

**SECTARIANISM IN SCOTLAND:
A CONTEMPORARY ASSESSMENT AND EXPLANATION**

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In November 1985 the Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher signed an accord with the Irish Republic which gave Dublin a role in representing the interest of Catholics in Ulster. Ulster Unionists began a campaign of protest against what they saw as an important step towards a united Ireland. Some Scottish Protestants, offended by what for them was the Tory Party's abandonment of unionism, formed a Scottish Unionist Party and threatened to stand against Conservatives with thin majorities at the next general election. Had there been any great support in Scotland for Ulster unionism such splitting of the right-wing vote would have killed off the Conservative Party on Scotland. As it was, the SUP decided not to field candidates but to recommend tactical voting for the person most likely to beat the Conservative and that the recommendation made no difference to the result merely demonstrated the lack of interest in Ulster and illustrated the irrelevance of religion in Scottish politics.

My aim is to clarify an argument about the importance of sectarianism in contemporary Scotland, to evaluate evidence, and to present an explanation for the decline of the salience of religion in Scotland.

The Historical Background

Most Catholics in Scotland are descendants of Irish immigrants. Most of the native Scots were and are Protestants. The Lowlands embraced the Reformation. The Highlands remained Catholic or Episcopalian until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century but then converted to evangelical Calvinism. Small pockets of Catholicism and Episcopalianism remained in the western highlands and in parts of the north-east lowlands, such as Banff and Buchan. However, Scotland became and remains a predominantly Protestant country. The vast majority of Roman Catholics in Scotland came from Ireland and settled, first in the western Lowlands, and then spread to Edinburgh and West Lothian and parts of Fife. The bulk of the settlement coincided with the industrialisation of Scotland.⁽¹⁾

No-one doubts that the Irish in Scotland were initially the victims of both disadvantage and active discrimination. The same relative lack of economic and political power which led them to migrate in the first place caused them to enter the Scottish labour market at the bottom. Many were

indigent. Others were willing to undercut the wages of Scottish workers to act as strike-breakers.⁽²⁾ There was considerable conflict between Irish and the native Scots. Hardly surprisingly, the social and economic conflict fueled religious enmity. The poverty and low levels of education the Irish were taken by Scots Protestants as evidence of the social Catholicism. Interestingly, Protestants did not have a monopoly on Irish prejudice and discrimination. As Handley's excellent work demonstrates, the old Scots Catholics were barely less hostile.⁽³⁾ Even after the Irish had come to outnumber indigenous Scots Catholics, the hierarchy remained entirely Scottish.

In *No Pope of Rome*, I argued that sectarianism in Scotland has become an irrelevance: 'just a boy's game'. Why anti-Catholicism have faded so quickly when it remains a powerful sentiment in Ulster I explained shortly. Firstly, there is the issue of the salience of religious conflict in contemporary Scotland. A number of scholars, in published reviews or in private correspondence, have suggested that the assessment presented in *No Pope of Rome* is altogether too sanguine.

The Evidence of Sectarianism

There is considerable superficial evidence of sectarianism, in a rather loose journalistic term we mean the aggressive display in the public sphere of religious and ethnic differences which, in modern societies, is supposed to be confined to the private world as matters of 'preference'. City walls are still daubed with slogans such as 'Fuck the Catholics'. Gangs of working class youths who identify themselves (and each other) as 'prods' and 'taigs' sometimes battle in the streets. Positions of support in the Ulster conflict are sympathetically struck and diluted. Some of that conflict are replayed in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Some descendants of Irish Catholics march under 'Troops Out' banners and small numbers of young Orangemen organise counter-protests. Both Glasgow and Edinburgh have a Catholic and a Protestant football team. Unlike Glasgow Rangers refused to sign Catholics. Although Glasgow Celtic had the odd Protestant on their staff, supporters continue to see the club as a Catholic club and the tricolour – the flag of the Irish Republic – regularly displayed by Celtic supporters.

