceedings of the British Academy* (Milford, 1938), xxiv, offprint in the National Library of Ireland.
40. Quoted in David Hume, 'Empire Day in Ireland, 1896–1962' in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *An Irish empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), pp 149–66, p. 153.
41. D'Arcy, *Adventures*, p. 289; *Church of Ireland, AD 432–1932*, pp 257–8.
42. The minister of agriculture, Sir Edward Archdale: see *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1932.
43. *Church of Ireland, AD 432–1932*, p. 257.

44. *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1932; *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 17 June 1932.
45. *Irish Press*, 10 June 1932; *Irish Independent*, 10 June 1932; D'Arcy, *Adventures*, p. 290.
46. D'Arcy, *Adventures*, pp 288–92; *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, pp 255–62.
47. *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 23 Sept. 1932, editorial.
48. *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, pp 3–4.
49. *Ibid.*, pp 7, 235.
50. Patton was the author of a popular *History of the Church of Ireland for schools* (Dublin, 1907), still in print in 1932, in which he had simply avoided the modern by stopping his narrative in 1886. Its final print-run was in 1943.
51. *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, pp 242–9.
52. *Ibid.*, pp 14, 15, 16.
53. For Meissner, Jourdan and Oulton, see Miriam Moffitt, 'The background, writing and reception of Walter Alison Phillips, *History of the Church of Ireland, from the earliest times to the present day* (1933)' (MA thesis, University of Nottingham, 2012), passim; also 'Donal MacEgan' [Timothy Corcoran], 'Cromwellian Anglicanism – its new history from Trinity College (a commentary on Professor Alison Phillips's editorship of a history of the Church of Ireland)' in *Catholic Bulletin*, 24 Aug. 1934, pp 643–52; *idem*, 'Protestant origins in Ireland by Professors Phillips and Jourdan of TCD (on the new history of the Church of Ireland)' in *ibid.*, 24 Sept. 1934, pp 724–9; *idem*, 'Alison Phillips and his parsons, disasters to the TCD light infantry' in *ibid.*, 24 Oct. 1934, pp 808–14; *idem*, 'Phillips and the proselytisers, a history lesson for a TCD professor' in *ibid.*, 24 Nov. 1934, pp 897–908.
54. *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 46: see also *Irish Independent's* report of that day's proceedings, 15 Oct. 1932.
55. Kerr, *Independence of the Celtic church*, p. 160, quoted in Ian Bradley, *Celtic Christianity: making myths and making dreams* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 170.
56. *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 119.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
58. For David Chart see <http://www.origins.net/help/aboutio-dub1851-chart.aspx> (accessed 30 July 2013). Robin Flower (1881–1946) was an English poet and scholar, a Celticist, Anglo-Saxonist and translator from the Irish language.
59. Seaver, *Gregg*, pp 188, 189.
60. 'The Reformation' in *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 126.
61. *Irish Independent*, 13 Oct. 1932.

62. A 'Gaelic service' was held in the diocese of Meath on 22 Oct. 1932: see *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 258.
63. *Ibid.*, pp 147–66.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 182. Gwynn was the brother of Stephen Gwynn, the nationalist MP. Two years after graduating, in 1900, he founded – along with his other brother E. J. Gwynn; the classicist Professor Louis Claude Purser (1854–1932); William Thrift and John Joly – the Social Services (Tenements) Company to provide housing for Dublin's poor. Motivated by a strong sense of social justice, Robin Gwynn was one of the original founders of the Irish Citizen Army in 1913. His life is detailed in Patrick Comerford, 'The Rev. Professor R. M. Gwynn (1877–1962): priest', at the R. M. Gwynn commemoration and seminar, Whitechurch Parish, Rathfarnham, Dublin, 19 Sept. 2013, at <http://www.patrickcomerford.com/2013/09/the-revd-professor-rm-gwynn-1877-1962.html> (accessed 20 Nov. 2015).
65. *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, pp 177–8.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
67. The Church of Ireland Purity Society, dedicated to purity amongst men, respect for women, and a higher tone for public discourse: see *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 188.
68. *Irish Independent*, 14 Oct. 1932.
69. The advertisement for the sweepstake in Saorstát Éireann, *Official handbook 1932*, was the first in 130 pages of advertisements.
70. *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, pp 167–77.
71. *Irish Press*, 15 Oct. 1932; *Irish Independent*, 15 Oct. 1932.
72. *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 219.
73. See A. O'Brien and L. Lunney, 'Todd, J.T.' in *DIB* (accessed 1 Aug. 2015).
74. *Irish Independent*, 15 Oct. 1932; *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, pp 223–4.
75. *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 26 Aug. 1932; *Church of Ireland AD 432–1932*, p. 7; Hood, 'Commemoration', p. 10.
76. Dublin Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, *St Patrick AD 432–1932: a fifteenth centenary memorial book* (Dublin, 1932).
77. *Church of Ireland A.D. 432–1932*, pp 7, 8.
78. Hood, 'Commemoration', p. 1.
79. *Irish Times*, 10 June 1932.
80. *Church of Ireland A.D. 432–1932*, pp 235–6. This was reported by the *Irish Independent*, 14 Oct. 1932, as '... The Church turned neither to London nor to Rome for the appointment of its bishops' [*italics added*].
81. Following Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London and New York, 1983).

‘Patrick, the First Churchman’
in the Protestant Vision of Ernest Bateman
of Booterstown (1886–1979)

Eugenio F. Biagini

... the reason for the existence of the Church of Ireland ... is the winning of the people of Ireland to the true faith. She is in a completely different position from any other Reformed Body in Ireland. Methodism, Presbyterianism and the rest came to Ireland from outside to minister to the spiritual needs of their adherents but the C. of I. is a native product. She claims to be the Catholic Church in Ireland, the descendant of the Church of St Patrick. When she calls herself the Church of Ireland, she thereby accepts responsibility for the care of the souls of the Irish, the souls of those who are wandering in the darkness and errors of Romanism even more than the souls of those who acknowledge her claims.¹

INTRODUCTION

The above quotation captures in a nutshell the significance of St Patrick in Ernest Bateman’s theological and pastoral vision. It is interesting because it offers a detailed and elaborate illustration of how Irish churchmen of

E.F. Biagini (✉)
Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK
e-mail: efb21@cam.ac.uk

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the first post-independence generation appropriated a tradition that was deeply rooted in Church of Ireland circles² and also remarkable because of its implications in terms of the construction of a new Irish identity for southern Protestants.

Born in 1886, educated at Trinity College, Dublin (he graduated in 1912), Bateman became a notable ‘middle-brow’ figure in post-partition southern episcopalianism. He held a number of positions as curate before becoming incumbent of Booterstown and a prebendary of St Patrick’s cathedral.³ He and his wife had four children. One of his grandchildren, Bishop David Chillingworth, primus of the Scottish episcopal church, remembers him as a self-conscious ‘member of the Chapter of St Patrick’s Cathedral, the National Cathedral of the Church of Ireland where Jonathan Swift was a former Dean’, and a man who, like his illustrious predecessor, always displayed considerable ‘independent-mindedness’.⁴ Another figure to whom Bateman could be compared is essayist and antiquarian, Hubert Butler, with whom the rector of Booterstown shared a fearless determination to champion the rights of the Protestant minority – especially that to call Ireland their home.

This chapter is based on evidence provided by Bateman’s sermons, which are preserved, although as yet uncatalogued, in the Representative Church Body Library, Dublin. They were delivered over a period of about sixty years, from the 1910s to the 1970s. Bishop Chillingworth remembers them as ‘part of that internal [community] discourse ... [they were about] what he was saying to “his own”.’ His sermons are particularly fascinating for the historian because they were composed with an eye to contemporary political and social developments, as if he was preaching – again in Chillingworth’s words – ‘with the Bible in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other’.⁵ Indeed, the Booterstown parish history refers to him as ‘a noted and forthright preacher ... His letters to the *Irish Times* are especially remembered’.⁶

This study first examines how Bateman perceived and represented Patrick – the quintessential Irish ‘saint’ – and then explores the implications of his Patrician model for the Protestant sense of Irish identity, at a stage when the minority was still trying to come to terms with being demoted from their long-held elite status, to what they regarded as second-class citizenship with a precarious belonging.

THE ‘SAINTS’ AND THE CHURCH IN BATEMAN’S PROTESTANT THEOLOGY

Down to the 1980s, most church leaders – from Archbishops John Henry Bernard and John A. Fitzgerald Gregg (the latter being the president of the committee formed to celebrate the 1500th anniversary of St Patrick’s arrival in the island) to John Godfrey Day and George Otto Simms – insisted on the episcopalian identity of Patrick as the corner-stone of southern Irish Protestant legitimacy in what Ian d’Alton calls ‘the Protestant Free State’.⁷ Such an identity was clearly articulated at the 1932 Church of Ireland conference⁸ and further developed in 1934 by Newport J. D. White in his contribution to Walter Alison Phillips’s controversial *History of the Church of Ireland*. This work had itself been conceived as an attempt to reassert the church’s claim on the Patrician legacy. When commissioning the study, in 1929, Gregg wrote to Phillips:

You are aware of the very keen propaganda which is now being directed against all things non-Roman by the R. C. Church and it has been felt by some of the leading clergy in the Ch. of Ireland that a carefully and scientifically prepared history of the Church of Ireland would be of great use at the present time. Such a history would have to emanate from men writing from the standpoint of the C. of I., but at the same time it would be of no use to us if it were chargeable with mere partisanship.⁹

Even its date of publication had been originally planned to counteract ‘Roman’ propaganda: as the archdeacon of Cashel wrote to Phillips, ‘When sending out your instructions to the various contributors would it not be well to urge on them that the book must appear in the first half of 1932, owing to the eucharistic congress in Dublin & the celebrations in connection with the 15th centenary of St Patrick’s mission?’¹⁰ As it turned out, the *History* was not published until 1933, one year after the congress, but it contained the desired message.

Bateman’s reading of Patrick was similar to that of Newport White. Both saw the saint as a mystic steeped in biblical theology: as White noted, ‘Apart from express direct citations of texts, which are very frequent, [his] style and diction is that of the Latin Bible, which was to Patrick what the Authorised Version was to Bunyan.’¹¹ This fifth-century Bunyan, Patrick, ‘[knew] of no intercessors for sinners save Christ and the Holy Spirit. He was, indeed, a Christ-possessed man.’¹² His views of the church sacraments were simple. In his *Confession* he mentioned only three: baptism,

confirmation and the consecration of ministers. As the Very Reverend A. S. Kerr, archdeacon of Dromore, noted in a paper that he gave at the 1932 Church of Ireland conference, Patrick made no mention of, or allusion whatsoever to, devotion to either the Virgin Mary or the 'saints'.¹³ In his writings, there were no references to transubstantiation or any other Roman doctrine, nor indeed to the eucharist.

Patrick's silence on the latter delicate subject embarrassed the good episcopalian Newport White, but did not perturb the more robustly Protestant Bateman. There were also other significant differences in the way the two churchmen interpreted Patrick's relationship to Protestantism: Newport White argued 'that it is foolish to attach to a writer of the fifth century the label of any one of the sections into which Christendom had come to be divided in the sixteenth century'.¹⁴ By contrast, Bateman saw Patrick – and his Church of Ireland – as both 'Catholic and Protestant': 'Catholic' in the sense of 'universal' and Protestant in the sense of rejection of the supremacy of Rome and commitment to the biblical, evangelical tradition.¹⁵ He dismissed the Roman Catholic church as 'the Italian mission to Ireland'¹⁶ and championed the view – which, as we have seen, was widely shared within the church – that Patrick came to Ireland not with a papal commission, but merely impelled by the call he felt, one that was rooted in his reading of the bible and the example of the apostle Paul. Patrick's theology provided an early example of the Church of Ireland's approach to theology, summarised by Archbishop J. A. F. Gregg in the classical Anglican formula: 'Any matter upon which Church and Bible agree is for us finally authoritative; but where the Church and the Bible are at variance, we are bound by the Bible; and where neither Bible nor Church speaks, we have not the temerity to lay down any doctrine as necessary for salvation.'¹⁷

However, the main difference between Newport White and Bateman was that the latter was not particularly interested in the historicity or otherwise of Patrick, because he used the saint as a sort of allegory or parable of Protestant Irishness. Patrick was the patriotic and deeply spiritual Irish churchman, a prototype and a pioneer of what the Church of Ireland ought to have become. Here we must also say a word or two about how Bateman used the expression 'saint' to denote 'a Christian, a member of a local church', a meaning that he derived from the New Testament: for example, on one occasion he told his audience that, had the apostle Paul sent one of his letters to them, he would have addressed it to 'The saints that are at Booterstown', on the 'assumption that in writing to a Christian congregation he was writing to saints', as 'all [Christians were] called to be saints'. Thus, far from representing a spiritual aristocracy, a heavenly

equivalent of the House of Lords, for Bateman 'the saints' were synonymous with 'the church'. By the same token, All Saints Day, he argued, '[had] a special message for "the man in the pew"'. It reminds him of his calling. He is called to be a saint, that is, to give himself to God, to regard his life, his property, his powers of mind and body, all that he has and all that he is, as "holiness into the Lord." ... Saintliness is simply manhood or womanhood *at its best*.¹⁸

Hubert Butler described the Irish attitude to saints as a 'Christian by-product of the dying art of ancestor-making'.¹⁹ Bateman's approach had nothing to do with such ancestor-worship. Indeed, he stressed how Patrick's Irishness was not based on 'flesh and blood', but on moral choices. Born a citizen of the Roman Empire, he chose Ireland as his country of adoption, although his identity remained always both imperial and Irish. He *became* Irish because he considered his faith to involve being a witness for Christ and a brother to souls in need wherever the Almighty might decide to send him. Here was the saint's first teaching for modern southern Protestants: a challenge to leave behind an imperial legacy – however glorious – for the sake of Ireland. Thus, Patrick was the ultimate antithesis of the 'West Briton'.

At the same time, Patrick's Irishness was not introspective and xenophobic, but involved a generous commitment to humanity. For Bateman provided a further reason why he was a model for modern Irish churchmen. The missionary statement of the 1938 general synod cited Patrick as an example of the Irish church's 'supreme purpose ... [namely] to preach [Christ's] Gospel to all mankind'.²⁰ In 1939 Bateman echoed and elaborated on this message and cited Patrick in the context of missionary Sundays and fundraising for church work in Africa. He noted how Patrick had come to Ireland at a stage when the island was even more dangerous than the worst areas of Africa were in the twentieth century:

Think of what Ireland was in those days. ... A land which observed the cruel and barbarous superstition of druidism. Do you imagine that young Patrick was not told what a fool he was to think of going as a missionary? ... They had a religion of their own, which they understood, which suited them very well. Why distrust their simple belief? And so on, all the old stuff that those who support missions today have to listen to.²¹

Bateman's audience must have found this comparison particularly poignant and evocative, since there were obvious parallels between how Patrick viewed the land where he spent years in servitude and the way

they felt about nationalist Éire. When, as a boy, he was kidnapped by Irish raiders, he experienced a sudden and catastrophic change in personal status and fortunes, one that resonated with that of southern Protestants of Bateman's generation:

In four short years [1914–18] the flower of a generation of the youth of the Church of Ireland was lost, and the survivors came back to a country in which ... they found the horrors of guerrilla warfare, and, for them, a conflict between their traditional loyalty to the British Crown and their allegiance to the country they loved.²²

There were other parallels. As a slave, when tending sheep in Armagh, Patrick felt lonely and marginalised; likewise, noted Bateman,

[t]oday, in the country the Protestant feels isolated, in the town he finds employment hard to get. He undoubtedly has to endure – especially among the less educated classes – a good deal of pin-pricking from those around him. And all the time ... he is conscious of the silent, ceaseless pressure created by the mere numbers of those belonging to another Faith.

In such a situation, it was no wonder that 'many of our people – often the best and the brainiest of them – leave Ireland to seek employment in an atmosphere that they imagine will be more congenial ...' This was, however, only an illusory escape, because, like Patrick when he returned to Britain, southern Irish Protestants in the UK felt in exile, their longing for the lost world that they had left behind being the clearest indication of where they really belonged.

If leaving was a mistake, then staying behind could be equally erroneous when accompanied by resignation and a sense of defeat and irrelevance:

Among those that remain there is an increasing tendency towards the development of an inferiority complex. Some others take the view that the battle of the Reformation is lost in this country, that Protestantism is dead, and might as well be buried. They are the easy victims of the mixed marriage trap and of Roman propaganda. Others develop a fierce fanaticism, search high and low for evidence of Roman intolerance and persecution, and cultivate an attitude of bitterness and resentment which, because it is unchristian, is destructive of their spiritual life and of kindly relations with their neighbours. Others again ... stick to their faith, but have none of the conviction or enthusiasm which would make them effective witnesses for it.²³

However, in Patrick they found a better example of how to respond to even worse challenges than those they faced in de Valera’s state. It arose because of Patrick’s belief. The difference was that he had ‘real Faith worth living for and dying for’, and knew that ‘there is no reason why the fact that the majority do not hold it should infect us with defeatism. Truth is not determined by the counting of heads.’ This was both Patrick’s lesson and the lesson of the bible:

Elijah at Carmel was one man against a king, a priesthood and a nation. ... There should be something inspiring rather than depressing in standing for a great cause against numbers. It means suffering and hardship, but it should mean also ... really living – living at full stretch, dangerously, adventurously – instead of pursuing the humdrum, jogtrot existence with which most people are satisfied.²⁴

What applied to Protestants as individuals, applied also to the church as a whole. The outward weakness of the Church of Ireland in the partitioned south was like the ‘weakness’ of Patrick after his voluntary return from Britain. Southern Protestants were ‘a remnant, politically impotent and socially negligible, in the midst of a triumphant and aggressive Romanism’. But in both cases the real factor was God’s sovereign will. Here was the clue to the Patrician destiny of the minority: ‘Do not imagine that it is in any spirit of defeatism that I am speaking. I am no more a defeatist than Gideon was when he led his 300 against the Midianites.’ As Gideon could only triumph after purging his army of the surplus, so the Church of Ireland had to be pruned for further growth: ‘I believe that at the beginning of the century God must have looked upon [the] Church of Ireland, and said, as he said long ago of the twenty thousand that had rallied at Gideon’s call: “The people are too many for me ... lest they vaunt themselves against me saying, Mine hand hath saved me”.’²⁵

NATION AND CHURCH

Thus there was complete interdependence between national and Christian duty. Under the union the church had failed in spite of the establishment. This was owing to what Bateman denounced as the church’s ‘unfaithfulness’ to its spiritual mission, an infidelity caused precisely by the Protestants’ preoccupation with the temporal advantages they enjoyed, though these should have been regarded as ‘side issues – earthly issues, political issues’.²⁶

Before independence, ‘the people [were] too self-satisfied, too secure, too well off, too worldly minded’, and this was ‘largely the fault of the Church of Ireland, many of whose members have failed to value their Irish heritage and thought of their Church almost as if it were the Church of England in Ireland’. He noted with relief that ‘[i]n the South at any rate that day is over. All external or worldly props have been removed. We are face to face with spiritual realities.’ The revolution had cured southern Irish Protestants of such misapprehensions: God had stripped them of every material advantage, not that they might be weakened, but that they would ‘be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might’ (Eph. 6:10). From this perspective, even the large-scale post-independence exodus of southern Protestants had been a blessing in disguise, for ‘the loss ... of those members of our Church who have left the country because they disliked the new regime, and had the money to live where they liked ... drives us into a complete reliance upon God, [and] could be a spiritual gain of inestimable value.’²⁷ As a consequence, ‘[t]he Church of Ireland is today faced with the greatest spiritual opportunity it has had since the Reformation. It threw away its opportunity then.’

