

Introduction

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Evangelicals and Catholics in nineteenth-century Ireland addresses a period of dynamic change in Irish society when a variety of often antagonistic religious movements had a profound effect on the shaping of Irish culture. At the end of the eighteenth century Wolfe Tone had famously expressed the desire to unite Protestant, Catholic and dissenter in Ireland. However, the nineteenth century saw the solidifying of more pronounced religious identities than ever. Just as the days of the Protestant Church of Ireland as the legally established church seemed threatened, both it and the dissenting Presbyterian Church were overcome with a tidal wave of evangelical enthusiasm, which led in many parts of Ireland to a zeal for the conversion of Catholics. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church was itself undergoing a devotional revolution and attaining new institutional strength. Assailed by the evangelical campaigning, the Catholic Church sought to strengthen its position through institutional support, especially in the area of education. In spite of a British distaste for what happened, the Catholic Church and, indeed, its rivals secured state backing for a system of denomination education.

These religious and educational changes were also mapped onto hardening political positions, with Church of Ireland members and Presbyterians forgetting their former differences and embracing a new common Protestant religious identity, a political commitment to the union of Ireland and Great Britain, and an Irish cultural identity which, inasmuch as it was distinctive, was also compatible with an allegiance to Britishness and the British empire. Equally, the equation of Irish nationalism with Catholicism seemed to grow inexorable through the century, though its initial formation, in the campaigns of Daniel O'Connell, was certainly at least in part the fault of Britain for denying what was rather grandly called Catholic emancipation and thus allowing a political nation to grow around the node of religious grievance.

The collection opens with a reconsideration of the concept of the devotional revolution. This term was coined by Emmet Larkin in 1972 to explain what he had identified as the sudden change in Irish Catholic religious practice in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, by which the majority Irish population became practicing Catholics, after the canons of the Council of Trent, in a manner in which they had not hitherto been. In the thirty or so years since then various scholars have argued that the change was a much less abrupt and a much more evolutionary one. Larkin's essay in this volume, 'Before the devotional revolution,' is nothing less than a magisterial analysis of the period before

the middle of the nineteenth century that comprehensively answers the critics of his devotional revolution theory. Combining empirical data with narrative history, in the manner so characteristic of his work, he shows 'that the level of Tridentine achievement in pre-famine Ireland was not sufficient because the social and economic resources necessary to such an achievement were not available to the Irish Church' until the famine had reversed the demographic trend. Further, he paints a fascinating picture of the Irish Catholic Church between 1750 and 1847 which he sees as *sui generis* in its reliance on the station mass as an instrument of pastoral outreach. The entire period is one, he argues, that 'deserves a better historical fate than being reduced to a mere Tridentine precursor or prolegomenon to the devotional revolution.'

In 1859, almost in the middle of the Catholic devotional revolution, the Presbyterians of Ulster experienced an extraordinary evangelical revival. Placing this event in the context of the growing search for self-identity of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, David W. Miller considers the question which is posed in the title of his essay 'Did Ulster Presbyterians have a devotional revolution?' His answer is that the 1859 revival was a short-lived affair and did not substantially halt the move of the Presbyterian Church away from its communal roots towards middle-class respectability, with an attendant loss of working-class allegiance. The final examination of the concept of devotional revolution is my own, 'Unremembering the devotional revolution,' which tries to account for the loss of historical memory of the changes of the mid-nineteenth century, such that it came to be believed that Irish Catholics had always been adherents to Tridentine practice. In my reading of Charles J. Kickham's *Knocknagow* (1870) I argue that the description of the station mass in the novel is framed in terms that implicitly acknowledge the abuses, from a Tridentine perspective, which were present in the practice of station masses before the devotional revolution. What I suggest is 'that the unreformed practices of the station mass are not simply absent, they are demonstratively absent in Kickham's account. In other words, Kickham's description, in its keenness to forget the past, draws attention to it by highlighting the absence of abuses [...] The memory of the older pattern of religious practice is thus paradoxically present through its pronounced absence.'