Bill Murray, the author of a recent book on Celtic and Rangers, has such displays as evidence that sectarianism is still a force in Scotland. My contention that these phenomena are of little importance (except for small numbers of people who take part in them). If we adopt the metaphor of an iceberg, I contend that the relatively rare public displays of sectarian animosity are not the visible tip of a submerged mass of ice but are rather the tip that is left. My critics believe that there is still a sizeable piece of ice under the surface.

Evidence can be searched for in a number of places. We can begin with formal law. Since the 1829 Emancipation Act, Scottish Catholics have suffered only the most piffling legal disabilities and these were removed by the 1926 Relief Act. However, as the fortunes of American blacks have clearly shown, formal law may be no indicator of genuine equality. In any consideration of political equality, what matters is not so much the legal right to vote but the ability to turn the franchise into political power. Here the evidence seem clearly on the side of those who argue that the Irish who settled in Scotland have been successfully assimilated. Perhaps because they refrained from forming separate Catholic trade unions and parties, and instead became involved in the secular labour movement. Scottish Catholics have attained considerable power.⁽⁶⁾ The Labour Party in the lowlands of Scotland (and especially in Strathclyde) is at least Catholic in proportion to the presence of Catholics and it has been in power in Glasgow since the nineteen thirties.⁽⁷⁾

This is not to say that religion was not a factor in Scottish politics; it was. In the early part of this century, many Protestants in the lowland urban areas supported first Liberal-Unionists, then Conservative and Unionists and, after the Catholic Church had dropped its opposition to 'moderate' socialist candidates, the majority of Catholics voted socialist. For a very brief period in the nineteen thirties, Protestant parties – Alexander Ratcliffe's Scottish Protestant League in Glasgow and John Cormack's Protestant Action in Edinburgh – enjoyed considerable success in municipal elections.⁽⁸⁾ However, that success served only to break the hold of the Conservatives on Glasgow Corporation and to allow in a socialist administration. For a short period the Orange Order was able to deliver working class Protestant votes to Unionist and Conservative candidates but this has not been the case since the fifties. And even when the Orange Order could deliver the Protestant votes, it made very little difference because there were few locations in which this gave them power. Although the Order might still like to engage in sectarian politics, the Conservative Party has no interest in attracting or sustaining an anti-Catholic vote. Its electoral base lies in class politics and the South of England. Interest in Orangeism declined to the point that in 1970, the party nominated three Catholics and one, Michael Ancram, has since served as chairman of the Scottish Conservatives. There has been very little to distinguish the Conservative Party's Ulster policy from that of the Labour Party and its recent accord with the Dublin government has left the Orange Order talking about opposing Conservative candidates in future elections. Finally, the odd maverick, such as Pastor Jack Glass, who has tried to revive sectarian politics in Scotland has performed embarrassingly badly at elections.

To summarise the situation which has obtained at least since the second world war, religious affiliation has played no greater part on the politics of Scotland than it does in the politics of the United States or New

Zealand. It is certainly not, as those commentators who are struck by the behaviour of some football supporters would maintain, comparable to the situation in Northern Ireland. This is not to say that some Scots have not wished to pursue sectarian politics. It simply means that, irrespective of desire, the situation has not permitted it, and in the absence of success even those rhetorically committed to such politics have tended to lose heart.

Political power is important because it gives access to local resources such as employment in local government and council housing. I know of no evidence that Catholics now fare any worse than Protestants in either of these important areas. Given the already mentioned influence of Catholics in the Labour Party in Scotland, this is not surprising. Furthermore, the management of such resources has, since the war, become more and more the preserve of highly mobile middle-class professionals who may in their careers move from region to region and are thus very unlikely to share the particularist impulses of those local groups who might wish to see discriminatory policies pursued. However, this is clearly an empirical issue. If evidence of Catholic disadvantage does exist, then it should be published.