Most of the quotations above are from sermons that Bateman delivered between 1940 and 1954. But he had first used the Patrician allegory of how Protestants might feel about a nationalist Ireland as early as 1920, in one of his first sermons delivered as curate of Taney. As the union lapsed into bloodshed and civil war,

the Irish question has been removed from the sphere of reason and morals, and transferred to that of violence. Both parties ... have now appealed to the arbitrament [sic] of force, and the [Great] war has taught us that force produces fresh problems not less difficult than those which it removes. Under these circumstances we do not want ... ‘party’ prayers ... The spirit of strife is what we must get rid of, before reasonable consideration of the questions at issue becomes possible. Let us at least keep it out of our devotions.

Ireland’s first churchman was now, more than ever, a source of inspiration and an example:

Here is ENCOURAGEMENT for those who find it difficult in this day of confusion to PRAY FOR IRELAND ... What we must do is to purge our souls of all bitter feeling, and lay the case of our country before God, and ask him to direct our feet into the way of peace. ... The kind of prayer which

we want is that supplied ... in the special collect for St Patrick’s Day ... Let the foreground of our prayer be the simple petition – too often profaned – ‘God save Ireland’.²⁸

Thus, from a Patrician perspective, Bateman identified a great historic opportunity in what others saw merely as a challenge if not a disaster. Like slavery for the young Patrick, nationalist Ireland was the biblically liberating ‘thorn in the flesh’ (2 Cor. 12:7). Without renouncing his cultural *Romanitas*,²⁹ Patrick had shown that he owed no allegiance except to Christ, and felt no call but to evangelise the country where God had sent him. Likewise, Bateman boasted after 1937:

As a citizen of Éire I have my own political views. As a member of the Catholic Church – the Church of all nations – I have none: I have not even a *country*. My citizenship is in heaven. I care not a whit what the politics of a fellow churchman may be – conservative or radical, imperialist or republican, labour or communist – as long as they are compatible with the Christian faith. I care not what his loyalties are – as long as he is loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ.³⁰

Instead of looking back, they – and the church – should be looking forward, into the future that God had prepared for them.

There is a further dimension to the relevance of Patrick to southern Protestants. He had come to Ireland as a prophet. The latter is a notion which, like the idea of ‘saint’, Bateman used in the evangelical sense, of someone who reveals and denounces the corruption of a certain social order in which he lives. This is certainly what Patrick did, for example with his public letter to Coroticus or when he challenged the druids’ belief system, exposing their dark superstitions. His call was still relevant to modern Irish Protestants: ‘There is nothing that this country of ours needs more than a prophet, someone ready to be a fool for God’s sake, a victim for truth’s sake, some realist who will come ramping and roaring into this Ireland of shams, and expose them by turning on them the hard, clear light of truth.’³¹ Nevertheless, the new Patrick

will have a bad time of it when he comes. He will be up against the dominant religion which has succeeded in combining a meticulous observance of the outward forms of religion with a moral degradation which has infected with rottenness our political, commercial and private lives. He will be up against the powers that be, who live in a world of make believe, and base

their policy, not on today's hard facts, but on a weird, idealistic, distorted picture of a Gaelic state that never existed. Most of all, he will be up against the wishful thinkers, those who, because they dislike [sic] the things that are, insist on living either in a past that is dead or in a dream future that may never be. ... He would ask us what we are doing here to justify our claim to represent God's Church in this land. If we are not here as standard bearers of God's truth, we have no business here at all. Our mission in this country is a purely spiritual mission. Anything that hinders us in carrying it out must be ruthlessly jettisoned.³²

Thus, like Patrick's Ireland, Éire had its own 'snakes' to fight. Bateman identified two particularly dangerous breeds. One was the doctrine of the Roman 'imposters'; the other was 'West Britonism', the misguided commitment to traditions that separated churchmen from their fellow citizens. These two sets of 'snakes' fed and depended on each other and together frustrated and undermined the church.

The Church of Ireland had its own unique responsibility, for Bateman regarded the other Protestant denominations as 'sects', while it was the true Catholic church, which was 'Protestant in the original sense of the word – witnessing on behalf of truth, not merely denying error'.³³ By the same token, because the Church of Ireland's claims were so legitimate, she was the most formidable threat to popish imperialism:

Rome does not fear, and need not fear, the scattered garrisons of the Protestant denominations, but her bitter hostility to the Church of Ireland is inspired by an uneasy feeling, that this Church which, like herself, ministers to the whole country, which has its representatives in every parish, from the presence of which she cannot escape, which claims the allegiance of the Irish people on the grounds that she, and not Rome, is the 'Ancient, Catholick and Apostolick Church' of the country, may some day make good her claim and win the hearts of the Irish. ... At the same time, I believe that the Church of Ireland is the main bulwark of Reformation truth in Ireland, that anything that weakens the Church weakens the cause of Protestantism, and that members of the Church of Ireland who deem themselves broad-minded because they see no difference between the Church and Dissent are adopting a position which all but destroys the Church's case against Rome.³⁴

The Roman attempt to represent the ancient Celtic church in St Patrick's time or for 400 years after as a devoted subject of the papacy was simply to fly in the face of the facts.³⁵ That so many people believed it showed the power of propaganda, for, as Bateman noted, 'there is a good deal in

[Mad] Hatter’s theory that, if a false statement is repeated often enough and emphatically enough, it will in the end be accepted as true.’³⁶ Such propaganda was effective because

Romanism ... [was] a totalitarian system, that is, an organization in which the individual exists solely and entirely for the organization. It is hard to refuse to believe that Mussolini and Hitler, consciously or unconsciously, modelled Fascism and National Socialism on Romanism. Indeed, as far as the bureaucratic mechanism is concerned, there is not a ha’worth [sic] of difference between them and Romanism or for that matter, between Romanism and its arch-enemy Communism ... The great danger of this Roman Catholic totalitarianism is that it is international, and that, therefore, there is in every country in the world a close-knit community whose first allegiance is, at the perils of its soul, to the Papacy.³⁷

Yet the Roman church was really much weaker than it looked. Behind its monolithic façade, there was, Bateman argued, insecurity, unrest and frustration. The hierarchy was so obsessed with control because they feared that any crack or leak in ‘the dyke’ of enforced orthodoxy could easily widen and soon turn ‘a trickle into a flood’. While it was up to the Almighty to open such cracks and leaks, the responsibility of the church was to be ready and equipped for the task of witnessing to the gospel.

Hence for Bateman it was important to invest in Protestant education, which was about safeguarding the future of the Church of Ireland by

safeguarding the faith of our children ... helping to fit our children for the hard task of making a living in a country where religious prejudices are a definite handicap ... ensuring that the witness of the ancient Church of Ireland to the pure and simple creed set forth in the writings of St Patrick will not fail. That witness, borne before those who differ from us, steadfastly, sincerely, and charitably, alike in our words and our deeds, is the best service we can render today to God and country.³⁸

Part of this strategy was his commitment to the parish school system. According to his grandson David Chillingworth, the local Protestant school

was ... a way of holding the community together and giving the next generation a continuing sense of identity. That’s why the building of the new Primary School [in the grounds of the church of Saint Philip and Saint James, Booterstown, opened in March 1957] was important – and why [Bateman’s] invitation to de Valera to open it was such a sensitive or insensitive thing.³⁹

The last point requires some more elucidation than Chillingworth provides: it was a *sensitive* thing to do, because Bateman had invited the ‘Father of the Nation’ to consecrate with his presence the hopes of the rising generation of Protestant Ireland. At the same time it was *insensitive*, because Ireland was then still in the midst of the turmoil caused by the Fethard-on-Sea boycott.⁴⁰ While the *Irish Times* published daily articles and letters decrying ‘Popish’ oppression,⁴¹ de Valera bravely accepted Bateman’s invitation (Fig. 14.1).

It is likely that de Valera saw his presence at the opening of a Protestant school in the church of one of the most relentless critics of Catholic Ireland as a gesture indicating his commitment to civil rights for Protestants. However, it also reflected what seems to have been a personal relationship between himself and Bateman, in whose parish the taoiseach lived. The connection went back to 1936, when de Valera’s son, Brian, died in



Fig. 14.1 Ernest Bateman (second from the right, behind Archbishop Simms), with Eamon de Valera at the opening of Booterstown national school in 1957 (Photograph courtesy Bishop David Chillingworth, and published with permission of the *Irish Times*)

a riding accident. The garda officer who was expected to report the tragic event did not wish to announce such devastating news to the president of the executive council without a clergyman in attendance. De Valera lived in Booterstown and the only one the garda could find was a Protestant, Ernest Bateman. Bateman – whose pastoral skills were as notable as his eloquence as a preacher – made a lasting impression on Fianna Fáil’s leader.

Moreover, this episode is illustrative of Bateman’s ability to distinguish between doctrines – which could be wrong and indeed ‘heretical’ – and people, real men and women who needed the love of God and care of the church, irrespective of any other consideration. This case is also revealing because it is a reminder of two key aspects of the Patrician legacy as Bateman conceived it. The first was his generosity to a former enemy and refusal to bear a grudge. The Church of Ireland had failed to live up to Patrick’s example and this for Bateman explained the failure of the Reformation in Ireland: ‘[we] allowed our eyes to be covered with the prejudice and resentments which have their origins in our unhappy history. We refuse to tear off the political and racial bandages that hide from our sight what God would have us do and be.’ The curse had survived till the twentieth century, and, Bateman prophesied,

The Church of Ireland will never become the Church of the land in fact as well as in name until she becomes Irish – not anti-British, but Irish, not nationalist, but national. It is the duty of her members, as citizens, to think politically, and equally their duty, as Churchmen, to forge [?] their politics.⁴²

The second aspect derives from the first as a corollary, and it was a lesson that Patrick could teach not only to the church, but also to the whole of Ireland as a nation and indeed to Europe and the rest of the world. In the *Book of common prayer*, the ‘Epistle’ for St Patrick’s Day is Rev. 22:2, which is about ‘the healing of the nations’ when there would be no more wars. In this context, perhaps there was more than a Patrician flavour in the sermon that the rector of Booterstown preached on Remembrance Sunday 1945. It was a memorable address about human and political solidarity across national divides in a Europe savaged by a new barbarism. It was entitled: ‘It’s a small world’, and it culminated with an appeal for the overcoming of national barriers when Bateman said:

We mistake the purpose of this day of memories if we make it simply a day of sentimental recollections, still more, if, forgetting the glorious dead, we

boast ourselves in the victory they won. ... At great price they purchased our freedom. It is for us to extend the bounds of freedom, and to live worthy of our freedom in a world of peace and righteousness.

The most important consequence of the war was that '[t]he old concept of nationality – of separate, sovereign states – has become outdated', as countries had fallen one after the other under the pressure of Nazi and Japanese forces, having previously failed to address the challenge of the economic depression. Hitler had recognised this in 1938–45 and had 'attempted one of the two possible solutions – a world-state based on the subjugation of mankind beneath the yoke of a master race'. Providence had thankfully thwarted his plan, but the need for greater cooperation between small nations still remained. For Bateman this required the creation of '[an] organization modelled either on the federalism of the United States ... or the looser bounds which unite the British Commonwealth of nations ... the world is too small, too crowded a place for a policy of rush and grab that is bound to end in fighting.' However, he continued: 'We Christians hold the solution of the problem. We may not work it out in practice, but there it is on every page of the New Testament – the brotherhood of man in God, the father of all.'⁴³

For this reason, when all was lost and chaos reigned, it was no reason to despair, but time to see the opportunity in the challenge and seize it, as Patrick had done fifteen centuries earlier, when he turned enemies into brothers, foreigners into fellow-countrymen and barbarism into civilization. In 1945, as in 1920 and in the 1930s, Bateman felt that the church was back to square one – echoing Patrick's mission to a lost world. His final Remembrance Day words read: 'we must learn in this diminishing world to regard the brotherhood of man, not as a beautiful, but ... impracticable ideal, but as the one and only principle of action that can save mankind.'⁴⁴

NOTES

1. Envelope, 'Church Teachings III', 'Early days', n.d. (RCB Library, Dublin, Bateman papers, box 5, MS 235, uncatalogued).
2. R. B. McDowell, *The Church of Ireland, 1869–1969* (London, 1975), p. 1.
3. C. (Curate) St Luke's, 1911–13; C. Taney, 1913–21; C. Zion Church, Rathgar, 1921–3; Vicar S. James's, 1922–33; Chaplain Dr Steevens' Hospital, 1924–33; Incumbent Booterstown, 1933–65; Wallace Lecturer in Divinity at TCD, 1939–44. Information taken from: *Clergy of Dublin*

- and Glendalough, biographical succession list* compiled by J. B. Leslie; revised and ed. W. J. R. Wallace (Belfast, 2001), p. 381.
4. From Bishop David Chillingworth's blog, 'Ernest Bateman and his sermons' (<http://www.bishopdavid.net/>, accessed 25 Feb. 2013).
 5. *Ibid.*
 6. From the website of the *Parishes of Booterstown & Mount Merrion, Church of Ireland* (<http://www.booterstown.dublin.anglican.org/>, accessed 8 Jan. 2016).
 7. George Seaver, *John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg, archbishop* (London, 1963), p. 188; Ian d'Alton, 'Religion as identity', above.
 8. 'St Patrick and his work', *Irish Times*, 8 Apr. 1932.
 9. Archbishop Gregg of Dublin, chairman of the Ecclesiastical Records Committee, to W. A. Phillips, 1 Oct. 1929 (RCB Library, Walter Alison Phillips papers, MS 60/37).
 10. J. D. Seymour, archdeacon of Cashel & Emly and author of vol. 2, chapters 2 and 3 and vol. 3, chapter 2, to Phillips, 27 Feb. [no year, but 1931] (Phillips papers, MS 60/323).
 11. Newport J. D. White, 'The teaching of St Patrick' in Walter Alison Phillips (ed.), *History of the Church of Ireland* (3 vols, London and Oxford, 1933-4), i, 106.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
 13. 'Commemorating St Patrick, Church of Ireland conference', *Irish Times*, 12 Oct. 1932.
 14. Cited in T. J. Johnston, J. L. Robinson and R. W. Jackson, *A history of the Church of Ireland* (Dublin, 1953), p. 37.
 15. In 1959, in response to moves in favour of adding the word 'Anglican' to the name of the church, Bateman proposed that instead it should be called 'Catholic and Protestant': E. Bateman, 'The Anglican communion', *Irish Times*, 18 Aug. 1959.
 16. Chillingworth blog, 'Ernest Bateman', 25 Feb. 2013.
 17. Archbishop Gregg, cited in Johnston, Robinson & Jackson, *A history*, p. 46.
 18. Sermon on 'Who are the saints?', from 1932 (also 1938 and 1945), Green notebook entitled 'Special Saints Days I' (Bateman papers, box 4, MS 235).
 19. Hubert Butler, *Ten thousand saints: a study in Irish and European origins* (Dublin, 1972, 2011), p. 12.
 20. *Journal of the second session of the twenty-fifth synod of the Church of Ireland, held in Dublin, 1938, with an appendix containing statutes passed, reports of committees etc.*, ed. R. H. Hyland (Dublin, 1938), pp lxxiv-lxxv.
 21. Sermon on 'An inescapable obligation', preached in 1939, 1945, 1953, 1957, 1958, in different churches (same envelope, Bateman papers, box 5, MS 235).

22. Sermon on 'Fragrant giving' (Bateman papers, box 5, MS 235).
23. Sermon, on 1 Pet. 3:14 ('But and [sic] if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye'), delivered two days after St Peter's Day 1945 (Bateman papers, box 5, MS 235).
24. Ibid.
25. Envelope 'Church Teaching II – Public worship', sermon 'Teach thy children' (1940, 1954). The biblical quotation is from Judges 7:2 (Bateman papers, box 5, MS 235).
26. Sermon on 'The liberty of prophesying. A Sermon written in reply to certain criticism', Is 1:1, n.d., written on the back of sermons delivered from 1932–1945; from the content, which is anti-de Valera, it is likely to be around 1932–3 (Bateman papers, box 4, MS 235).
27. Envelope 'Church Teachings III', 'Early days', n.d. (Bateman papers, box 5, MS 235).
28. Black notebook, no title, 22nd Sunday after Trinity, 1920, Dan. 6:15, 'Prayer for Ireland' (Bateman papers, box 4, MS 235).
29. 'Church of the Scots! nay, of the Romans! In order that ye be Christians, as well as Romans, ye must chant in your churches at every hour of prayer that glorious word, Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison', cited in White, 'The teaching of St Patrick', p. 115.
30. Sermon on 'The liberty of prophesying', contained in notebook 'Special Saints Days I, a sermon written in reply to certain criticisms' (Bateman papers, Box 4, MS 235).
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. II – 'ROME THE DECEIVER.' – (I Tim. 4:1, 'The Spirit saith expressly, that in latter times some shall fall away from the faith.')
34. 'The Church of Ireland, Rome and Dissent' – Sermon for St Patrick's Day, n.d. This sermon is the first starting from the beginning of those written on the back of the pages of the notebook 'Special Saints Days I'. 'What I have to say to you today is suggested by the fact that tomorrow is St Patrick's Day and inspired by the remarks made by the Lord mayor of Dublin when he welcomed to the city the other day the Papal Nuncio. They are the kind of statements which are so often made. ... I should like to think that every member of the Church of Ireland is so well acquainted with the history of his Church, that he is in a position to give good reason for his repudiation of the claims made by our worthy Lord Mayor on behalf of the Church of Rome.' (Bateman papers, box 4, MS 235).
35. In the same envelope, 'An inescapable obligation', preached in 1939, 1945, 1953, 1957, 1958, in different churches (Bateman papers, box 5, MS 235).