The second section of this collection takes us back to the period of Catholic emancipation and to the anxieties it caused both in Britain and in the Established Church in Ireland (the Church of Ireland). Fear of the growth of Catholic power was certainly one of the prime causes of the upsurge in the evangelical movement within the Established Church. The case of William Maginn, as described by David E. Latané, Jr, is typical of a pro-Establishment figure fighting a rear-guard action. He confronts change 'with rhetorical fireworks, mixed with an ironic appraisal of the chances of success,' while having little sympathy for the evangelical alternative. Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna was one who did embrace that option. Kara M. Ryan writes that her 'remedy for the Irish question is that disaffected Irish Catholics must be converted by a revi-

talized evangelical Protestantism.' This was a perspective that deeply influenced the writing of her novels, *The Rockite* (1823) and *Derry, a tale of revolution* (1833). Shirley Matthews, in "'Second spring" and "precious prejudices": Catholicism and anti-Catholicism in Hampshire in the era of emancipation', explores anti-Catholicism within British culture and tries to determine the extent to which it was a function of the rising tide of Catholic immigration. Her conclusion, at least as far as her local study of Hampshire is concerned, is 'that anti-Catholicism was not necessarily a reaction to a large Catholic or Irish presence, but was often a fear of the unknown.' Finally, Katherine Parr explores reactions to the famine through the prism of the work of two Young Ireland poets, the Anglo-Irish Jane Francesca Elgee (later Lady Wilde), and the Catholic Richard D'Alton Williams. Though employing similar religious imagery, Parr discerns the presence of a very different outlook and tone between the two poets.

'Configuring Catholicism' explores some of the ways in which Catholicism interacted with Irish culture. Marjorie Howes, in 'William Carleton's literary religion', challenges the concern which critics have traditionally had, when viewing William Carleton as an ethnographer of Irish peasant society, to establish his authority and authenticity on the basis of a supposed continuing loyalty to the Catholicism, which he had formally rejected. She refocuses the debate about Carleton away from speculation on interior states and onto religion as lived practice. She focuses on bodies and rituals. Carleton rewrites 'Catholic ritual and the sacred in sentimental and domestic terms.' And in his religio-literary imagination 'bodies figure in several ways: as the deceptive exteriors of Catholicism, as the natural, god-given foundation of rational Protestantism, and as objects that demand interpretation and therefore provide indexes that separate the discerning from the credulous viewer or reader.' In 'Nationalism as blasphemy: negotiating belief and institutionality in the genre of Fenian recollections,' Amy E. Martin notes the ways in which Fenians, such as John O'Leary, have been castigated for their apparent inadequacy as they fail to provide comprehensive histories of the Fenian movement in their published writings. She also draws attention to the ways in which they embraced the designation of Fenians as blasphemers and even heretics by the Catholic Church, which opposed them, as a clue to the real agenda of such recollections. 'By speaking from the position of blasphemer and heretic, Fenians articulate a nationalist politics that reckons with the problems of state formation, the sociopolitical role of the Catholic Church in Ireland, and the imbrication of Church and state in the 1860s, problems that were imminent and urgent as the process of decolonization approached at the end of the nineteenth century.' Jill Brady Hampton seeks to locate the perspective on both Catholicism and Protestantism of May Laffan, a novelist whose background and attitudes straddled the denominational divide. 'Throughout her fiction, Laffan's examination of social and religious conflict is directed toward portraying a pluralistic rather than a dichotomous Irish culture and society desperately in need of increased social activism and educational

reform. Her work mediates rather than perpetuates conflicts in late nineteenth-century Ireland.' Finally, Louise Fuller outlines the career of Walter McDonald, professor of theology at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, who also ventured into the borders of what could be tolerated by Church authority, in his championing of the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* and his writings on science and religion and on social questions such as peace and war. He managed to avoid being labeled a heretic but was subjected to a perhaps even more debilitating fate: 'The tragedy for McDonald, and perhaps for the Church of his day, was that because some of his ideas were seen as a threat to theological orthodoxy, and because he pursued them so doggedly, he came to be seen as somewhat of an eccentric genius, which meant that many of his ideas never received the hearing that they may have deserved.'

The fourth section of the book looks at various individuals whose careers intersect both with Ireland and other countries and in whose experience religion was an important element. Catholic or evangelical influences are strong in the stories of most, though not all, of them. G.K. Peatling looks at the writings of William Warren Baldwin, who had been born into an Irish Protestant gentry background, on the issue of the native population of Canada. He sees his legacy as a mixed one. Though his 'contribution to bi-sectarian amity in Ireland was [...] limited, broadly it is true that evangelical religious impulses did the most to underpin the more humane dimensions of William Baldwin's thought, and ironically more so than the influences upon him of the secular humanism of the Enlightenment.' John Boyce, the Catholic priest and novelist, of whom Patrick Maume writes, resided in the United States but was preoccupied by Ireland in his fiction, to the extent that his reviewers accused him of subordinating Catholicism to Irishness. Indeed, he did insist 'that the lived faith of the Irish people represented an argument for Catholicism more formidable than any intellectual treatise,' and in so doing, argues Maume, prefigured the work of later priest-novelists such as Canon Sheehan, 'who blended devotional Catholicism with nostalgic images of a pious rural Ireland for emigré audiences and worried about the role of the priest amid the breakdown of older social hierarchies.'