Although electoral politics are important, their study does not exhaust the search for evidence of disadvantage or discrimination. What of socio-economic position? Is there evidence that Roman Catholics are generally poorer and of lower status than non-Catholics, and, if so, does an explanation of any difference lead us to conclude that there is systematic disadvantage or discrimination? The first and most important thing to note is the dearth of data. Unlike the Northern Ireland census, the Scottish census does not contain a religion question and we are thus denied a vast amount of potentially illuminating data. However, the Scottish Mobility Survey (SMS) conducted in 1975 did record the type of school attended by respondents and thus permits some comparison of the educational performances and social mobility of those men who attended Catholic schools and those who did not.

It should be noted that the SMS data refers to people who attended school between 1925 and 1972 and is thus already a remembrance of things past. The main conclusion is that there are statistically significant but small differences between the two samples, which increase as one moves towards higher levels of qualification. 68.4% of Catholics obtained no exam passes at all, as compared with 63.4% of non-Catholics. 5.8% of Catholics obtained university entrance qualifications, as compared with 9% of non-Catholics. As Payne and Ford put it 'the differences tend to be more acute at the upper end of the range of qualifications, and since this only applies to about 1 in 10 of the sample, it seems unlikely that *most* pupils' educational chances were seriously impaired by religiously-segregated education'.⁽⁹⁾ Surprisingly, controlling for class suggests that working-class Catholics actually perform slightly better than their non-Catholic counterparts, while middle-class Catholics seem at a disadvantage.

It is also possible to use the SMS data to compare rough rates of social mobility for the two populations. Credentials play only a relatively modest role in mobility. Almost all of those people with higher education qualifications attained middle class jobs, but 'the overwhelming majority of persons in the middle class both for Catholics and non-Catholics, pre- and post-1933, do *not* have a high level of education'.⁽¹⁰⁾ The one highly significant finding concerns the upward mobility of those people with low levels of education: 'Whereas 22.2% of Catholics from working class backgrounds and born before 1933 were able to enter middle class jobs with low qualifications, 33.0% of non-Catholics with the same characteristics were able to do so and of those born after 1933 only 24.5% of Catholics achieved this against 30.0% of non-Catholics'.⁽¹¹⁾

Two points should be made about this considerable difference. Firstly, as Payne and Ford recognize, they are describing the past. Someone born in 1940 entered the labour market in 1956: thirty two years ago. Someone born in 1950, in 1966: still twenty two years ago, and so on. Secondly, even the very crude division around 'born in 1933' (hence entering the labour market between 1949 and 1952), shows a considerable improvement in the mobility of Catholics. Catholics born before 1933 enjoyed a rate of 'unearned' mobility which was only 67.3% of that of non-Catholics; for those born after 1933 it was 81.7%. Clearly one would need to be able to further sub-divide the age bands to see if such a trend continued.

It is far easier to describe the data than it is to explain it. It may well be that the different rates of mobility for the two populations were caused by discrimination. Other studies have identified the importance of informal contacts in securing jobs. Given that the Irish came into the Scottish labour market at the bottom, it only requires Protestants and Catholics to consistently favour co-religionists for inequality to persist. Informal aid in securing positions will perpetuate the pattern of advantage. The fact that the pattern has not been maintained and that non-Catholic advantage has been reduced (halved, according to the SMS data) suggests that informal discrimination has been diminishing. But this is to present the explanation which gives the greatest weight to discriminatory practices. There is another highly likely possibility which Payne and Ford describe as "passive discrimination" against Catholics'.⁽¹²⁾ The majority of Catholics are concentrated in the poorest areas of Scotland. In 1970, eight out of ten Catholic children were in schools in West Central Scotland: the part of Scotland with the least potential for social mobility. The pattern of settlement established in the nineteenth century thus has a restraining effect on Catholics, entirely irrespective of the behaviour of non-Catholics. Although Payne and Ford put 'passive discrimination' in inverted commas, the use of the term 'discrimination' to describe a disadvantage caused by the general decline of a region seems inappropriate. When 'discrimination' is the noun form of an active verb, how can it be 'passive'? Who is doing it?