36. Sermon preached on the eve of St Patrick's Day 1945 (Bateman papers, item missing from boxes, MS 235).
37. 'I – ROME THE INTRUDER', Notebook IX, n.d., but Aug.–Sept. 1948 (Bateman papers, box 2, MS 235).
38. 'Teach thy children', in envelope 'Church teaching II, preached 1940, 1954 (Bateman papers, box 5, MS 235).
39. Chillingworth blog, 'Ernest Bateman', 25 Feb. 2013.
40. See Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 1994), pp 240–1.
41. 'Taoiseach opens new national school', *Irish Times*, 23 Mar. 1957.
42. Sermon 'Youth – Vision' (1940, 1954) – (address to a Youth Conference). A note attached reads: 'Church must be Irish (not anti-British)'. Envelope Church Teaching II – Public worship (Bateman papers, box 5, MS 235).
43. Sermon for Remembrance Sunday 1945, preached again in 1946: 'It's a Small World.' (Bateman papers, box 4, MS 235).
44. Ibid.

PART III

Religious History: Practice and
Reconciliation, *c.*1980s to the Present

The 1641 Depositions and the History Classroom

Eamon Darcy

For Mary McAleese, president of Ireland (1997–2011), the turbulent events of mid-seventeenth-century Ireland cast ‘long, brooding shadows’ from which the island only started to emerge in recent times.¹ McAleese expressed this view at the launch of the 1641 Depositions Project in Trinity College, Dublin on 22 October 2010, an event that had both academic and political significance. The project was a flagship digital humanities initiative which published a key collection of Irish historical documents in an online (and later print) format.² The depositions comprise 8,000 witness statements describing events in Ireland in the 1640s that subsequently became the main evidence for the alleged massacres of Protestant settlers in 1641. In later years the depositions were evoked to justify anti-Catholic legislation, or to denigrate calls for home rule and Irish independence. According to some commentators the publication of the depositions would not have been possible without the Good Friday Agreement (1998) which offered hope of a lasting and peaceful settlement for Northern Ireland.³ In keeping with this spirit, President McAleese was joined by Reverend Dr Ian Paisley, Lord Bannside, former first minister of Northern Ireland (2007–8), as official first guest at the launch, and

E. Darcy (✉)

National University of Ireland Maynooth, Maynooth, Ireland

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both shared reflections on the publication of the depositions. Noting how the outburst of sectarian tensions in the 1930s and 1960s had prevented attempts to publish the depositions, McAleese expressed confidence that their online publication in 2010 would yield a ‘new history of good neighbourliness, understanding and partnership between all the people and traditions on this island’. She hoped that scholars would now be able to examine the evidence forensically and assess the past in a dispassionate manner, thereby deepening understanding of the events of the 1640s. Paisley acknowledged the 1641 rebellion as a key event for Ulster, and one that shaped his personal outlook. He urged that the depositions be studied by all as a warning about what can go wrong and as an opportunity to learn from the processes that contributed to ‘the tragic story of our land’. This would enable us ‘to know who we are and why we have had to witness our own troubles in what became a divided island’. He lamented the fact that not everyone from Ulster knew the date of the outbreak of the 1641 rebellion as well as their own birthday. Such knowledge would, he argued, facilitate a ‘stable and promising future for everybody’. Mischievously, Paisley concluded his speech by declaring:

In the words of Lord Carson, a great man well known to Trinity and to this City, ‘God Save Ulster’. I would be willing now to just stretch a bit harder and I would like to say ‘God save Ulster and the three other parts of this island. Being a Ballymena man, I’m putting Ulster first.’⁴

The 1641 Depositions Project began in 2007 and was funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (now the Irish Research Council), the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the United Kingdom, and Trinity College Library. It brought together historians from Trinity College, Dublin (Professors Aidan Clarke, Jane Ohlmeyer and Micheál Ó Siochrú), Cambridge University Professor John Morrill, and from the University of Aberdeen, Professor Tom Bartlett. With the expertise of Eneclann history and heritage company and IBM, the project aimed to conserve the original collection housed in Trinity College, Dublin and to digitise, transcribe, and publish the depositions in both online and print formats.

It soon became clear that their publication, which coincided with major political developments concerning Northern Ireland, presented an opportunity for significant public engagement with this major historical event. McAleese mentioned the decade of commemorations (2012–22) in her

launch speech and warned against ransacking the past for ‘ammunition to justify the furthering of hatred and distrust’. To prevent this, she argued that both academics and members of the public should engage with contentious issues of Ireland’s past in a constructive spirit that would promote embracing a common future. Dissemination of the depositions in classrooms in Northern Ireland, which Paisley strongly supported, was a key goal of the project. The subtle differences between McAleese’s and Paisley’s views on the matter, however, intimate how challenging a task this could be. This chapter outlines the process of introducing the depositions into second-level schools across Northern Ireland and reflects on the attendant challenges. First, however, a brief account of the depositions themselves.

THE 1641 DEPOSITIONS

The ‘commission for the despoiled subject’ that comprised eight Church of Ireland clergymen headed by the dean of Kilmore, Henry Jones, originally collected the 1641 depositions.⁵ At first, the commission recorded the losses of those affected by the Irish rebellion that broke out on 23 October 1641. However, their remit quickly expanded and the commissioners recorded rebel movements, actions and utterances.⁶ Soon deponents from across the country began informing the commissioners in Dublin about the extent of Irish Catholic cruelty and the numerous murders and mass-killings of Protestant settlers that they had either witnessed or heard about. Colonial authorities quickly realised the political value of the depositions, which could serve as a warning to future generations of both Catholic perfidy and Irish disloyalty.⁷ Their predictions proved well founded, as histories of the 1641 rebellion that drew upon the depositions, such as Sir John Temple’s *History of the Irish rebellion* (London, 1646), appeared and re-appeared in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries at times of heightened Protestant anxiety about Catholic political amelioration. Thus, in later years the depositions were hailed as credible evidence of Catholic barbarity and were used to justify various penal laws, or to undermine campaigns for emancipation of Irish Catholics or home rule. These strong memories of the depositions and of the 1641 rebellion, however, receded over time as more recent events such as the Battle of the Somme (1916) assumed greater significance in the Protestant commemoration calendar.

How did the depositions become such a controversial source for the study of Ireland's past? Throughout the 1640s a range of publications appeared that drew upon evidence of Catholic barbarity and savagery toward Irish Protestants contained in the depositions. At first, the deposition commission and the colonial authorities used the statements to convince English audiences that Irish Protestant settlers were in dire need of financial and military aid.⁸ Thus, in March 1642, Henry Jones presented the House of Commons with *A remonstrance of divers remarkeable passages concerning the church and kingdome of Ireland*, a short commentary of events in Ireland supported by an appendix of edited depositions. Jones argued that the rebellion was a popish conspiracy aided by foreign powers that would eventually spread into England. His selective editing of deposition evidence was a polemical masterstroke.⁹ The *Remonstrance* was later superseded by John Temple's aforementioned *History* which also drew selectively from the depositions (albeit to even greater effect), and appeared in several editions.¹⁰

As both men manipulated evidence to accuse Irish rebels of various heinous acts, Catholic writers responded by challenging the credibility of the 1641 depositions. After the Irish Protestant antiquarian Walter Harris claimed in the 1750s that Catholic writers sought 'to wipe away the unrepented sins of their ancestors',¹¹ John Curry, the son of a wealthy Catholic merchant and a campaigner for Catholic reform, responded by criticising partisan Protestant historical accounts of 1641, which misappropriated the depositions to 'credit their horrible narrations'.¹² Such tit-for-tat exchanges continued in the nineteenth century as the massacres of 1641 were evoked to justify the retention of anti-Catholic laws after the act of union (1800).¹³ As the Irish Home Rule party grew in strength and popularity in the late nineteenth century, hostile opponents cited 1641 when warning what could happen under Catholic rule.¹⁴ In 1884 Mary Hickson became the first scholar to print a substantial number of depositions in nearly 250 years.¹⁵ Hickson's work, however, perpetuated the highly partisan Protestant version of 1641 and, by extension, discredited Irish Catholics' calls for land reform and home rule. Unsurprisingly, her conclusions were vigorously rebutted.¹⁶ These works sparked debate not only in intellectual circles in Ireland, but also among politicians at Westminster. Hickson bitterly denounced Prime Minister William Gladstone's criticisms of her scholarship as a slander to her 'countrymen'.¹⁷ Engaged in research in 1913, Scottish historian Robert Dunlop expressed unease at the close

relationship between the depositions, memories of the 1641 rebellion, and contemporary politics in early 1880s Ireland, at which time:

I turned to the study of the Depositions relating to the Massacres [of 1641]. It was then that I first began to experience an uncomfortable feeling that my evidence was not so strong as I would have liked it to be. True the Depositions were very explicit and apparently incontrovertible; but I was living in Dublin at a time when the power of the Land League was at its height, and I could not help asking what value depositions taken by a body of Orange magistrates as to nationalist outrages were likely to possess for an impartial estimate of the state of Ireland.¹⁸

His reflections highlight how down to the late nineteenth century the depositions continued to be used for contemporary political ends.

Prior to the 1970s, when historians side-stepped these passionate, sectarian debates and engaged with the depositions to a greater extent, these documents were either ignored or ransacked by authors. Rarely analysed as a complete collection, they had mythical or 'ritual status'.¹⁹ Today, there is a clearer picture of how the rebellion began and spread, and the role that rumour and fear-mongering played in perpetuating the belief that thousands of Irish Protestants were massacred. Furthermore, the depositions have been used to provide fresh insights into seventeenth-century Irish life and society. However, historians have been reluctant to comb through the depositions to ascertain how many people were killed during the rebellion – a key issue, as contemporary estimates ranged from 154,000 to 600,000. The evidence is problematic, being neither consistent nor reliable enough to yield definitive conclusions, although some recent estimates suggest that between 15 and 20 per cent of the Irish population perished as a result of military conflict, famine and disease.²⁰ With the online publication of the depositions, it was hoped that this historical conundrum would finally be solved. Some sections of the media confidently predicted that now the truth could be uncovered by a 'cold case review'.²¹ Furthermore, they anticipated that forensic linguists' analysis of the depositions would provide definitive answers to questions about their historical validity and show that the depositions were 'often based on hearsay'.²² The public's enthusiastic engagement with the depositions project and their online publication has been significant. Perhaps unsurprisingly, public discussion led to a return to the time-honoured question about the credibility of the depositions as a source for the massacre of Protestant settlers in 1641.

As mentioned by Reverend Ian Paisley, for sections of Northern Ireland's Protestant community, the rebellion, and by extension the depositions, played a key role in shaping their identity. In 1913, for example, Protestant clerics warned their congregations that home rule would lead to a repeat of 1641.²³ Even though over time, the rebellion has become less central to Protestant identity in Ulster, it was clear that any educational resource on the depositions and the Irish rebellion to be introduced in second-level classrooms in Northern Ireland needed firstly to treat these matters in an appropriate manner; secondly to draw upon recent findings that have enriched the understanding of the nature of the testimonies, and thirdly to locate the issues raised by the 1641 depositions in a broader interpretative framework.

DEVELOPING THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

In 2010 Professor Jane Ohlmeyer, a principal investigator of the 1641 Depositions Project, secured funding from the Reconciliation Fund administered by the Irish department of foreign affairs to develop educational resources relating to the rebellion. Working closely with Denise Morgan, development officer at the Northern Irish Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), Gareth Boal (head of history) and Alan Dalton (headmaster), both at Strangford Integrated College at Carrowdore, Newtownards, County Down, the project team undertook this task with three goals in sight. The first was to host public meetings on the depositions across Northern Ireland and discuss issues arising such as history, memory, identity, massacre, ethnic cleansing and reconciliation. Secondly, Dale Purvis (a teacher in Strangford Integrated College) and this author were tasked with producing educational materials that drew extensively upon the depositions to explain the outbreak and course of the 1641 rebellion across Ireland for year nine students (fourteen-year-olds) in Northern Ireland schools. Thirdly, training sessions were to be provided for teachers wishing to use the resources as part of the Anti-Bias Approaches to Education organised by NICIE.

By engaging with teachers and members of the public and through consultations with Denise Morgan of NICIE and Dr Alan McCully, senior lecturer in education, University of Ulster, it emerged that effective use of the depositions in the classroom relied upon a number of factors. First, from the public meetings in Derry and Letterkenny it became clear that the rebellion still played a role in shaping some communities' identity.

At one such meeting, following presentations by academics from Trinity College, Dublin, the University of Aberdeen and the Ulster Centre for Migration Studies, an audience member remarked that despite what he had just heard, he knew what had happened in 1641 and nothing would change his mind.²⁴ A 2010 report by the Community Relations Council and the Institute for Conflict Study in Northern Ireland stated that those of school-going age were heavily influenced by their parents' and communities' traditions and versions of the past.²⁵ The goal of the project team was to enable students to identify different traditions' perspectives on the rebellion, and the origins of those perspectives, in order to foster greater appreciation of the value of such stories in shaping communal identities. It was also hoped to show how evidence has been interpreted in different ways by members of different traditions and by historians. However, it became clear that the early modern period was not one that readily captured the imagination of students. Those who participated in a 2010 study on schooling in Northern Ireland considered pre-modern history 'boring' and were more interested in the 'Troubles'.²⁶ To address this, Dale Purvis devised exercises to stimulate students' imaginations and encourage inquiry-based learning. Finally, in a bid to change perceptions of the depositions as merely a chronicle of cruelty, the teaching packs included depositions through which students could observe aspects of everyday life in seventeenth-century Ireland.

The pack materials feature nineteen discussion topics for year nine students to cover in class over a recommended four weeks.²⁷ The first topic, 'Introducing atrocity', and the last 'Atrocity in the wider world' outline the challenges historians and teachers face when investigating atrocities in the past and from a broad geographical perspective. Numerous studies have highlighted how history teachers in Northern Ireland were reluctant to discuss violent events in the classroom, particularly in regions affected by conflict.²⁸ To overcome this, NICIE offered a tailored teacher-training session, which proved highly successful. A small number of teachers from schools across the socio-economic and religious divide volunteered to participate and helped to tailor the resources for use in classrooms. For example, thanks to their input the rebellion is contextualised with reference to other violent episodes during the early modern period (St Bartholomew's Day massacre, 1572, Jamestown massacre, 1622) and more recent times (My Lai massacre, 1968). These approaches were adopted to increase students' awareness that the interpretation of any violent event is problematic for historians owing to the partisan nature of surviving evidence and contested legacies.

Through the next four topics ('Plantations in Ireland', economic, political and religious causes of the rebellion) students explore the escalating colonial, economic, ethnic and religious tensions that contributed to its outbreak. They have the opportunity to investigate the early seventeenth century from a number of perspectives (English, Scottish, Irish, Catholic or Protestant), thereby empowering them to understand the processes that shaped the historical record. One exercise on the economic causes encourages students to think about issues such as eyewitness versus hearsay testimony, the use of 'propaganda', and separating 'fact' from 'opinion'. Since some students encounter difficulties in interpreting the language in the depositions, teachers have the option of using the original statements or an adapted version, which renders the content in modern English, including standardised spelling. These depositions capture the variety of reasons why the rebellion broke out and why people participated. Through engagement with the depositions, students are encouraged to reflect critically on the nature of the evidence. For example, one exercise investigates seventeenth-century popular religious beliefs to show students how some of these testimonies and interpretations of the rebellion may have been shaped by contemporary beliefs in divine providence.

In presenting the next five topics ('Outbreak of the rebellion in Ulster', 'Outbreak of rebellion in Dublin', 'Outbreak of popular violence', 'Other instances of violence' and 'Massacre at Islandmagee') a range of pedagogical strategies are deployed to allow students explore the motivations of various actors involved in fomenting rebellion and in defending the English colony in Ireland. Having studied a brief narrative of events in Ulster on the night of 22 October 1641, including the capture of Charlemont fort and the murder of Arthur Champion, a settler and justice of the peace for County Fermanagh, students are urged to consider how different communities responded, and why. They then read a proclamation allegedly issued on 23 October by Sir Phelim O'Neill, MP for Dungannon and chief conspirator in Ulster, instructing his followers not to harm English or Scottish settlers. This contrasts sharply with the testimony of Owen Connolly, the prophet and discoverer of the plot, who told the colonial authorities that the Irish rebels intended to perpetrate a wholesale massacre of Protestants (copy supplied in pack). Students learn that Connolly's 'evidence' led the lords justices to blame all 'evil-affected Irish Papists' for the rebellion. This exercise seeks to raise students' awareness of how mutual distrust contributed to the escalation of tensions during the early stages of the rebellion, and prepares the ground for investigating the outbreak of popular

violence. Students then investigate some of the more noteworthy violent events of the 1640s, such as the atrocities at Islandmagee and Portadown. Here, they are alerted to difficulties associated with interpreting surviving evidence, including the bias in favour of emphasising cruelty perpetrated against Protestants, and the manner in which the worldview of deponents and their attitudes towards their Irish and Catholic neighbours profoundly shaped how the events of the 1640s were recorded in the depositions.

Topic eleven ('Life in seventeenth-century Ireland') encourages students to analyse the depositions for evidence of daily life. For example, students examine the deposition of Robert Howell, a merchant from Kilkenny with income from an ironworks and from agricultural labour. Howell had contacts in England, France and Germany, who owed him £2,452. He lamented the fact that 'although he accounted the same to be goode debts before the begining of this rebellion, yet in regard this examinants bills bonds and bookes of account were forceably taken away from him therefore the deponent is not likely to gett any satisfaction from the said debts'.²⁹ This evidence is revealing about economic and material culture, as well as the social values invested in the written word, specifically on bonds and certificates of indebtedness. Students are encouraged to reflect on this information by writing a letter to a friend that describes how the early modern counterparts earned a living.