The polarities of the influence of Ireland are reversed in Walter L. Arnstein's essay which retraces the interrelationship between Charles Bradlaugh, the radical English, Victorian atheist and parliamentarian, and Ireland. Bradlaugh's sympathies for Ireland and for the home rule movement of the 1880s were clear, but it was a sympathy which was not always reciprocated. Initially, many Irish MPs voted against attempts to allow Bradlaugh to remain in parliament without having to take an oath which compromised his atheism, a stand which was praised by the English Catholic hierarchy. By 1888, however, Irish MPs acquiesced in the measure which finally resolved the issue. Maureen O'Connor's subject is a person caught between even more Victorian dilemmas than Bradlaugh: Dublin-born, Frances Power Cobbe, who was variously a 'progressive reformer, iconoclastic theologian, lecturer, abolitionist, woman's advocate, and defender of

animals.' Though she distanced herself from the formal institutions of Christianity, she paradoxically held to the superiority of Protestantism. 'There is an abundance of evidence for Cobbe's anti-Irish sentiments and repulsion towards Catholicism, no doubt deeply ingrained by the anti-papist siege mentality that was her cultural inheritance'. A progressive in so many ways, 'Cobbe's various modes of patriarchal resistance are at once stimulated and undermined by her experience as an Anglo-Irish woman, including a strain of unregenerate Protestant conservatism, which often erupts in inconvenient contradictions.'

Max Arthur Macauliffe, who is Tadhg Foley's subject, escaped from the force field of Irish and British Catholicism and Protestantism into the Sikh religion only to reproduce the patterns of the original dichotomy in the colonial context. A convert to the Sikh religion and an acclaimed translator of its religious texts into English, nonetheless, 'Macauliffe saw the Sikhs as India's indigenous "English"'. Indeed, the Sikhs were the reformed Anglicans of the orient when compared with the Hindus. 'Like Matthew Arnold's flattering representations of the Irish, Macauliffe's magnificent contribution to Sikhism was also, and ultimately, in the interests of empire.'

The final section of the collection looks at the evangelical movement from a number of angles. Janice Holmes places the Irish movement in the context of its relationship with British evangelicals. She distinguishes between two types of networking, the unproblematic 'co-ordinative', and the much more problematic 'conversionist'. Because Irish evangelicals were surrounded by a largely Catholic population, conversion had distinctively political implications which British evangelicals found hard to fathom. 'Irish evangelicals may have wanted to eschew their ethnic and geographic origins, but the evangelical emphasis on conversion meant that they were never entirely successful in doing so.' The notion that the Church of Ireland retreated into a siege mentality after the 1869 measure to bring about its disestablishment is questioned in Martin Doherty's essay on the Arklow disturbances of 1890–92. He argues that in the late nineteenth century, 'the combination of reinvigorated Catholicism and politicized evangelicalism was both an engine and an indicator of the gradual worsening of sectarian relationships in many parts of the island.' His essay recounts the animosities caused by evangelical street preaching, initiated by the local Church of Ireland clergyman, in Arklow in the early 1890s and the difficulties it posed to the authorities at Dublin Castle who were anxious not to fan the flames of sectarian tension. Finally, Matthew Brown focuses on the controversy surrounding the famous address on evolution by John Tyndall to the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Belfast in 1874. Yet this is only the starting point for an essay which explores the tension between models of cultural experience which contended with each other in nineteenth century society and which derived from the Darwinian conflict between science and religion. Brown contrasts a gradualist approach to cultural change, associated with the theory of evolution, with the notion of instant conversion, inherent in

the evangelical experience, though he also notes that Tynall himself sought to accommodate the two. He further points out that, ironically, though the gradualist model seemed to prevail in the scientific realm, the notion of instantaneous insight and change gained currency later on in the cultural and literary spheres, especially with modernist and Irish writers. Thus 'Yeats finds in Celticism, with its high degree of mysticism and pantheism, a profound narrative emphasis on instantaneous change.' Similarly, though less optimistically, the moments of insight or 'epiphany' in the works of Joyce also find their cultural antecedent in instantaneous conversion.

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