What would be illuminating is evidence about the relative fortunes of Protestants and Catholics in West Central Scotland but such data are not presently available.

Clearly, the most obvious conclusion about the relative socio-economic status of Catholics and non-Catholics in Scotland is that the data required to say anything more than the above is missing. However, in the absence of anything better, anecdote is not without its place. In this respect, it is worth noting that a recent collection of studies of poverty and deprivation in Scotland makes no mention of religion. The words 'religion', 'sectarianism', 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' do not even appear in the index of *Scotland: the real divide*.⁽¹³⁾ Although a desire to avoid what is a politically sensitive issue may have had some bearing on these omissions from a work edited by two Scottish Labour MPs, I cannot believe that 18 researchers studying the social distribution of income, educational opportunity, employment and wealth would all have conspired to completely pass over something of relevance to their findings. Similarly, one might note that, of the 385 items listed in the 1986 *Scottish Government Yearbook* bibliography of publications on Scottish politics and government, only two concern religion: one is my *No Pope of Rome*; the other is Bill Murray's *The Old Firm*!

Segregation as Sectarianism?

One commentator pointed to the degree of religious segregation which still exists in Scottish life as being evidence of the social importance of religious differences. The majority of Roman Catholic children are still educated in separate Catholic schools. There is still residential segregation and there is 'leisure' segregation. Protestants and Catholics support different (and often locally competing) football clubs. Especially in the larger lowland urban areas, there are Catholic and Protestant 'fraternal' associations and there are Protestant and Catholic drinking clubs and public houses. However, segregation is not necessarily evidence of discrimination (although it may be precisely that). The Roman Catholic Church may have begun its own school system because it felt that the public schools, having initially been Protestant church schools, would undermine the socialization of Catholic children in Catholic beliefs and culture. But since the end of the last century the public schools have been independent of the Protestant churches. From 1872 until 1927, they were managed by directly elected boards which had Catholic clergy members.⁽¹⁴⁾ That a separate Catholic school system still exists is entirely due to the wish of the Catholic Church in Scotland to socialize Catholic off-spring in the culture and ethos of Catholicism. This can hardly be regarded as evidence of anti-Catholic discrimination.

It seems similarly inappropriate to take the voluntary segregation of leisure associations as evidence of discrimination. Some degree of

segregation follows inevitably from the desire of orthodox Catholics and Protestants to maintain their own religious cultures. To see separation as a 'social problem' is to endorse improperly the view that religions should be liberal and ecumenical. Likewise, to regard membership of voluntary associations (such as the Orange Order or the Troops Out Movement) which support conflicting political positions as a matter of public concern, as something which modern democracies should have outgrown, is curious. It seems most sensible to confine the shorthand 'sectarianism', and the concern it connotes, to the maintenance or re-introduction into the public arena of religious particularisms which, in modern societies, are supposed to be confined to the private world.

The question of whether there is in Scotland a degree of sectarianism which is significant, either because it is a neglected part of the operation of the social system or because it should cause 'right-thinking' people disquiet, should not be answered by a measure which includes voluntary association as an index. More properly, what is at issue is the extent to which private prejudices are acted upon in the public sphere so as to affect the lives of those who do not wish to be affected. It should not be a matter of public policy concern that the Church of Scotland only permits those who can pass certain doctrinal tests to enter into communicant membership. Similarly, it should not be a matter of great concern that Scots of Irish Catholic ancestry are far more likely than non-Hibernian Scots to support Irish Republican and nationalist movements. What would be evidence of enduring sectarianism would be the operation in the public sphere of what we permit as private opinion. Hence we need to ask whether Catholics fare significantly worse than non-Catholics in educational provision and performance, in the exercise of political rights, in the consumption of public goods such as state-funded housing, welfare benefits, health provision, and in the general indices of socio-economic status. Furthermore, once such data are presented, we need to know to what extent any identified disadvantage results from active discrimination. And, presumably, we would be interested initially in anti-Catholic discrimination. It is altogether another question if a population remains relatively disadvantaged because it has performed the societal equivalent of shooting itself in the foot. It would be interesting if, as some radical Catholics have suggested, it was the case that the Church's insistence on maintaining its own school system was an own goal; interesting, but not what is conventionally thought of as evidence of sectarianism.