Since a key component of the history curriculum for year nine students is the critical analysis of propaganda, topic thirteen, 'Seventeenth-century propaganda', focuses on portrayals of the rebellion in contemporary print in order to familiarise students with evaluating the range of sources consulted by historians of 1640s Ireland. Thus, 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' propaganda items are juxtaposed. This builds on topic twelve, 'Setting up the Confederation', which explains how the rebels formed their own government and established their own printing press to rival the output of the colonial administration in Dublin and parliament in London. Through these two topics, students become aware of differences *vis-à-vis* the scale of publication, what was printed, and how each side portrayed the rebellion. For example, whereas the Confederation of Kilkenny printed sixty-six works during the 1640s,³⁰ the London presses printed hundreds on the Irish rebellion throughout the decade.³¹ Students also discover that stories featured in the depositions appeared in contemporary print, thereby introducing them to contemporary cultural constructions of violence. The resources therefore include images from James Cranford's *Teares of Ireland* (London, 1642), depicting well-established tropes of biblical

violence frequently mentioned by deponents. Irish Confederate criticisms of the portrayal of the rebellion by London printers are also included to stimulate comparisons. Students are therefore afforded opportunities to engage with fundamental issues that historians face in assessing primary sources, and hone their analytical skills.

The appearance of the depositions in print during the 1640s led to their being deemed unreliable by later nationalist writers in the nineteenth century as evidence for the massacre of Protestant settlers. Topic fourteen 'Using the depositions as propaganda' aims to develop students' understanding of how this happened. They examine an unedited, modernised deposition of John Edgeworth and compare its testimony with that presented by Henry Jones to the House of Commons in his *Remonstrance* (March 1642). Edgeworth's edited testimony in the *Remonstrance* drew selectively upon the original statement to portray a version of the rebellion that catered to anti-Catholic English audiences dissatisfied with the rule of Charles I. For example, the edited testimony revealed that the rebels claimed royal sanction for their actions; that they hoped to avenge the wrongs the 'Puritans of England' had done to the English king, and that at a meeting of friars in Multyfarnham, the issue of a plenary indulgence by the pope for all sins committed during the rebellion was discussed.³² Intriguingly, however, Jones decided that some of the information provided by Edgeworth contradicted the overall picture of the rebellion that he wished to paint; hence, he omitted it from the *Remonstrance*. Edgeworth, who described himself as a British Protestant, served as high sheriff of Longford and stated that he owned land in Cavan and Longford. Having been despoiled of some of his estate, Edgeworth was told by his mother (Mrs Jane Edgeworth) that if he wished to recover his sizeable estate he should 'turn papist' and that she was in the process of mediating with the rebels on his behalf.³³ Such evidence contradicted the prevailing narrative emanating from Irish Protestant circles that the outbreak of rebellion precipitated the wholesale massacre of Protestant settlers. By observing how easily the depositions could be manipulated to portray a certain view of the rebellion, students are encouraged to reflect on the processes at work in the construction of propaganda.

The final section of the teaching pack focuses on the consequences of the rebellion. Topic fifteen, 'Outbreak of the civil war: Ireland's role' features evidence from the depositions on Ireland's role in the wars of the three kingdoms, to develop students' awareness of how the rebellion fits into their study of the English civil wars of the 1640s. Through

topics sixteen and seventeen ('The Confederate war' and 'Cromwell at Drogheda') students trace the course of the Confederate wars in Ireland in the 1640s and examine the Cromwellian conquest (1649–52) in order to explore how memories of the alleged massacres of Irish Protestants in 1641 affected the course of these wars in Ireland. Finally, topic eighteen ('The Catholic and Protestant legacy') challenges students to consider how different communities remembered the 1641 rebellion in the centuries that followed and how particular attitudes towards the depositions influenced the formation of various traditions around the rebellion. This develops students' skills as practising historians by nurturing their ability to assess a range of historical evidence, to identify perspectives and traditions on the rebellion (and other violent events) and to understand the challenges scholars, students and members of the public alike face when researching or discussing seventeenth-century Ireland.

These teaching packs were printed and distributed by NICIE and were made available online for free download.³⁴ Over eighty paper copies were distributed across schools in Northern Ireland and a further 200 copies were downloaded, although there is no way of telling by whom. This educational resource revisits and critically examines the original interpretation of the 1641 rebellion as an instance of Irish Catholic barbarity aimed at wholesale massacre of the Irish Protestant population. Through direct engagement with the depositions and other contemporaneous evidence, students gain insights into the genesis of this version of the rebellion. Like professional historians, they can delve into the complex causes, course and consequences of the 1641 rebellion, develop their research skills, and relate that conflict to others beyond both Ireland and the seventeenth century.

CONCLUSION

These educational resources are the result of an intense and highly rewarding collaboration. Such opportunities, however, rarely present themselves to historians and educationalists, despite their obvious potential for promoting history as a discipline and for fostering a greater understanding of Ireland's contested past. In recent years there have been calls from some quarters for 'inclusivity' in historical narratives. There is a risk, however, that this may only be achieved through 'simplistic and misleading dichotomies'.³⁵ While these demands reflect the ever-changing nature of Irish politics, such inclusivity does not necessarily lie in the historical record. As

the decade of commemorations (2012–22) has led to calls for the production of shared histories on the revolutionary era (1912–23), the experience of developing these school resources has taught this author a healthy respect for folk memories and traditions about particular communities' pasts. If shared histories have little appeal for those wishing to cling to strongly held beliefs, then why pursue it? Such shared histories may prove ahistorical, inaccurately representing the archival record and/or engaging in mere tokenism, thereby potentially neglecting to discuss the brutality of events in either the early modern period or the twentieth century. The compilation of these educational resources under the auspices of this major academic project underlines the potential contribution to be made by schoolteachers in the burgeoning field of 'Public History' and in creative engagement with issues around interpretation and commemoration of our pasts. While academics, commentators, governments and journalists argue about the 'best' or 'right' way to approach commemorating the past, history teachers discuss Ireland's history with their students on a daily basis. Furthermore, as many history teachers are closely associated with their local communities and attuned to historical consciousness in their circles, they act as important mediators between communities, politicians, and academics (each with their distinct outlooks on history) in fostering interest, curiosity and knowledge of history.

A positive outcome from the decade of commemorations is a greater dialogue between historians, journalists, members of the public, politicians and cultural institutions. While it may never be possible to compose a 'shared history' of seventeenth-century Ireland, shared investigations can be encouraged. These initiatives require collaboration between educationalists, teachers, historians, and local communities. If at a young age more budding historians are afforded opportunities to engage directly with primary sources for Irish history, particularly contentious events such as the 1641 rebellion, if they are encouraged to reflect on the nature of evidence contained in the archives, and if similar initiatives are funded by the Irish and British governments, then students ought to have a strong analytical foundation for their pursuit of further education. If more dynamic resources are produced through cooperation between academics and educationalists that enrich students' skills and their understanding of the past then perhaps, the prospects for a bright future for the discipline will be strong.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise stated, the source for the McAleese and Paisley speeches is an electronic copy presented to the author by the Communications Office, Trinity College, Dublin.
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4. *Irish Times*, 23 Oct. 2010.
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6. HMC, *Ormond*, NS ii, pp 12–13; Henry Jones, *A remonstrance of divers remarkeable passages* (London, 1642), pp 13–15.
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17. *Irish Times*, 28 Apr. 1893.
18. Robert Dunlop, *Ireland under the Commonwealth* (2 vols, Manchester, 1913), i, p. vii.
19. Aidan Clarke, 'The 1641 depositions' in Peter Fox (ed.), *Treasures of the library, Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin, 1986), pp 111–22, p. 111.
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22. <http://1641dep.abdn.ac.uk/>, 6 Jan. 2014; *Irish Times*, 18 Feb. 2011.
23. *Hansard 5 (Commons)*, 9 June 1913, liii, col. 1313 (http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1913/jun/09/government-of-ireland-bill-1#column_1313) (accessed 6 Jan. 2014).
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St Patrick's Day: Commemoration, Conflict and Conciliation, 1903–2013

Brian Walker

Presently in Ireland we are marking a whole series of commemorations of important events, which happened a century ago. At the same time, we continue to mark annually a number of other commemorations or anniversaries of significant historical events or individuals, such as the Battle of the Boyne on 12 July, the Dublin Rising at Easter and, of course, St Patrick's Day. On one level, these events are simply to do with important matters from our past which we choose to recall. On another level, however, such occasions are very much to do with the present and reflect contemporary attitudes. By looking at how St Patrick's Day has been celebrated, north and south, from the beginning of the twentieth century until the present, one can see how attitudes have changed in a wide range of areas. We can learn about people's sense of identity, their ideas of history and their religious and cultural views. In the case of Ireland, of course, we are talking about highly divided attitudes, north and south. A study of how St Patrick's Day has been marked from 1903 to 2013 can provide an insight into changing identities of the various communities in Ireland since the early 1900s.

B. Walker (✉)

School of Politics, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, UK

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In the recent past, such commemorations have often been occasions of discord and conflict. Referring to the 1960s, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield has written: 'Anniversaries are the curse of Ireland. Like saint's days, the dates of historically resonant events punctuate the Northern Ireland calendar, calling for an orgy of reminiscence, celebration and demonstration from some section or other of the population.' He continued: 'it does not seem to matter that some of these demonstrations annoy or even infuriate other people; that is, indeed, for some at least of the participants, a principal attraction.'¹ It has been argued that the passion and confrontation aroused by the large number of commemorations in the 1960s, especially in 1966, was one of the factors that helped to destabilise political society and led to the outbreak of the 'Troubles'.² In recent decades, however, new ways of viewing and celebrating these commemorations have emerged. Such changes indicate radically altered understanding of matters of identity in Ireland, north and south. To some extent, such developments reflect the recent peace process. At the same time, the new approach to these commemorations has helped to create conditions that have led to conciliation between the different communities in Ireland.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARTITION FOR COMMEMORATION

In the early twentieth century St Patrick's Day was celebrated in many parts of the island. All the main denominations regarded St Patrick as the patron saint of Ireland. Many churches and cathedral buildings of both the Catholic church and the Church of Ireland were named in his honour. In 1903 a bill was introduced at Westminster to make St Patrick's Day a bank holiday and it quickly passed into law with the support of all MPs from Ireland – an outcome which, as the *Belfast News-Letter* commented, was 'rare good fortune' for an Irish bill.³ That same year the paper also remarked: 'The anniversary helps to create a spirit of mutual tolerance and good will amongst Irishmen and this year perhaps the spirit is more evident than before.'⁴ The rise in political controversy over the next decade did not dent this wide support for St Patrick's Day. In Dublin there were usually two parades involving the lord mayor and the lord lieutenant.

The *Church of Ireland Gazette* for 20 March 1913 reported that on St Patrick's Day holy communion was held in St Patrick's cathedral, Dublin, where Reverend J. E. H. Murphy, professor of Irish at Trinity College, officiated. The *Gazette* noted that all over Ireland, in many cathedrals, the festival was duly honoured. To some extent, there were probably more

popular celebrations in nationalist rather than unionist circles; for example, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) organised their parades on this day, and Catholic parish churches throughout Ireland, not just cathedrals, held services in honour of the saint. Nonetheless, this day was held as important in all the main communities and was regarded as a special day for Ireland and expressions of Irishness. On 18 March 1914, an editorial of the Belfast unionist paper, the *Northern Whig*, noted: 'Irishmen, whatever their creed or politics, have an affectionate regard for St Patrick's day and yesterday the shamrock was worn in honour of the festival by fully nine tenths of the population of the country.' Significant differences, however, would now emerge between north and south in how St Patrick's Day was celebrated. This reflected the impact of the Ulster crisis, 1912–14, the Easter Rising of 1916, the War of Independence and the Civil War. The two new states sought to develop their own identities.

In the new Irish Free State, St Patrick's Day quickly took on special significance. In 1922 it was made a general holiday and from 1925, thanks to the Irish Free State licensing act, all public houses were closed on that day. From the early 1900s a strong movement had grown up to express concern that alcohol was too closely associated with the day and with Irishness, and the founders of the new state were happy to endorse this change. In Dublin, an annual army parade replaced the processions organised previously by the lord lieutenant and lord mayor. Throughout the country there were also parades, often involving army marches to church for Mass. Dances, sporting activities, theatrical events and excursions were run on the day. The Irish language was specially promoted, frequently with events organised by the Gaelic League. In 1926 the southern premier W. T. Cosgrave made the first official radio broadcast on St Patrick's Day. He called for mutual understanding and harmony and declared: 'The destinies of the country, north and south, are now in the hands of Irishmen, and the responsibility for success or failure will rest with ourselves. If we are to succeed there must be a brotherly toleration of each other's ideas as to how our ambition may be realised, and a brotherly co-operation in every effort towards its realisation.'⁵ In his St Patrick's Day speech, 1930, Cosgrave stated: 'as we have been Irish and Roman, so it will remain', but he prefaced his statement with the remark that he was speaking for the majority of people in the state.⁶ In 1931, in a St Patrick's Day broadcast to the Irish in America, reported in the Irish press, Cosgrave again sought to make a reconciliatory gesture: 'whatever be your creed in religion or politics, you are of the same blood – the healing process must go on.'⁷

With the accession to power of Eamon de Valera and Fianna Fáil in 1932, however, St Patrick's Day took on new importance. Links between church and state were stressed publicly with the annual procession on St Patrick's Day of de Valera and his executive council, complete with a cavalry troop, to the Dublin pro-cathedral for Mass.⁸ The Patrician year of 1932, which included the eucharistic congress held in Dublin, gave an opportunity for large demonstrations, with considerable state involvement, emphasising connections between Ireland and Rome.⁹ The Church of Ireland organised its own events in 1932 in the south but without state involvement. While Cosgrave had sought to take a broad and conciliatory approach to St Patrick's Day, Eamon de Valera took a different line. In his St Patrick's Day broadcast of 1935 he reminded people that Ireland had been a Christian and Catholic nation since St Patrick's time. He declared: 'She remains a Catholic nation.'¹⁰

De Valera now used the St Patrick's Day broadcasts, which were transmitted to the USA and Australia, to launch vigorous attacks on the British government and partition. These speeches reached a peak in 1939 when de Valera broadcast on St Patrick's Day from Rome where he had attended the inauguration of Pope Pius XII. He declared how he had made a pledge beside the grave of Hugh O'Neill that he would never rest until 'that land which the Almighty so clearly designed as one shall belong undivided to the Irish people'. He urged his listeners to do likewise.¹¹ At the same time, however, the links between Catholicism and Irish identity as expressed on St Patrick's Day were not absolute. In 1939 too, the Church of Ireland president of Ireland, Douglas Hyde, attended a St Patrick's Day service in the Church of Ireland cathedral of St Patrick's in Dublin.¹²

During the Second World War celebrations on St Patrick's Day were restrained, although de Valera continued to make his annual broadcast. In 1943 he spoke of the restoration of the national territory and the national language as the greatest of the state's uncompleted tasks.¹³

After the Second World War, St Patrick's Day became a major national holiday once again. In 1950 the military parade in Dublin was replaced by a trade and industries parade. In their St Patrick's Day speeches in the 1950s, heads of government, Eamon de Valera and J. A. Costello, continued to use the event to make strong denunciations of partition. In his St Patrick's Day broadcast in 1950 Costello declared that 'our country is divided by foreign interference'.¹⁴ By the 1950s government ministers and spokesmen, such as Seán MacEntee, were also making public speeches on the day at a range of venues in Britain and the USA, usually concentrat-

ing on attacking partition.¹⁵ In 1955 a rare discordant note was struck by Bishop Cornelius Lucey of Cork when in his St Patrick's Day address he suggested that emigration was a greater evil than partition, but this had no impact.¹⁶ Irish leaders in their speeches continued to emphasise links between Ireland and Rome. By the mid-1950s it was common for either the president or the taoiseach to be in Rome on St Patrick's Day. The 1961 Patrician celebrations marked a high point in this religious aspect of the festival. It began with the arrival on 13 March of a papal legate, Cardinal James McIntyre, who, as described in the *Capuchin Annual*, was 'welcomed with the protocol reception given only to a head of state'. This included a welcome at the airport from the taoiseach and a full military guard.¹⁷

Turning to Northern Ireland after 1921, St Patrick's Day was still observed, but in a more under-stated way than in the south. During the 1920s and 1930s the shamrock continued to be worn widely and the day remained a bank holiday when banks, government and municipal offices and schools were closed, although many shops and factories seem to have been unaffected.¹⁸ In Catholic churches St Patrick's Day was an important feast day and was well-attended. The AOH continued to organise demonstrations on this date and nationalist politicians often used the occasion to make speeches. From 1925 the BBC in Northern Ireland commenced an annual series of special broadcasts on St Patrick's Day.¹⁹ The Patrician year of 1932, regarded as the anniversary of St Patrick's arrival in Ireland, was marked by all the churches. At Saul, the site of St Patrick's first church, the Church of Ireland built a new church while the Catholic church erected a statue of St Patrick on a nearby hill top. The Presbyterian church also held events to mark St Patrick's arrival. Each of the main denominations took advantage of the occasion to reaffirm its belief that St Patrick belonged exclusively to its own tradition.²⁰

Sporting activities took place on St Patrick's Day, including the Ulster schools rugby and Gaelic football cup finals; and special theatrical events, dances and dinners were well attended in the 1920s and 1930s. On 18 March 1939 the *Belfast News-Letter* reported that 'in Belfast and all over the province Ulster folk said goodbye to St Patrick's Day with dances and other entertainments'. Special ceremonies of the trooping of the colour and presentation of the shamrock to Irish regiments remained a tradition (begun by Queen Victoria at the end of her reign). There was, however, no government involvement in or recognition of St Patrick's Day, apart from a number of dinners or dances on the day, organised by the duke of

Abercorn as governor of Northern Ireland.²¹ On the unionist and government side there was no attempt to hold parades or make speeches on 17 March. The speeches of southern politicians on the day denouncing partition or declaring Ireland's attachment to Rome were reported regularly in the northern press and sometimes criticised in editorials but there was no attempt by the government in this period to respond.

After the Second World War, banks and government offices in Northern Ireland continued to close on St Patrick's Day, while the wearing of the shamrock remained popular and the tradition of presenting it to Irish regiments abroad continued. Catholic churches still observed it as a special feast day and the AOH organised parades and demonstrations as before. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the Northern Ireland premier, Lord Brookeborough, used the occasion of St Patrick's Day to issue public addresses to Ulster people abroad, while members of his cabinet spoke at dinners organised by Ulster associations in Great Britain.²² By the mid-1950s however, these attempts to match the political use made of St Patrick's Day by the southern government had mostly ceased. In the late 1950s a government information officer urged the Northern Ireland cabinet that it might be wise to 'quietly forget' St Patrick's Day and abolish it as a bank holiday.²³ The suggestion was rejected, but it is clear from newspaper reports in the 1950s that for many people St Patrick's Day was 'business as usual'. Many schools dropped it as a holiday and shops and businesses remained open.²⁴

It continued to be an important day for Catholics and nationalists, when AOH parades were usually addressed by northern nationalist politicians, often denouncing the 'six county system'. On St Patrick's Day in 1960 a statement from northern nationalist MPs and senators that 'towards the ideal of a united Ireland we will strive unceasingly', was published on the front page of the *Irish News*, alongside the St Patrick's Day messages from the taoiseach and president, also calling for reunification.²⁵ Correspondents in the unionist press denounced the political overtones of the day in both the north and the south. One letter on 17 March 1961 in the *Belfast News-Letter* stated that 'the day is now chiefly memorable to the average Ulsterman as the day on which repeated threats against his stand for constitutional liberty are pronounced in the republic and on which Ulster's position is vilified throughout the English speaking world.'²⁶

Nonetheless, it should be noted that there were some in unionist and Protestant church circles who believed that more attention should be given to the event. From the mid-1950s the editorial in the *Belfast Telegraph*

often urged that the day should be a full public holiday. We may note that Reverend Ian Paisley chose to open his first Free Presbyterian church at Crossgar, County Down, on St Patrick's Day, 1951. In the 1950s the Church of Ireland inaugurated an annual St Patrick's Day pilgrimage and special service at Downpatrick and Saul, which was well attended. Such events were still strongly limited by denominational barriers, although small elements of change were occurring. In 1956 the nationalist members of Downpatrick council refused an invitation to participate in a joint wreath-laying ceremony at what was believed to be St Patrick's grave, on the grounds that the Catholic church 'had arranged adequate celebrations for the Feast and they could not add anything to them'. Eight years later, however, when the archbishop of Canterbury was the special guest at the St Patrick's Day service at the Church of Ireland cathedral in Downpatrick, nationalist councillors turned up to greet the archbishop at the entrance to the cathedral, although they felt unable to enter the building.²⁷

CHANGES FROM THE 1960s

During the 1960s celebrations of St Patrick's Day continued to reflect highly polarised views on this event, but elements of change can be discerned. On St Patrick's Day 1960 Irish president, Eamon de Valera, issued a greeting to the friends of Ireland overseas. He expressed hope that the occasion would strengthen 'your determination to continue your support of the motherland's just claims to the unity of the national territory'. In the same year, however, in his message to Irish men and women abroad, Taoiseach Seán Lemass declared that 'politically the aim of national objectives was the unity of Ireland, which would be achieved ultimately', but for the first time he expressed also his support for better understanding with the north.²⁸ In 1962 de Valera visited the pope in Rome and, in a Radio Éireann broadcast from there on St Patrick's Day, he stated that 'loyalty to the See of Peter has been an outstanding characteristic of the Irish people's faith, and it is well that in commemorating St Patrick we should give national expression of this great historic fact and pledge continuance'.²⁹

Nonetheless, subsequently, St Patrick's Day messages from the taoiseach, Seán Lemass and then Jack Lynch, often contained expressions of hope of co-operation and better understanding between north and south, although these were usually qualified by the stated belief that goodwill arising from this 'would surely hasten the day of reunification'.³⁰ Other leading politicians, such as Neil Blaney and George Colley, used the occa-

sion in the mid-1960s to call for cross-border co-operation in matters such as tourism.³¹ St Patrick's Day continued to be observed widely in the south. It was a public holiday and there were various parades and church services. The ban on the sale of alcohol on St Patrick's Day was lifted in 1961. In Dublin throughout this period, the main event was a trade and industries parade.

In Northern Ireland, celebration of St Patrick's Day in the 1960s was still generally restrained, compared to the south. It remained a bank holiday, when government offices were closed, but the press reported that it was usually a 'working day for most people and shops and other businesses remained open'.³² Shamrock was distributed to British army regiments from Northern Ireland, both at home and abroad, and to the Irish Guards. In Belfast, there was no parade, but a small number of cultural and sporting events usually took place. St Patrick's Day retained greater significance among members of the Catholic community. There were special services in many Catholic churches and the AOH continued to organise a number of well-attended demonstrations on the day. There were a few small scale parades, as in Downpatrick and Armagh, connected with Catholic church services.

During this decade, however, we can see some effort to make the event more important and more widely appreciated. The government did not organise official events or issue statements, but the Northern Ireland premier, Captain Terence O'Neill, took advantage of the day on a number of occasions to make special visits to Canada and America.³³ The pilgrimage and church services at Downpatrick, organised by the Church of Ireland, became more popular, and in 1961 both the diocesan synod of Down and Dromore and the annual conference of the Young Unionists, the young people's organisation of the Ulster Unionist Party, urged more support for the day.³⁴ In the north Bishop Julian Mitchell of Down and Dromore seems to have been the leading Church of Ireland figure in promoting interest in St Patrick, as was also Archbishop George Otto Simms in Dublin. Some correspondents in the press argued that St Patrick's Day should be ignored in the north because of the way it had become politicised, but influential editorials in the *Belfast Telegraph* continued to back calls to give it more importance.³⁵

From the early 1970s celebration of St Patrick's Day changed more significantly, especially in the south. The most conspicuous change was in the character of the Dublin parade after its organisation was taken over in

1970 by Dublin Tourism. There were now bands and majorettes as well as many visitors from the USA and Canada in the parade, which took on a new tourist and commercial aspect. Significant changes also occurred in other areas. An editorial in the *Irish Independent*, 16 March 1974, pointed out that 'since the Troubles began in the north' speakers at St Patrick's Day parades have become 'hyper-sensitive about words, concepts, tributes and ideologies which hitherto had been taken for granted' and talked of a new growing acceptance of different traditions and a slow redefinition of Irish patriotism. Speeches by leading politicians no longer contained strong condemnation of partition, and, both in America and at home, Irish government ministers often denounced violence and support for the IRA.³⁶ On a religious level also, efforts were made to overcome the denominational divisions associated with the saint's day. On St Patrick's Day 1972 a Jesuit, Father Michael Hurley, became the first Catholic priest since the Jacobite period to preach in St Patrick's Church of Ireland cathedral in Dublin. Interdenominational services were now held on the day and an ecumenical blessing of the shamrock became a regular feature of the Dublin parade.³⁷

A new organisation, 'St Patrick's Festival', was set up in 1995 to run the Dublin parade, which has become part of an all-day cultural and tourist event. In 1996 the chairman, Michael Colgan, declared: 'The day is long gone when you could have an electrical company with washing machines on a float and a girl in a sash.'³⁸ Another new feature of St Patrick's Day has been efforts by the Irish government to promote Ireland abroad and to connect with members of the Irish diaspora. Previously some government ministers had attended celebrations of St Patrick's Day in Britain and the USA. By the early 2000s, however, over a dozen government ministers and large numbers of councillors visited such events among the Irish diaspora, all over the globe. From the mid-1990s it became an annual feature for the taoiseach to present shamrock to the American president at the White House. On 17 March 2004 an editorial in the *Irish Times* declared:

Ireland looks inwards and outwards on St Patrick's Day, celebrating Irish identity and communicating it to other peoples. The holiday ... has a remarkable outreach to the Irish abroad, to their host societies and to the wider world. In recent years these dimensions have been projected even more strongly by a growing internationalisation of Ireland's economic, cultural and political life.

It observed: ‘St Patrick remains an appropriate figure to express these changing realities. He has been reimagined to fit them, as is often the case with such national symbols.’ Such changes reflected a gradual weakening of the main denominations’ influence in society, as well as the impact of globalisation and a new interest in the Irish diaspora.

In Northern Ireland changes in the marking of St Patrick’s Day were slower to come. During the 1970s and 1980s the occasion continued to be celebrated in an unremarkable way. It remained a bank holiday but there was little special about it apart from some sporting events, several AOH parades and a number of religious services. There were celebrations in Newry, Armagh and some other towns, and occasionally parades on the Falls Road in Belfast and in Derry. There were new instances of interdenominational co-operation on the day. The first joint Protestant–Catholic service in Down Church of Ireland cathedral was held on 17 March 1985, while five years later in Armagh Catholic cathedral an ecumenical service commemorated the laying of the cathedral foundations.³⁹ Nonetheless, such events did not attract widespread support. On 17 March 1992 an editorial in the *Belfast Telegraph* commented: ‘A casual visitor to Ulster would need to be very perceptive to realise that this is St Patrick’s Day. Our celebrations are so muted as to be invisible. Yet across the border, March 17 is an occasion for national rejoicing by people and government.’

From the early 1990s, however, the event began to assume greater importance. Parades in nationalist towns such as Newry and Downpatrick were revitalised. At the same time there was an effort to give these events a cross-community focus, especially in Downpatrick, thanks in large part to the work of Edward Mc Grady, MP, of the Social, Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). From 1994, at unionist instigation, the flag of St Patrick was flown at Belfast City Hall. By the late 1990s members of the Apprentice Boys of Derry in the city of Derry and a number of Ulster Scots groups had become involved in celebrations on the day. Efforts to organise a major parade in Belfast were dogged by controversy over flags and emblems. The first such parades in the late 1990s and early 2000s proved controversial, but subsequently they achieved wider, if not universal, support. By 2006 the event in Belfast had become a major festival, organised by Belfast City Council.

From 1994 unionist politicians began to visit Washington on 17 March to attend events at the White House, where SDLP and Sinn Féin leaders had already been guests on St Patrick’s Day. After 1998 the first and deputy first ministers were received at the White House by the president

on the day. These visits by Northern Ireland politicians to Washington provided the occasion for several important initiatives in relation to the Northern Ireland peace process.⁴⁰ In 1999 the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, John Alderdice, organised the first official reception on St Patrick's Day at the assembly buildings at Stormont, and this has continued annually (although cancelled in 2010, so that the Speaker could attend the St Patrick's Day celebrations in the White House). Politicians, including Dr Ian Paisley, have urged that St Patrick's Day be made a public holiday in Northern Ireland.⁴¹ This has not happened, but St Patrick's Day now enjoys markedly wider support than before. On St Patrick's Day 2003 a *Belfast News-Letter* editorial declared that: 'March 17 is increasingly seen as a day when the peoples of the two main traditions in our province can share the Christian legacy and inheritance of St Patrick. Marking St Patrick's day in an appropriate way should not be seen as a threat to the culture and aspirations of the pro-union population and the events should be celebrated in a manner that offends no one.'

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Some final observations are appropriate. Celebration of St Patrick's Day has changed greatly in its form over the last one hundred years. In the early days it was marked by most of the main communities and traditions in Ireland. Then it became dominated by one major group and the other major group walked away. This separation, however, was never complete. There continued to be some in the northern unionist and Protestant tradition who retained a strong interest and involvement in the day. Southern Protestants also continued to honour the feast day. Nonetheless, in the context of the political changes that occurred between 1912 and 1923, this event came largely to be monopolised by the nationalist and Catholic community, north and south. Such involvement was seen by many as an important part of Irish identity which moved from a more conciliatory spirit to one linked to a strong sense of (Catholic) nationalism and anti-partitionism. This latter approach can be seen clearly in speeches by Eamon de Valera on St Patrick's Day in Rome, in 1938 and again in 1962.

Northern Protestants, by and large, withdrew from celebration of this event, partly because of the way these religious and political dimensions became linked. At the same time they wanted to emphasise their ideas of British and Ulster identity, with no place for any Irish identity, which St Patrick's Day celebrations seemed to embody. At the beginning of the

twentieth century most northern unionists had been happy to acknowledge their Irish nationality alongside their British citizenship.⁴² By the late 1960s, the number of Protestants/unionists in Northern Ireland who still identified themselves as Irish as well as British had fallen to about 20 per cent: by the late 1970s this had collapsed to 8 per cent.⁴³ These developments in the celebration of St Patrick's Day reflected the broader political and religious divisions in Ireland. At the same time they undoubtedly served to heighten such divisions.

In recent decades, however, efforts to respect different traditions and also to seek common ground have changed how this event is approached. St Patrick's Day is once again experienced as a shared event, which unionists and nationalists, Catholics and Protestants, can enjoy. This reflects a new ecumenical spirit whereby St Patrick is viewed not in restrictive denominational terms but as a common saint for all the churches. Such developments reflect also new approaches to Irish identity. From the 1970s onwards, there was a strong effort in the south to replace the Catholic and anti-partitionist characteristics of St Patrick's Day with a more pluralist and conciliatory spirit. These changes were part of important developments that would eventually lead to the amendment of the Irish constitution, after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement of 1998, with the removal of the territorial claim on the north and the acceptance of the principle of consent.

At the same time, the new second article of the Irish constitution acknowledged the importance of the Irish diaspora. A central feature of today's celebrations of St Patrick's Day is worldwide outreach to the Irish diaspora. On 4 June 2011, at the Irish Pontifical College in Rome, President Mary McAleese gave a different view of religion and Irish identity from that espoused earlier by Eamon de Valera in Rome on St Patrick's Day. She declared that despite 'past political and religious conflicts', modern Ireland has emerged as 'a country, a family, which is at once Catholic, Protestant, agnostic, atheist, Islamic, Jewish' and that all are to be 'cherished equally'.⁴⁴

In Northern Ireland there have also been important changes in how St Patrick's Day is celebrated. In the last two decades there have been strong efforts to make it an important and inclusive event for all religious and political communities. The celebration of the day has encouraged conciliation and has promoted a non-political and non-threatening sense of Irishness. While opinion polls still show that a low number of northern unionists claim an Irish identity, from the late 1980s there has been a

rise in those who see themselves as 'Northern Irish'. The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement recognises the right of the people of Northern Ireland to 'identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British or both', which has allowed many unionists to be more relaxed about adopting an Irish identity alongside their Britishness.⁴⁵

In 2004 at an Ulster Unionist Party conference, party leader David Trimble declared; 'We are pluralist in our culture ... For us, unionism is not the same thing as Protestantism. We wish to add to the glory of being British the distinction of being Irish.'⁴⁶ In April 2007, at his first public meeting in Dublin with Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, Reverend Ian Paisley stated: 'I am proud to be an Ulsterman, but I am also proud of my Irish roots.'⁴⁷ Given the importance of St Patrick to the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, it is appropriate that the celebration of his day is no longer a source of conflict but one of a sense of a common heritage and conciliation. Surely St Patrick would have approved!

NOTES

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2. Paul Arthur, *Political realities, government and politics of Northern Ireland* (London, 1980), p. 92.
3. Pauline Mooney, 'A symbol for the nation: the national holiday campaign, 1901–3' (MA thesis, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1992), p. 76.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Irish Independent*, 18 Mar. 1926.
6. *Ibid.*, 16 Mar. 1930.
7. *Ibid.*, 18 Mar. 1931.
8. *Ibid.*, 18 Mar. 1932, 19 Mar. 1934.
9. See speech by Eamon de Valera in *Speeches and statements by Eamon de Valera, 1717–73*, ed. Maurice Moynihan (Dublin, 1980), pp 217–19.
10. *Irish Independent*, 18 Mar. 1935.
11. *Northern Whig*, 18 Mar. 1939.
12. *Irish Independent*, 18 Mar. 1939.
13. *De Valera's speeches*, ed. Moynihan, p. 46.
14. *Irish Independent*, 18 Mar. 1950.
15. *Ibid.*, 18 Mar. 1953.
16. *Ibid.*, 18 Mar. 1955.
17. Anon., 'Ireland celebrates fifteenth centenary of Saint Patrick' in *Capuchin Annual* (1962), pp 217–21, p. 218.
18. *Northern Whig*, 18 Mar. 1930.

19. Rex Cathcart, *The most contrary region: the BBC in Northern Ireland, 1924–84* (Belfast, 1984), p. 32.
20. *Irish News*, 18 Mar. 1932; *Belfast News-Letter*, 17 Mar. 1932.
21. *Northern Whig*, 18 Mar. 1930.
22. *Belfast News-Letter*, 18 Mar. 1946, 18 Mar. 1950, 17 Mar. 1952.
23. Document is quoted in *ibid.*, 1 Jan. 1996.
24. *Irish Independent*, 18 Mar. 1954; for complaints about schools not closing see *Belfast News-Letter*, 16 Mar. 1961.
25. *Irish News*, 17 Mar. 1960.
26. *Irish Independent*, 17 Mar. 1961.
27. *Ibid.*, 19 Mar. 1956; *Belfast Telegraph*, 10 Mar. 1964.
28. *Irish News*, 17 Mar. 1960.
29. *Irish Independent*, 19 Mar. 1962.
30. *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1966.
31. *Ibid.*, 18 Mar. 1964, 16 Mar. 1965.
32. *Belfast News-Letter*, 18 Mar. 1960.
33. *Irish Independent*, 17, 18 Mar. 1964.
34. *Belfast News-Letter*, 17 Mar. 1961.
35. *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 Mar. 1967.
36. *Irish Independent*, 18 Mar. 1971, 18 Mar. 1983, 18 Mar. 1987.
37. *Irish Times*, 17 Mar. 1972.
38. *Ibid.*, 19 Jan. 1996.
39. *Irish Independent*, 18 Mar. 1985; *Belfast Telegraph*, 18 Mar. 1990.
40. See Conor O’Clery, *The greening of the White House* (Dublin, 1996).
41. *Belfast News-Letter*, 17 Mar. 2008.
42. See B. M. Walker, *Dancing to history’s tune: history, myth and politics in Ireland* (Belfast, 1996), pp 114–16.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
44. *Irish Times*, 4 June 2011.
45. See B. M. Walker, ‘We all can be Irish, British or both’ in *Belfast Telegraph*, 10 June 2015.
46. *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 Nov. 2004.
47. *Belfast News-Letter*, 5 Apr. 2007.