I do not wish to propose a simple infrastructure-superstructure argument but it is generally the case that religion only remains an important base for 'secular' association when it is underpinned by shared socio-economic characteristics. As Scottish Catholics have experienced upward mobility and come to spread themselves more evenly across the occupational spectrum their shared Catholicism has diminished as a source of identity and has, to a large extent, been superseded by class. More and

more middle class Catholics send their children to non-Catholic schools. Catholic fertility rates have declined to approach the norm for Protestant Scots.⁽¹⁵⁾ Most significantly, the Catholic Church in Scotland's own statistics show that by the 1970s 'mixed' marriages were almost half of the total of all marriages contracted by Catholics.⁽¹⁶⁾

Explaining the Failure of Scottish Anti-Catholicism

Some of the evidence which has been offered against the following argument misses the point and it is best to clarify the nature of the argument before the details are presented. That some Scottish Protestants and Catholics continue to dislike each other is neither here nor there. The argument is not that some time between 1850 and 1940 Scottish Protestants became tolerant, theologically liberal and ecclesiastically ecumenical. It is that some Scottish Protestants tried to act in a discriminatory manner but found that they lacked the wherewithal to act particularistically. However much some Protestants may have wished to maintain their economic, political, social and cultural advantages, a variety of forces outside their control radically reduced their ability to do so. Being unable to act on their world-view gradually led all but the most committed to abandon that world-view. The clearest way of presenting an explanation of the decline of religious politics in Scotland is to offer comparisons between Scotland and Ulster.

The first obvious difference between Scotland and Ulster is the greater secularisation of the former. Whether one considers the involvement of individuals in organised expressions of religiosity, or the impact of religious values on the general culture and polity, one has to conclude that Scotland is less religious than Northern Ireland.⁽¹⁷⁾ But this suggests a tautology; we explain the decline of anti-Catholicism in Scotland by arguing that religion matters less. To avoid the charmed circle we need to explain why religion matters less in Scotland. Part of that will involve elements particular to Protestant-Catholic conflict but there is a more general element. It is well-recognised that modernization and pluralism undermine religiosity.⁽¹⁸⁾ Scotland is far more integrated into the British economy and into European culture than is Northern Ireland. Thus, even if relations with Catholics had not been an issue in either context, one would have expected Scotland to be the more secular.

But if we concentrate on relations between Protestants and Catholics, a major difference between Scotland and Ulster can be found in the interaction between a high degree of internal fragmentation and the absence of external threat. I have argued in detail elsewhere that conservative Protestantism is inherently fissiparous.⁽¹⁹⁾ However, the cohesion of Ulster Protestants suggests the point ably made by Durkheim, Simmel and Coser: cohesion may be created and maintained by the presence of an external threat.⁽²⁰⁾ I will first discuss the reasons why the

Irish Catholics in Scotland were not seen by Scottish Protestants as a threat of proportions similar to that posed by the Catholic majority in Ireland. I will then consider the roots of Scottish Protestant fragmentation. The interaction between these, the perceived threat to a group and its internal cohesion, explains the degree of anti-Catholicism. Having established that, I will turn to consider the ability of such anti-Catholics as remained to pursue their policies.