Perceptions of Irish Religious History Among Community Activists in Northern Ireland, 2010–2013

John Wolffe

During the last two decades the critical exploration of memory has become an increasingly important strand in the academic study of Irish history, a trend paralleled by political and community discussion of the most appropriate mechanisms for reconciling both painful memories of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the conflicted longer term histories expressed in marches and other vernacular traditions. Academic interest in part arises from the influence of the seminal collection edited by Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, which appeared in French between 1984 and 1992 and was subsequently translated into English.¹ However, it has derived particular impetus from awareness of the rich, albeit often divisive, cultures of memory widespread in Ireland itself as explored in *Reconciling memories*, first published in 1988.² Edna Longley made an important contribution in her chapter in a volume published in 1991 to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Easter Rising.³ Subsequent significant publications have included Ian McBride's study of the siege of Derry and his assembling of a wide-ranging volume of contributions from other scholars; Guy Beiner's

J. Wolffe (✉)
Open University, Milton Keynes, UK

work on the 1798 rebellion, its long-term legacies and ‘deep memory’ in twentieth-century Ireland, and Roisín Higgins’s study of the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966.⁴ There is also an increasing body of academic work exploring the development of memories of the Troubles since 1969, emerging contemporaneously with the aspiration of the Consultative Group on the Past, which reported in 2009, for ‘remembrance ... which is more humane, comprehensive and rounded’.⁵ Most recently, the cross party panel chaired by Richard Haass saw ‘contending with the past’ as an important aspect of its endeavours to resolve outstanding inter-community tensions in Northern Ireland. In addition to specific measures to address the concerns of victims, it proposed the setting up both of a ‘Commission on Identity, Culture and Tradition’ and ‘an archive for conflict-related oral histories, documents, and other relevant materials’.⁶

Running through both the historical literature on memory, and public policy proposals on ‘contending’ or ‘dealing’ with the past is a more or less explicit assumption that Northern Ireland’s continuing community divide has been reinforced by conflicting and ultimately incompatible understandings of history. However, a more positive view of the role of history in the province emerged in an interview with Monsignor Raymond Murray, well known as a leading Catholic supporter of Republican prisoners, who drew attention to the development of the Federation for Ulster Local Studies, which was formed in 1974, and survived through some of the darkest days of the Troubles. Its journal began by exploring neutral topics, such as placenames, but from an early date there was also coverage of the religious history of all traditions. According to Murray:

In the Troubles, you talk about history, but in the Troubles people were asking themselves who are we, what are we, are our traditions necessarily opposed? You had some people saying, even Tony Blair, ‘*Draw a line through history and forget it*’. We say the opposite. Open it up. Tell the truth about it, educate people about it. It’s no use having a faint and vague myth. Don’t be ashamed of the past, don’t draw a line through history. Open it up, face it.⁷

Murray’s testimony is suggestive evidence of the potential for shared history to provide neutral ground, and even resources for reconciliation, in the face of sectarian conflict. It is a very different view of the role of history from that underlying much of the literature on memory, which naturally

tends to reflect its sources in tracing the development of polarised traditions rather than raising the question of whether there is actual or potential common ground between them.

EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF THE PAST

This chapter seeks to develop a complementary view of the role of memory in contemporary Northern Ireland through an analysis of some of the comments on history made in semi-structured interviews with a cross-section of religious and community activists, conducted between 2010 and 2013. These were elements of joint projects between The Open University and the Belfast-based Institute for Conflict Research, and formed part of the work of Global Uncertainties Fellowships, funded by the UK Research Councils. In the first phase linked to a project on historic Catholic–Protestant tensions, a total of sixty-six interviews were carried out in 2010, 2011 and early 2012, in three contrasting parts of Northern Ireland: Belfast; South Armagh, and a variety of locations west of the Bann, including South Tyrone, Fermanagh and Derry/Londonderry. The sample was made up as follows (Table 17.1):

No children were interviewed, but otherwise the objective was to secure a wide spread of age groups, which ranged from late teens to mid-seventies. However, there was a predominance of people in the forty to sixty age range, who thus had significant personal experience and recollections of the Troubles, but at most childhood and teenage memories of life in Northern Ireland before 1969. This sample also represented a cross section of levels of religious practice; although over half the sample

Table 17.1 Sixty-six interviewees in Northern Ireland, 2010–12

Community	Protestant 37	Catholic 29	
Gender	Male 33	Female 33	
Location	Belfast 31	South Armagh 20	West of Bann 15
Age	Under 30 6	30–50 27	Over 50 33
Churchgoing	Regular 39	Occasional 11	Never 16

Source: Open University/Institute for Conflict Research interviews

were committed and regular churchgoers, some were more occasional ones, and the remainder (although sometimes practising Christians in the past) were now atheists or agnostics or, in one case, a committed adherent of the Bahá'í faith. The sample included some individuals (termed 'key informants') who have played prominent roles in the recent history of Northern Ireland, such as Robin Eames, Harold Good, and Bernadette McAliskey, but most respondents were people with a low profile outside their own immediate communities. As the key informants were in general selected because they were – or had been – playing strategic roles in the churches, their presence in the sample naturally accentuated the predominance of older age groups and of churchgoers. Of the remaining fifty-one interviewees, only twenty-one were over fifty, and only twenty-six regular churchgoers.⁸

The second, smaller phase of fourteen interviews was conducted in Belfast in the spring and summer of 2013, and focused particularly on respondents' perceptions of martyrdom and sacrificial death, with particular reference to the Easter Rising, the Somme, the Troubles and the hunger strikes, and on their hopes and fears for the centenaries of 1914 and 1916. They formed part of wider ongoing research comparing attitudes in Northern Ireland with those in the Republic of Ireland and in other parts of the United Kingdom, and also examining Catholic and Protestant views alongside Muslim ones. This sample was all drawn from the greater Belfast area, and comprised eight men and six women, six Catholics and eight Protestants, ten churchgoers, one occasional churchgoer and three non-churchgoers.⁹

The main purpose of the first set of interviews was to gain an enhanced understanding of relationships between present-day religious practice or the lack of it, attitudes to the security situation, and to the process of peacebuilding since the mid-1990s. However, thirty-eight of the sixty-six interviewees made some kind of explicit comment about history, mostly in response to being shown a list of events in Irish history, ranging in date from the seventeenth-century plantation to the Good Friday Agreement. They were asked to identify and comment on those that they considered significant – for good or ill – for understanding the present-day situation in Northern Ireland. There was no limit on the number of events they could so identify.

Interpretation of the transcripts is somewhat subjective, especially as some respondents referred to an event that they implicitly did *not* regard as significant, but the following table gives an indication of the salient

responses. It lists all the events identified as significant by at least five respondents (Table 17.2).

Two other events on the list picked out by at least three respondents were the 1641 Rising and the act of union (1800). Three events not on the list were also mentioned by several respondents – the Great Famine, the Shankill bombing of 1993 and the Omagh bombing of 1998. On the other hand, some familiar landmarks for professional historians of Irish religion, notably the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, attracted little attention and some respondents were quite open about the limitations of their own historical knowledge. For example, one young Belfast Catholic disarmingly responded: ‘Catholic Emancipation I have heard of but can’t think what it is.’¹⁰ The wife of a Pentecostal pastor queried ‘When you say disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, what does that mean?’¹¹

It is immediately apparent from the table that, for many, events within living memory, especially if they were personally experienced in some way, seemed more significant than those in the historic past. A Church of Ireland administrator responded: ‘The Battle of the Boyne and all that jazz wouldn’t have much relevance to me.’¹² A Catholic commented

Table 17.2 Historical events deemed significant by sixty-six interviewees, 2010–12

	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Protestant</i>	<i>Total</i>
Overall sample	15	23	38
Plantation (early seventeenth century)	4	8	12
Siege of Derry (1688–9)	1	4	5
Battle of the Boyne (1690)	2	7	9
Catholic Emancipation (1829)	3	3	6
Ulster Covenant (1912)	3	6	9
Easter Rising (1916)	2	8	10
Partition (1921)	3	7	10
Bloody Sunday (1972)	10	14	24
Hunger strikes (1981)	9	8	17
Darkley massacre ^a (1983)	3	5	8
Good Friday Agreement (1998)	10	11	21

Source: Open University/Institute for Conflict Research interviews

^aThe ‘Darkley massacre’ was an attack by the self-styled ‘Catholic Reaction Force’ on a Pentecostal church in County Armagh, in which three members of the congregation were killed and seven others wounded. While, in terms of loss of life it was by no means the worst atrocity of the Troubles, the random shooting of innocent civilians during a church service was a particularly extreme manifestation of sectarian hatred.

‘These other things – ancient history, don’t interest me at all. They are relevant but for me don’t do much.’¹³ A Catholic woman in her fifties from Armagh highlighted Bloody Sunday, the hunger strikes and the Darkley massacre (and the Good Friday Agreement as a positive development) but remarked ‘The Plantation of Ulster etc., they don’t really mean a lot to me.’¹⁴

Other interviewees who lived through the hunger strikes were profoundly affected by them. For a Catholic woman from West Belfast ‘It really hits home because a lot of them are from the Falls Road and some of the families I would have known.’¹⁵ A Protestant contemporary growing up in County Tyrone lacked the same personal contacts and acknowledged that ‘there wouldn’t have been any way at the time for me to understand what was going on’. Nevertheless, the interviewee stated: ‘Bobby Sands changed my life ... it became the moment when I decided that I had to do everything in my power to ensure that this doesn’t happen again.’¹⁶ There was, though, acknowledgement that the passage of time had brought wider perspectives: a Catholic who was nine at the time of the hunger strikes observed that it ‘was a much simpler world in the 1980s, it was black and white ... And it’s a different world now’.¹⁷ A Protestant recalled that at the time of the hunger strikes the attitude in her home was ‘Sure let them die’ but in ‘the past fifteen to twenty years I have begun to see it through a different lens’.¹⁸

The emphasis on recent events was especially pronounced among the Catholic sample, with thirty-six identifications of events since 1969 and only twenty-one of historic ones. Among Protestant respondents, on the other hand, historic events had a slight majority over recent ones, at fifty-two to forty-seven. This widespread lack of engagement with more distant history clearly merits further reflection, and provides an essential context for analysis in the rest of this chapter of how that distant history is regarded by the minority of the Catholic sample and small majority of the Protestant one who do take an interest in it.

TOWARDS SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS?

While Protestants in general were found to have a stronger sense of history than Catholics, among this sample at least that sense of history was not especially focused on the traditional Orange-style celebration of the Boyne. Indeed it is striking that quite as many of them saw the Easter Rising as a significant event, although primarily because they perceived it

as being such for Catholics, an assumption that ironically, but significantly, was not supported by responses from Catholics themselves. A Catholic woman educated at a convent school in Newry in the 1960s pointed out that the nuns ‘heavily frowned’ on republicanism and that, contrary to Protestant perceptions, she was not ‘indoctrinated in ... the goodness of the Easter Rising’.¹⁹ On the other hand, another Catholic interviewee thought ‘I dare say if you talked to some of the Catholic schools on the Falls Road for example and gave them those dates the only thing you would get back is the Easter Rising.’²⁰

It must be acknowledged that as some of the more hardline Protestants approached to take part in the research declined to do so, their perspective was under-represented in the sample. Nevertheless it is striking that the predominant view among Protestant churchgoers who did take part was more critical than celebratory of key events in their own history. Thus an Omagh Church of Ireland woman in her fifties acknowledged a sense of sharing in ‘the guilt of the Protestant people ... when you think of the arrogance of us coming in and taking over’. She perceived Cromwell’s actions as ‘horrible’.²¹ It is possible to detect something of a generational change in the advance of such attitudes among those from a Protestant background. One respondent recalled a conversation at least ten years before with his now-deceased grandmother, who was talking about their ancestors who settled in Ulster in 1673. He asked her ‘But what about the people that lived here?’ and recalled that

she looked totally perplexed and shocked and really challenged and internally you could see that she was really struggling with this and it [was] something she had never actually comprehended before. She said ‘You know I never thought about that ...’²²

Another Protestant respondent, however, defended the plantation on the grounds that the conventional narrative was distorted by nationalists who, he thought, ‘have been masters of rewriting history for their own purposes’. He thought that the idea that ‘the “Prods” from mainland Britain were imposed on the poor Catholics’ was nonsense. His own version of the history of the seventeenth century highlighted the participation of Catholics themselves in the plantation, their presence in Cromwell’s army, and the killing of Protestants as well as Catholics at the sack of Drogheda. He also appeared to believe that the controversial painting at Stormont supposedly showing Pope Innocent XI blessing William of Orange represented an

actual historical event.²³ An aspiration to challenge historical mythologies can bring its own distortions.

Those who singled out the Battle of the Boyne, did so, not as an event to be celebrated, but rather, as one respondent put it, because it was ‘the start of everything that we’ve went through’.²⁴ Another Protestant interviewee, however, argued that ‘if you understand the real historical context’ it need not be divisive.²⁵ She did not elaborate on what aspects of the ‘context’ she had in mind but it is interesting to note that the sentiment that better understanding of the Williamite Wars could help to build bridges between communities was echoed by two respondents from Catholic backgrounds. A woman whose grandmother had met James Connolly and Patrick Pearse, and whose father had been interned in the 1970s, found a conference about the siege of Derry to be ‘eye opening’ since it transformed her perception that it was a ‘narrow sectarian thing’, by setting events in Ulster in a wider European context. She came away thinking ‘God, the term Londonderry doesn’t feel threatening any more.’²⁶

For Bernadette McAliskey (*née* Devlin), a leading republican and socialist activist in the 1970s, the defenders of Derry had an heroic quality as ‘an element of ordinary people defending the little they had with their lives when their leaders would happily have surrendered them’. On the other hand she characterised the Boyne as a clash between ‘two parcels of rogues who, had history so determined that they fought at Dover, the rest of us would have been saved an inglorious history’.²⁷

A similar pattern of critical ambivalence was apparent in relation to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century events. One Belfast Protestant commented on contemporary responses to the act of union, notably Catholic enthusiasm and Protestant despair at the demise of the Dublin Parliament, attitudes which seemed to him to cast an ironic light on subsequent events.²⁸ A young Armagh Catholic man appreciated the complex legacy of emancipation, perceiving the eventual alienation of Protestants from the nationalist cause as the price that was paid for greater Catholic freedoms.²⁹

Interestingly, all the three respondents who made an unprompted mention of the Famine were Protestants. For one, closer study of what happened in the 1840s was a kind of revelation that gave him ‘a sort of context as to why Irish people don’t like the British’.³⁰ Another reflected on the divergent perceptions of Protestants and Catholics: for the former it was an event in the distant past; for the latter it was as though it had happened in ‘Granny’s lifetime’.³¹

The Ulster Covenant was deemed of ‘tremendous significance’ by one Belfast Protestant, but his perspective on it was anything but celebratory. He saw something ‘quite dark and deep and sinister’ in what he felt was a misapplication of the Christian concept of covenant with God, implying an irrevocable commitment to a particular political purpose.³² A Catholic respondent also affirmed the significance of the Covenant, but charitably commented on how it was in part a response to conflict over mixed marriages fuelled by the *Ne temere* decree in 1907.³³

As already noted, comment on the Easter Rising came primarily from Protestants rather than Catholics. One respondent perceived both the Rising itself and the subsequent executions of its leaders by the British authorities as ‘colossal mistake[s]’, albeit ones that were understandable in the context of a wartime situation in which military rather than political approaches were prioritised.³⁴ A young Protestant woman in Belfast was well aware of the extent to which a mythology was created after the event, leading her to emphasise the importance of critical historical study.³⁵

In the first set of interviews, largely conducted in 2010 and 2011, several Protestant respondents volunteered a concern about the upcoming ‘decade of anniversaries’. As one put it, ‘the potential is there ... for good or bad, for both.’³⁶ Another interviewee reflected further on the challenges raised both by regular annual commemorations and by the centenaries:

They’re lived history and I think that’s it ... I think the trick is how you retain those things with integrity and actually try to bring them through so that they can become not just simply memorials but something around this is part of our history ... I’m not saying you’ve got to celebrate it you know because I think to celebrate difference is impossible. I can’t celebrate things that for me are anathema ... It’s about recognising difference and it’s about finding ways to accommodate the difference ...³⁷

By the time that the second set of interviews was conducted in the summer of 2013 the centenaries were much closer, and there was opportunity to reflect on the commemoration of the Covenant that had already taken place in September 2012. These respondents spoke of the importance of seeking as much consensus as possible, but were also well aware of the challenges entailed in doing so – notably the risk of ‘official’ commemorations being outflanked by republican dissidents and loyalist hardliners. There was also significant concern about the potential for a resurgence of militant attitudes among young people with no first-hand experience

of the anguish of the Troubles and simplistic understandings of the more distant past. The response – it is suggested – needs to be not only one of carefully choreographed superficial consensus, even if that were possible, but also one of purposeful public education, based on rounded objective historical analysis and contextualisation. The comments of a former Irish Republican Army hunger-striker are especially apposite. He feared polarised responses to the 1916 centenary,

But we can also then get to the point where looking back becomes sort of bland. We tone everything down to say, ‘*We’re all similar*’. But I think it is about thinking why did people sign the Covenant? Why did people join the Ulster Volunteer Force? What were the circumstances at the time? Rather than just singing the praises of the people who started this, or the people who then died for it. To me let’s look at what were the conditions at the time, what led to this? Why did they think this was a good move? What were the fears at the time? *So there needs to be a wee bit of analysis around it?* Of course. It is about learning from history.³⁸

The Covenant centenary drew positive comment both from a nationalist representative of Belfast City Council, which had successfully taken the initiative in facilitating an inclusive commemoration attended by both the Social Democratic and Labour Party and Sinn Féin,³⁹ and by an Orangeman who saw it as ‘a once in a lifetime thing’. He thought that ‘we have a unique opportunity and I suppose a responsibility to make sure the centenaries are commemorated in a way that will not promote division but will inform debate.’⁴⁰ An academic assessment of the role of the churches in the Covenant centenary saw it as something of a missed opportunity insofar as there was a focus ‘on managing the risks of sectarianism rather than proactively reaching for a transformation of Northern Ireland society through self-critical reflection, commemoration and inclusion’.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the manner in which it was possible for the Covenant to be commemorated without giving rise to significant confrontations was an encouraging indication of the growing influence of better-informed and less partisan versions of history.

CONCLUSION

These interviews with religious and community activists thus present a significant counterpoint to the work of historians who have traced the divisive legacies of history in Northern Ireland. They provide evidence that in these quarters there is now a readiness to question entrenched polarised narratives of Irish history, and to seek to understand contentious events in an informed and rounded context. The small and perhaps not wholly representative nature of the sample makes it impossible to quantify this trend with any confidence, and it is clear that simplistic and partisan readings of history also continue to be influential, not least among the generation of young people which has grown up since the end of the Troubles. Ironically, for all its intellectual sophistication, historical writing that implicitly presupposes the inevitable and indefinite persistence of two opposed traditions can have parallel cultural consequences. However, both the appetite of some for balanced analysis and the ongoing prevalence elsewhere of divisive mythologies, point to the potential for professional historians to have an active role as mediators and educators in the endeavour to build a 'shared future' in Northern Ireland, rather than merely one of passive observation and analysis of passing events. In part the task is an intellectual one of researching and writing a history that explores commonalities across traditions, and explores the contingent and external factors leading to conflict rather than assuming its inevitability. In part it is one of effective dissemination of their insights in the quarters where they can have the desired impact. This is a challenging medium- to long-term task, which will extend well beyond the centenaries themselves. It is, however, one well worth undertaking, precisely because, as one interviewee observed, the centenaries, for all their potential difficulties, are outside living memory, and hence attract less emotional investment and offer greater potential for objective reassessment than the painful series of fiftieth anniversaries that will start to unroll from 2019 onwards.⁴² There is hope that an increasing recognition that the tragedy of the First World War was one shared by all Irish people will counteract the more divisive political resonances of the Easter Rising. There is also value in taking a long view to promote greater historical literacy in time for 2022, likely to be a particularly challenging year beginning as it will with the fiftieth anniversary of Bloody Sunday, and ending with the centenary of the formal enactment of partition.

Historians of religion have a distinctive contribution to make to this wider undertaking. Edna Longley wrote in 1991 that ‘religion, still the major psycho-cultural force in Ireland, has powerfully influenced the forms of Irish memory’ but observed that ‘the deconsecration of Irish memory is overdue – and underway’.⁴³ The rapid secularisation of Irish society during the last quarter of a century has indeed furthered that process, but, as the religious dimension forms an essential part of the context of the events in question, it is important that it too continues to be properly understood, rather than caricatured by sectarian or secular polemic. In particular, our interviews suggested that somewhat monolithic perceptions of the history of Ireland’s main religious traditions remain widespread, especially among those who identify them with ‘the other side’ but also among their own professed adherents. Enhanced general public understanding of the Catholic church’s often ambivalent relationship to Irish nationalism and of the rich internal diversity of Irish Protestantism would surely be valuable. A more widespread awareness of the contingent factors that during the nineteenth century created the Catholic–nationalist and Protestant–unionist alignments that came to seem axiomatic in the twentieth century would be helpful in prompting a questioning of their inevitability in the twenty-first century.⁴⁴ And while few people would regret that the technicalities of disestablishment, which aroused such strong passions in 1869, are of no public interest today, there may still be value in recalling that at a constitutional level the battle for religious equality and the separation of religion from the state in Ireland was won a century and a half ago, a one hundred and fiftieth anniversary that could constructively be marked in 2019 alongside other more recent, painful and contentious events.

In 2009 the Consultative Group on the Past observed that:

Divided communities carry different experiences and understandings of the past in their minds and indeed it is this that divides them ... If these conflicting moral assessments of the past are to change, then all sides need to be encouraged and facilitated to listen and hear each other’s stories. This listening must then lead to honest assessment of what the other is saying and to recognition of truth within their story. In such a process it might be possible to construct a remembrance of our past which is more humane, comprehensive and rounded.⁴⁵

The interviews analysed in this article provide evidence both that this process is already under way, and that there is much work still to do.

NOTES

1. Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire* (3 vols, Paris, 1984–92); Mary Trouille (trans.), *Rethinking France* (4 vols, Chicago, 1999–2010).
2. Alan D. Falconer (ed.), *Reconciling memories* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1988). A second edition, with additional material and edited by Alan D. Falconer and Joseph Liechty, appeared in 1998.
3. Edna Longley, 'The rising, the Somme, and Irish memory' in Máirín Ní Dhonnchada and Theo Dorgan (eds), *Revising the rising* (Field Day, Derry, 1991), pp 29–49.
4. Ian McBride, *The siege of Derry in Ulster Protestant mythology* (Dublin, 1997); idem (ed.), *History and memory in modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001); Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish folk history and social memory* (Madison, 2007); idem, 'Between trauma and triumphalism: the Easter Rising, the Somme, and the crux of deep memory in modern Ireland' in *Journal of British Studies*, xlv (2007), pp 366–89; idem, 'Forgetting to remember Orr: death and ambiguous remembrance in modern Ireland' in James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: historical perspectives* (Sallins, 2013), pp 171–202; Roisín Higgins, *Transforming 1916: meaning, memory and the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising* (Cork, 2012).
5. For example, see Brian Conway, *Commemoration and Bloody Sunday: pathways of memory* (Basingstoke, 2010) and a review article by Stephen Howe, 'Memory and history in Northern Ireland' in *History Workshop Journal*, lxxi (2011), pp 219–31; *Report of the Consultative Group on the Past: executive summary* (Belfast, 2009), p. 14.
6. *Proposed Agreement 31 December 2013: an agreement among the parties of the Northern Ireland executive on parades, select commemorations and related protests; flags and emblems; and contending with the past*, pp 16–17, 36 (downloaded from www.northernireland.gov.uk/haass.pdf).
7. Open University/Institute for Conflict Research (hereafter OU/ICR) interview, k[ey informant] 9, 29 Mar. 2011.
8. Anonymised transcripts of the interviews have been deposited with the UK Data Service (<http://ukdataservice.ac.uk>). I most gratefully acknowledge the essential contributions to this research of John Bell, who conducted and transcribed the great majority of the interviews, and of Neil Jarman, Director of the Institute for Conflict Research.
9. Anonymised transcripts of these interviews will also be deposited with the UK Data Service when the research is completed.
10. OU/ICR interview 45, May 2011.
11. OU/ICR interview 42, Apr. 2012.
12. OU/ICR interview K5, Nov. 2011.

13. OU/ICR interview 40, Mar. 2011.
14. OU/ICR interview 36, Feb. 2011.
15. OU/ICR interview m[artyrdom]12, 20 Aug. 2013.
16. OU/ICR interview M2, Apr. 2013.
17. OU/ICR interview M1, Apr. 2013.
18. OU/ICR interview M10, 8 Aug. 2013.
19. OU/ICR interview 29, 7 Dec. 2010.
20. OU/ICR interview M12, 20 Aug. 2013.
21. OU/ICR interview 48, June 2011.
22. OU/ICR interview 6, Aug. 2010.
23. OU/ICR interview 30, 6 Dec. 2010. On the painting see Tony Canavan 'A papist painting for a Protestant parliament?' in *History Ireland*, xvi, no.1 (2008), pp 12–13.
24. OU/ICR interview 17, 17 Sept. 2010.
25. OU/ICR interview 12, 27 Sept. 2010.
26. OU/ICR interview M4, 5 July 2013.
27. OU/ICR interview K1, 28 Mar. 2011.
28. OU/ICR interview 23, Jan. 2011.
29. OU/ICR interview 44, May 2011.
30. OU/ICR interview 22, Dec. 2010.
31. OU/ICR interview 5, 12 Aug. 2010.
32. OU/ICR interview 16, 6 Oct. 2010.
33. OU/ICR interview K15, June 2011.
34. OU/ICR interview 4, 1 July 2010.
35. OU/ICR interview 19, Nov. 2010.
36. OU/ICR interview 13, 13 Sept. 2010.
37. OU/ICR interview 5, 12 Aug. 2010.
38. OU/ICR interview M8, 24 July 2013.
39. OU/ICR interview M7, 24 July 2013.
40. OU/ICR interview M9, 29 July 2013.
41. Nicola Morris and David Tombs, "A solid and united phalanx"? Protestant churches and the Ulster Covenant, 1912–2012' in John Wolffe (ed.), *Irish religious conflict in comparative perspective: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims* (Basingstoke, 2014), p. 38.
42. OU/ICR interview M7, 24 July 2013.
43. Longley, 'The rising', pp 30, 49.
44. Andrew R. Holmes, 'Religious conflict in Ulster, c.1780–1886' in John Wolffe (ed.), *Protestant–Catholic conflict from the Reformation to the twenty-first century: the dynamics of religious difference* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp 101–31.
45. *Report of the Consultative Group on the Past: executive summary* (Belfast, 2009), p. 14.

Reconciling Memories Reconsidered:
Reflections on a 1988 Irish Reconciliation
Classic in Light of Three Decades
of Scholarship and Political Experience

Joseph Liechty

In 1988, when theologian Alan Falconer published *Reconciling memories*,¹ edited proceedings of a multidisciplinary 1986 conference entitled ‘The reconciliation of memories’, it was the culmination of a study project begun by the Irish School of Ecumenics in 1980.² *Reconciling memories* was also among the early scholarly efforts worldwide to treat reconciliation as a matter of public and political relevance. A few years later, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and Nelson Mandela’s release from prison in February 1990, what had been a trickle of literature on reconciliation quickly became a flood, and it has hardly abated in the quarter of a century since.

Some statistics will indicate just how dramatic the increased attention to the theme of reconciliation has been. While similar conclusions might be drawn from varied sources, two especially significant ones will serve to illustrate: the holdings of the United States Library of Congress and the

J. Liechty (✉)
Peace Studies, Goshen College, Goshen, IN, USA
e-mail: joecl@goshen.edu

2011 second edition of Priscilla Hayner's authoritative overview of truth (and reconciliation) commissions, *Unspeakable truths: transitional justice and the challenge of truth commissions*. Among the more than 200 Library of Congress subject headings in the online catalogue that begin with 'reconciliation', one of the headings with the most entries, at 200 exactly, is simply 'reconciliation'.³ Of these books, just fourteen (7 per cent) were published before 1990, and the remaining 93 per cent in 1990 or after. The same pattern repeats itself across constituent and related categories such as 'apologizing', 'reparations for historical injustices', 'forgiveness', and more. Concerning political expressions of reconciliation over the last forty years, the premier and unprecedented applications to post-conflict recovery have sometimes been called truth commissions, sometimes truth and reconciliation commissions. In either case, it is argued here, there has been some reconciling function intended. Since 1974 there have been forty such commissions, seven beginning before 1990 and the remaining thirty-three, or 83 per cent, from 1990 on. In 1986, then, a conference on reconciliation of memories was a very early entrant into a field of thought and practice around the theme of reconciliation that has since become a major concern when considering how to respond to many kinds of conflicts, but especially those involving clashing ethnic, national, and religious identities.

THE 1986 'RECONCILIATION OF MEMORIES' CONFERENCE, AND THE PUBLISHED PROCEEDINGS

The list of speakers at that 1986 'Reconciliation of memories' conference was impressive. In mid-1980s Ireland, the philosopher Richard Kearney, literary critic Seamus Deane, and historian Margaret Mac Curtain were all respected intellectuals and widely-known public figures. Among the other speakers, Anglican bishop Mark Santer was well known internationally as a co-chair of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, and Alan Falconer, theologian Gabriel Daly, and political scientist Frank Wright were highly regarded in scholarly circles.⁴ Wright already had a particularly strong reputation as an analyst of conflict in Northern Ireland, which would be elevated with the publication in 1987 of his widely praised book *Northern Ireland: a comparative analysis*,⁵ described in 1991 by political scientist John Whyte, the comprehensive, scrupulous, and fair-minded surveyor of literature on Northern Ireland, as 'difficult but profound'.⁶ And the presiding spirit over the 'Reconciliation of memories'

enterprise was that of the then recently-deceased Theodore Moody, long-time professor of modern history at Trinity College, Dublin (d. 1984) and one of the founding figures of the modern academic study of Irish history, who had done much to encourage Falconer to pursue the reconciliation of memories theme.

A renowned cast does not guarantee excellent performance, of course. In this case, however, in re-reading the papers gathered in *Reconciling memories* almost three decades after the conference, memories of the event are confirmed: most of the contributors were consistently wise, and some were occasionally profound. In fact, a quarter century after the great post-1990 burgeoning of literature on reconciliation and related themes, *Reconciling memories* sometimes anticipates and generally stands alongside the best of subsequent work in the field.

Assessing *Reconciling memories* requires some rudimentary definition work, in the hope of putting author and readers more or less on the same page. 'More or less' is the operative phrase here, as there are few widely agreed definitions of reconciliation and its components, even though definitions are usually, but not always, broadly compatible. Decades of engagement with these themes might invoke a vision of scholars hammering out agreed, standard definitions, but such fantasy is surely idle and probably not constructive. Where there are relationships there is conflict, and where there is conflict people need some mechanism, some version of reconciliation, to mend broken relationships. The cultural and historical variations on these themes are endless and often deep-rooted, however, so scholars need to settle for some consistent definitions for themselves and then be alert to the rich implications of the reconciliation concepts employed in different settings.

A broad definition of reconciliation might be the set of processes that help a relationship – interpersonal, collective, political, or any other kind – become what it ought to be, or at least to move in the direction of what it ought to be.⁷ Delving into that set of processes, one way of framing a definition is that reconciliation equals repentance plus forgiveness: when parties in conflict have repented of their wrongdoing and forgiven offences against them, reconciliation will be achieved. Such a definition really ought to be sufficient, but it is not, because repentance and forgiveness can be contested – who bears what weight of responsibility in the conflict? – and corrupted. When reconciliation is corrupted, it is most often because repenting and forgiving have failed in their basic orientation to truth-seeking and especially to justice. Both repenting and forgiving are

inherently ways of dealing with a justice claim, and they must be rooted in a true account of events, so when they attempt to dampen or elide the claims of justice and truth, they are weakened.

If repenting, forgiving, truth-seeking, and justice-seeking are the core mechanisms of reconciliation, they are enlivened by a range of subtle qualities, dispositions, and virtues. Among these vivifying qualities are likely to be included: hope; trust; confidence; love; and the sense, in conflict resolution specialist Byron Bland's phrase, 'a sense that we belong together.'⁸ Of these five, hope and trust are closest to self-evident, but the other three – confidence, love, and the 'sense that we belong together' – require some explication. Whether at the individual or communal level, people seeking reconciliation must have some basic level of confidence in themselves, an intact, operative core of dignity, to imagine that they have the strength to pursue reconciliation and indeed that they are worth being reconciled with. Those too downtrodden, who have been damaged by repeated injury, by betrayal, by persistent hopelessness, and perhaps by the sense that they are held in contempt, may lack the confidence and therefore the strength necessary to pursue reconciliation. Then there is love, a quality not often discussed at a serious academic conference, and which only compounds reconciliation's image problem as not quite serious; a nice option for nice people, but not truly relevant to the hard cases. In truth, however, love is an essential, un-get-roundable feature of the reconciliation endeavour. Given love's image problem, M. Scott Peck's definition is borrowed here, from what can be described as a quality piece of 1970s American pop psychology, *The road less traveled*, and adapted in this unsentimental form: love is the will to extend oneself for the good of another.⁹ This definition of love highlights the reality that to seek reconciliation is almost always to initiate, to risk, to assume a vulnerable stance, with no reason to be certain that the initiative will be accepted. I still value and use this definition, but in recent years I have been reading the work of philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff on love and justice, and I have added his simple but powerful definition of love: to love is to care.¹⁰ The beauty of this definition is that it is, again, unsentimental – what one cares about, one will labour over, seek the best for, strategize concerning – while at the same time leaving appropriate room for sentiment. To care is both to act and to feel. Finally, Byron Bland's 'sense that we belong together'. What Bland has in mind is that the most perfect strategies, analysis, and provision cannot force reconciliation between estranged parties in the absence

of some sense ‘that we belong together’, that our lives are bound together and cannot be picked apart without damage. Instilling or nurturing the sense that we belong together will likely be essential to reconciliation processes. Again, part of the merit of ‘we belong together’ is its joining of the sentimental and the unsentimental. One might celebrate the conviction that we belong together, hold it as a high and cherished ideal; and yet in some cases and for some people, reconciliation can be not a high ideal but what we are ground down to as the best among unpalatable options. I do not like these people, I do not want to live with them, but they are not going away; I cannot expel them, nor can I ignore them. Our future is unavoidably entwined, and we must find a way of living together.

That cursory perspective on reconciliation provides a framework for examining what *Reconciling memories* accomplished. Perhaps the outstanding and enduring feature is no particular idea but a general and consistent stance, never explicitly stated but always enacted: a commitment to complex interpretations and against any form of reductionism, and especially the kind of materialism that is incapable of taking seriously various forms of identity – ethnic, national, religious, and other – as factors that make a real difference in human affairs. This is simply an essential stance for any serious work on reconciliation. In Margaret Mac Curtain’s formulation, ‘identity is at the core of reconciliation.’¹¹ In *Reconciling memories*, this stance is so constant, so consistently assumed, that it might escape notice, but it should not.

The *Reconciling memories* authors were committed to more than taking religious identity seriously among other forms of identity. More broadly, the structure of the book and the approach of all its authors indicate, in practice more than in explicit argument, a conviction that religion is not a separate domain, with nothing to say to, and nothing to learn from, other fields of inquiry and expressions of public commitment; instead, religion is to be in vigorous, give-and-take conversation. If an idea arises first in a religious context, there is no reason that it cannot be applied in others. As Seamus Deane wrote in his chapter, ‘One doesn’t have to be Christian to use the bible’, adding, ‘although it sometimes seems to be a precondition of abusing it’.¹² While it is not clear what may have informed this characteristic *Reconciling memories* posture concerning the broader relevance of religious ideas and practices, it is worth noting that the approach bears a strong resemblance to a passage from the forgiveness section of Hannah Arendt’s *The human condition*, published in 1958. She wrote,

The discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs was Jesus of Nazareth. The fact that he made this discovery in a religious context and articulated it in religious language is no reason to take it any less seriously in a strictly secular sense. It has been in the nature of our tradition of political thought (and for reasons we cannot explore here) to be highly selective and to exclude from articulate conceptualization a great variety of authentic political experiences.¹³

A connection between Arendt and *Reconciling memories* is that Alan Falconer loved, and cited passages from, this section of *The human condition*, at least raising the possibility that Arendt's work may have influenced other *Reconciling memories* authors.

FOUR KEY CHAPTERS

In addition to these themes pervading *Reconciling memories*, four chapters have endured especially well. These are Gabriel Daly's 'Forgiveness and community', Alan Falconer's 'The reconciling power of forgiveness', Richard Kearney's 'Myth and the critique of tradition', and Frank Wright's 'Reconciling the histories of Protestant and Catholic in Northern Ireland'. Some key themes will be drawn from Daly, Falconer, and Kearney, followed by a closer look at Wright's work.

In the post-1990 flood of reconciliation-related literature, forgiveness has received significantly more attention than other relevant themes. This author has in the past been judgemental about the apparent disproportion, writing that 'however difficult, forgiving involves dealing with how we have been wronged, while repenting involves what most of us find more difficult, dealing with what we have done wrong. Moral maturity requires both.'¹⁴ There is another way of interpreting the emphasis on forgiveness, however. By the time a person or a group is in a position to consider the possibility of forgiving, they are enduring a world gone twice wrong. The first wrong is simply the perpetrator's offence; the second is the perpetrator's failure to apologise and make amends. But the offence has happened, plunging the victim into the domain of insult, injury, and injustice, and perpetrators, far from repenting, too often assume or even flaunt impunity – what political scientist Daniel Philpott calls 'the standing victory of injustice'.¹⁵ Victims may have few ways of addressing the offence, but some version of forgiveness is always an option. In such a world, considerable attention to forgiveness may not actually be disproportionate.

Daly is everywhere alert to human frailty, to the inevitability of offence and the ambiguity of forgiveness, which has important implications for a politics of reconciliation. He writes,

When Brendan Behan suggested that the first item on the agenda of any meeting of Irishmen was a split, he was being unduly nationalistic. A potential split ought to be taken as read on any human agenda ... It is both politically and theologically realistic to act on the assumption that there will be a split, and therefore to plan from the outset the means of damage control and subsequent bridge-building.¹⁶

Daly points here, at least at an oblique angle, to how reconciliation ought to figure in a mature politics. For the most part, reconciliation comes as a mopping-up operation, an attempt to find some measure of healing after conflicting parties have sought outright victory through all-out conflict. But there are questions that can be asked early in a conflict that ought to shape how that conflict is conducted. Thus, political realism ought to dictate that combatants should ask the question: at the end of this conflict, is it likely that we will simply defeat or expel our enemies, or will we in some way need to live with them? If the latter, that ought to shape how a conflict is conducted. Apparently something like this happened in South Africa in the late 1980s. Both the South African military and ANC leadership conducted studies that arrived at a similar conclusion: all-out violence was likely to leave a million dead, with a decimated white minority still holding power over a devastated and even more alienated black majority. Making the case for the political *necessity* of reconciliation in South Africa, Methodist minister and long-time anti-apartheid activist Peter Storey quoted another prominent anti-apartheid activist, the journalist Percy Qoboza: ‘If there is a bloodbath in South Africa, what will we be left with? A majority of blacks and a minority of whites who will have to work out how to live together in this land.’¹⁷ Storey added his own commentary, noting that ‘the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt and our liberation differ in one very important respect: their journey led them to a new land away from Egypt and the Egyptians; we, on the other hand, have to build the new land in Egypt, with the Egyptians all still there.’ Analysis reflecting such a perspective influenced a move away from violence and toward politics, which made a space for Mandela and others to introduce reconciliatory themes.

Clearly signalled by the title, ‘The reconciling power of forgiveness’, Falconer’s chapter has a narrower focus: forgiveness as a form of power. Reconciliation’s image problem has already been alluded to as unrealistic, and the problem is most pronounced concerning forgiveness, which can appear to be not merely a repudiation of vengeance, but the abandonment even of any justice claim. Forgiveness is not just a harmless foible of nice people, according to this critique, it is powerlessness, and it is for weak people. In fact concerning power, Falconer observes, forgiveness needs to be saved not only from its enemies, but from its friends. At least in Christian circles, ‘the tendency in theological reflection has been to largely suggest that power is antithetical to Christianity, or at best a reality that has to be tolerated.’¹⁸ Falconer wants to approach the question quite differently. ‘Power is the capacity to initiate the new in relationship’, he states. ‘Power can be creative, rather than destructive. Theologically, therefore, it is not adequate to speak of the renunciation of power, or of powerlessness.’¹⁹ Based on work by psychoanalysts Rollo May and Erich Fromm, Falconer develops a typology of power, highlighting the significance of what May calls nutrient power and integrative power. Nutrient power, in Falconer’s account, is power-for, ‘power exercised on behalf of another, e.g. a normal parent’s care for his or her children.’ Integrative power is power-with, that is, ‘standing alongside the other, helping him, her or them to assert their own sense of self-significance’.²⁰ He concludes that forgiveness ‘is an exercise of power itself, which counteracts the destructive modes of the exercise of power and releases people to act anew’.²¹

In a research project titled ‘Vengeance and Forgiveness’, this author and a Goshen College colleague Paul Keim are coming to the same conclusion from a very different starting point. Noting that talionic societies (characterised by strict application of an eye-for-an-eye ethic), hold as an inviolable principle that ‘all debt must be paid’, we explore the implication of thinking of forgiveness as the victim choosing to pay the debt that ought by right to have been paid by the perpetrator. This perspective on forgiveness challenges the ordinary assumption that victims are weak, and perhaps have few or no options other than to absorb their abuse and suffer. When victims *choose* forgiveness, it is argued in ‘Vengeance and Forgiveness’, it is an act of strength that can only arise from a morally, emotionally, and spiritually strong self. In terms of debt and payment, it might be said that the victims have a kind of spiritual, moral, emotional wealth that has allowed them to pay the debt. With that wealth comes power, in this case the power to act unexpectedly, to redefine the rules of

engagement. For example, if I, the victim, have paid the debt that you, the perpetrator, ought to have paid, then I have given you a gift, a positive gift for a negative gift. With a gift comes obligation. The minimum obligation for the recipient of a good gift is gratitude. None of this has any guaranteed outcomes, of course, but then no other response, least of all vengeance, has any guaranteed outcome either. What forgiveness does is to generate new possibilities in circumstances where positive movement may seem all but impossible, and it acknowledges the agency of the victim, who is often seen to be helpless. Note also that the victim may have recourse to no means of power other than forgiveness. He or she cannot force the perpetrator to repent and may have no realistic way of implementing any form of vengeance and no authority to punish. Far from being a form of weakness, forgiveness may be the only form of power, the only means of seeking change, for some victims of insult, injury, and injustice.

Thinking of forgiving as a form of power, as expenditure of wealth, of abundance, will be a mental revolution for some – including some forgivers and many detractors of forgiveness – because forgiving is too often thought of as the expenditure of a scarce resource, of self in a way that will diminish self. We concur with Falconer: forgiveness is a form of power that ‘releases people to act anew’.

Kearney works to expose and make sense of the tangled connections between myth, tradition, and history:

Myth, I argue, is not some museum piece of the ancient past; it is a living dimension of culture which may serve either a negative *ideological* function or a positive *utopian* function ... Every tradition needs to be both demythologised and remythologised. Without such an ongoing process of critical and creative reinterpretation, there is, I am convinced, little hope for any realistic reconciliation of the different cultural traditions on this island.²²

Kearney develops his argument in three main steps. First, he offers an account of the demythologising project of modernity and its hermeneutics of suspicion, holding it up as an essential move in relation to tradition. His account is preparatory, however, for his second step and a deeper point: ‘the critique is ... itself subject to critique.’²³ The essence of his critique is that demythologising, however necessary, is limited, and is deficient on its own. Subjected to a consistent strategy of demythologising in ‘the service of a self-perpetuating iconoclasm, ... [m]odern consciousness may ... find itself liberated into a no-mans-land of interminable self-reflection without

purpose or direction. It is not enough to free a society *from* the ‘false consciousness’ of tradition, one must also liberate it *for* something.²⁴

This conclusion leads to Kearney’s third step, his positive programme: recognising the positive utopian function of myth, we should remythologise our traditions. ‘The utopian content of myth differs from the ideological in that it is inclusive rather than exclusive; it opens up human consciousness to a common goal of freedom instead of closing it off in the inherited securities of the *status quo*.’²⁵ Scholars can reveal this positive utopian content of myth by means of a ‘hermeneutics of affirmation’, which ‘operates on the hypothesis that myth may not only conceal some pre-existing meaning but also reveal new horizons of meaning.’²⁶ The emphasis of such explorations, therefore, will be less on origins than on ‘the end (*eschaton*) opened up in front of [myths]’. This will ‘rescue mythic symbols from the gestures of reactionary domination’ so that ‘we may discover genuinely utopian anticipations of “possible worlds” of liberty and justice’.²⁷

Frank Wright’s chapter, ‘Reconciling the histories of Protestant and Catholic in Northern Ireland’, is perhaps the most challenging piece in *Reconciling memories*, as well as being the most directly relevant to the working practices and assumptions of historians. Here, a main line of Wright’s reasoning is followed by the slanting of a personal account toward a concluding section on writing history, and doing other scholarly work, in the service of contemporary reconciling purposes.²⁸ This ‘slant’ is entirely congruent with Wright’s general approach.

Can history have a reconciling role? Should historians be reconcilers? Wright himself, as political scientist and historian, wedded scholarship and commitment to reconciliation in his own work (and life), and he put a similar challenge to historians in this chapter. He called historians to aid the cause of reconciliation in Northern Ireland by attempting to reconcile the ‘two opposed national histories’ of Protestants and Catholics. This task will involve, he said, ‘the uncovering of stories that are only important when they are of service to some pre-existing reconciling purpose’.²⁹ The work Wright proposed is unapologetically political and present-minded.

‘National groups coexisting on the same soil tend to develop their nationalism in rivalry with each other,’ said Wright, ‘and the features of their histories that are most important to them are therefore the things that have clearest bearing on that antagonism.’³⁰ Once established, this tendency to base identity in rivalry and over against the other has tremendous powers of self-perpetuation. In the logic of national conflicts, ‘the

most significant in a vortex of antagonism are those who can both threaten violence and control the threat simultaneously',³¹ a formula that gives key players on both sides an interest in maintaining antagonism through an intricate dance of violence and counter-violence, threat and restraint. Should the antagonism be resolved, their power would be dissolved. Even apart from considerations of power and interest, the dynamics of identity formed in rivalry tend naturally to create a spiral of deepening antagonism. In time, the memory that relationships were ever different, and the hope that they ever will be different, are all but lost.

Eventually memories of any less malignant inter-communal relationships are either belittled (shown to have merely concealed things that would blossom into malignancy), hijacked (to show how one community displayed a trust not reciprocated by the other), or forgotten (because ultimately they had an 'insignificant' effect on the present).³²

What is more, using the example of Catholic and Protestant accusing each other of sectarianism, Wright demonstrated that plausible defences of both communities' positions can be developed 'without any serious distortion of historical fact. All that is required is that the standpoint of the observers reflect the direction from which threats of physical violence, humiliation and denigration are converging toward them.'³³ No wonder, then, that Wright believed 'reconciling moments of history are likely to look like tangents to a history of antagonism'.³⁴

Given the potency and persistence of histories of antagonism, historians attempting to reconcile the histories of Protestants and Catholics in Ireland face fundamental difficulties. Even the task of finding sources will present uncommon problems. In historical epochs when the dynamics of antagonism were dominant, contemporaries often found 'countervailing tendencies' and unspoken strategies for coping too insignificant to merit much comment. However, the most important problem, said Wright, 'is that reconciling moments of past history are intrinsically uninteresting unless they serve some current reconciling purpose'³⁵ – unless the historian is predisposed to search for or recognise stories of reconciling significance, they are likely to appear as nothing more than insignificant, irrelevant sidetracks from the main story. If significance means visible effect on or relationship to the present, then historians must couch their work on reconciling moments in the unappealing language of insignificance.

Wright admitted the limits of history written to serve reconciling purposes. It will have no ‘visible thread or continuity’ apart from its tangential relationship to the history of antagonism. ‘It will be partial, subjectively chosen and disconnected.’ It must be prepared not only to accept the reproach of insignificance, but to embrace it – to ‘announce the importance of the “insignificant”, “unimportant”, and “ineffective”’.³⁶

Despite these limitations, Wright believed that ‘the effort to reconcile histories’ is not only desirable but necessary: that we may ‘recover the simple truth that we are made different by experience and not by inherent qualities’.³⁷ In pursuit of reconciling history, we will find incidents and characters ‘that demonstrate the difference between knowing national conflict is a malignancy and mistaking it for a righteous cause’,³⁸ thereby learning how it is that ‘pessimistic judgements about the other, born of real experiences, turned into righteous causes’.³⁹ Eventually we may even find that ‘these past precedents, feeble though they may have been, become interesting’.⁴⁰

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Inspired by re-engaging with *Reconciling memories* and by rich presentations and conversations at the conference for which this paper was prepared, some implications for scholars who might be in a position to take on reconciliation-related themes are outlined here.

1. I have no interest in suggesting that reconciliation-driven scholarship is anyone’s obligation. I only want to say, with Kearney, Wright, and Falconer’s whole ‘Reconciliation of memories’ team, that it can be done with integrity, as they demonstrate in their work.
2. At the 2013 conference, in response to Miriam Moffitt’s opening up of a characteristic trope in historical interpretation, we started to ask ourselves what subtle tropes might be guiding our own work, perhaps without our awareness. It was suggested that one trope might be that we write from a secular, neutral, objective, and value-free perspective; we do what participants called elsewhere during that day ‘scientific history’. Such a perspective has been debunked for quite a while, on the grounds that there is no neutral, objective, and value-free place to stand, and we have to stand somewhere. Yet we retain the trope because even though it is flawed, it does good work for us. A more solid basis, however, might be to replace this under-

standing of scientific history with an approach framed in terms of moral commitments, above all, the commitment that as scholars, as historians, we must be fair and honest. Is that not really what the idea of ‘neutral, objective, and value-free’ does for us? Encourage us to be fair and honest? I prefer framing our commitments in moral terms, because it emphasises the inescapable subjectivity of the scholar.

3. What we will certainly retain from scientific history is methods of investigation and interpretation that are indispensable for helping us to be fair and honest.
4. High quality scholarship has an indirect but inherently reconciling function in its commitment to complexity. The kinds of communal memory that foster identity-in-opposition always over-simplify. Insistence on complexity, making the case for complexity, is the best antidote.
5. One responsibility of the historian is to communicate an honest sense of the past to the present. In addition to complexity, this will involve conveying what Raymond Gillespie called in his presentation at the conference ‘the strangeness of the past’. But strangeness does not mean incomprehensibility and irrelevance. Just as we need to recognise the strangeness and difference of other cultures, yet that does not mean that meaningful engagement across cultures is impossible, so too we can recognise the strangeness of the past while learning meaningful things from the past – for my purposes, things with reconciling implications.

NOTES

1. Alan D. Falconer (ed.), *Reconciling memories* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1988); Alan D. Falconer and Joseph Liechty (eds), *Reconciling memories* (2nd revised edn, Blackrock, 1998). All following references to the second edition, which added new chapters but did not change the chapters from the first edition.
2. Alan D. Falconer, ‘Reconciling memories’ in *Theology in Scotland*, xv, no. 1 (2008), pp 23–39, p. 23.
3. Library of Congress online catalogue (<http://catalog2.loc.gov/vwebv/searchResults?searchId=51757&recPointer=-25&recCount=25>, accessed 28 Nov. 2015).
4. Of the speakers at the 1986 conference, only Maurice Bond, a Presbyterian minister, and Joe Harris, professor of education at the University of Ulster,

- Coleraine, were less widely known. While my essay, ('Testing the depth of Catholic/Protestant enmity: the case of Thomas Leland's *History of Ireland*, 1773'), was included in the first edition of *Reconciling memories* in 1988, it was the only contribution not presented at the conference.
5. Frank Wright, *Northern Ireland: a comparative analysis* (Dublin, 1987).
 6. John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford, 1990), p. 201.
 7. My fullest published work on the definition of reconciliation can be found in Joseph Liechty, 'Putting forgiveness in its place: the dynamics of reconciliation' in David Tombs and Joseph Liechty (eds), *Explorations in reconciliation: new directions in theology* (Aldershot, 2006), pp 59–68.
 8. Byron Bland, 'The post-Troubles troubles: the politics of reconciliation in Northern Ireland', Stanford Center on International Conflict and Negotiation, Stanford Law School, SCICN Working Papers Series, no. 203 (Dec. 2001), 18 (<http://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/default/files/child-page/370999/doc/slspublic/WP%20Doc%20203.pdf>, accessed 20 Nov. 2015).
 9. Peck's definition of love is: 'The will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth': see M. Scott Peck, *The road less traveled: a new psychology of love, traditional values and spiritual growth* (anniversary edn, New York, 2002), p. 81.
 10. See Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Love as care' in idem, *Justice in love* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2011), pp 101–9.
 11. Margaret Mac Curtain, 'Reconciliation of histories' in Falconer & Liechty (eds), *Reconciling memories*, pp 99–107, p. 103.
 12. Seamus Deane, 'Reconciliation of cultures: apocalypse now' in Falconer & Liechty (eds), *Reconciling memories*, pp 57–62, p. 59.
 13. Hannah Arendt, *The human condition* (2nd edn, Chicago, 1998), pp 238–9.
 14. Liechty, 'Putting forgiveness in its place', p. 61.
 15. Daniel Philpott, *Just and unjust peace: an ethic of political reconciliation* (New York, 2012), pp 264–6.
 16. Gabriel Daly, 'Forgiveness and community' in Falconer & Liechty (eds), *Reconciling memories*, pp 195–215, p. 202.
 17. Peter Storey, 'Reconciliation and civil society', unpublished paper presented at 'Making ends meet: reconciliation and reconstruction in South Africa', a conference organised by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Johannesburg, 18 Aug. 1994 (<http://www.csvr.org.za/wits/papers/papstory.htm>, accessed 7 Dec. 2015).
 18. Alan Falconer, 'The reconciling power of forgiveness' in idem & Liechty (eds), *Reconciling memories*, pp 177–94, p. 180.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

21. Ibid., pp 187–8.
22. Richard Kearney, ‘Myth and the critique of tradition’ in Falconer & Liechty (eds), *Reconciling memories*, pp 37–56, p. 37.
23. Ibid., p. 43.
24. Ibid., p. 38.
25. Ibid., p. 47.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. What I write here is drawn from a much fuller account in Joseph Liechty, ‘History and reconciliation: Frank Wright, Whitley Stokes, and the vortex of antagonism’ in Falconer & Liechty (eds), *Reconciling memories*, pp 149–76.
29. Frank Wright, ‘Reconciling the histories of Protestant and Catholic in Northern Ireland’ in Falconer & Liechty (eds), *Reconciling memories*, pp 128–48, p. 128.
30. Ibid., p. 129.
31. Ibid., pp 131–2.
32. Ibid., p. 130.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., p. 128.
35. Ibid., p. 131.
36. Ibid., p. 132.
37. Ibid., p. 133.
38. Ibid., p. 132.
39. Ibid., p. 147.
40. Ibid.

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