The Irish Catholics in Scotland

In the first place there were not all that many Catholics in Scotland. The best figures available suggest that the Catholics formed 9.2% of the population of Scotland in 1878, rising gradually to 13.7% in 1931 and 15.9% in 1977.⁽²¹⁾ In contrast, if one takes Ireland as a whole, Catholics form the vast majority of the population and in Northern Ireland, as constituted since 1926, they form more than a third of the population.⁽²²⁾ The total impact of the Irish Catholic immigrants on Scotland was considerably reduced by the concentration of their settlement in certain regions. Basically, they concentrated where industry was developing: Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, Glasgow, Dundee, Dunbarton, the Lothians and Edinburgh. And even within these areas, distribution was uneven. While Catholics formed 25.3% of the population of Strathclyde Region in 1977, they were only 10.1% of Lothian.⁽²³⁾ Although Catholics were strongest in the most populous parts of Scotland, important organisations such as the Church of Scotland and the Free Church had a national structure which, although skewed towards population concentration, had been slow to adapt to movements of people. Thus in the period from 1890 to 1930 – the crucial time for the career of anti-Catholicism – relations with Catholics were not a practical issue for much of the Church.

The Irish Catholics in Scotland flirted with Irish politics, but generally they settled to regard themselves as Scots. While they acted to preserve their own religion and culture, they did not for long have a distinctive Catholic politics.⁽²⁴⁾ Unlike the Catholics of Ulster, Scottish Catholics were not intent on moving the Protestants of Scotland into another political formation. Hence the only way in which they could be seen as a 'threat' was to suppose that they would change dramatically the nature of Scotland from within and not many Scots, even those of a conservative Protestant faith, were convinced of that.⁽²⁵⁾ Although the idea was floated by some Catholic politicians, a specifically Catholic party, along the lines of the European Christian Democratic parties, was not formed. Instead Catholics became active in the secular Labour movement and in what became the Labour Party. This meant that a neat alignment of religion and politics could only be created if all or most Protestants supported the Unionist and later Conservative parties. But arguments between the supporters of the established Kirk, and the dissenting heirs to the Secession Churches (who were later joined by the Free Church) has caused elements of the urban

bourgeoisie and the Highlands who supported the Free Church to support the Liberal Party. The re-union of the majority of Presbyterians reduced the salience of the church establishment issue and thus helped erode the links between Presbyterianism and Liberalism. Some Protestants followed Liberal Unionists into the Conservative and Unionist fold but many, especially among the more theologically conservative Presbyterians, remained Liberals.

The ability of the Conservatives to sustain a pan-class Orange vote was further undermined by them retaining far longer than their English counterparts an image of being a hunting, shooting and fishing party while the majority of Orangemen were members of an urban industrial proletariat.⁽²⁶⁾ The Tories' lack of responsiveness to Scottish concerns, the power of the Labour Party in local government, and the rise of Scottish nationalism all helped erode Protestant support. Any lingering attachment to the Conservative Party the Protestant working class might have carried into the nineteen eighties has been destroyed by the collapse of Scottish heavy industry which is, rightly or wrongly, blamed on the economic policies pursued since 1979 by the Conservative government. That government's Ulster policy has also offended many Orangemen.

To summarise these three points, the Catholic presence in Scotland did not offer good evidence of a significant 'threat' to the Scottish Protestants, and hence did not act as a counter to the fragmentation which already existed and which increased between 1870 and the present. In contrast, relations between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland caused an *increase* in Protestant cohesion. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, one had considerable conflict between the Ulster Presbyterians and the more 'Anglo' Irish of the Church of Ireland; reaction to Catholic demands for first emancipation and later home rule, brought Protestants in Ulster together into a homogenous political bloc.

Scottish Protestant Fragmentation

There were a number of sources of fragmentation in Scottish Protestant culture. The first major division was between Highlands and Lowlands. The topography of the Highlands delayed its development so that it was always out of step with Lowland Scotland. When the Lowlands were Protestant, the Highlands were Catholic and Episcopalian. By the time the Highlands had been converted to Calvinism, the Lowlands had become secularized and the dominant form of Protestantism, for those who still had any, was moderate, rational, and ecumenical. In language, custom, social relations, and economy, the two parts of Scotland have been so different as to challenge the usefulness of regarding the area north of the Solway sands and the Tweed as one country.

As was the case with England, social differentiation produced a

fragmentation of the religious culture. In Scotland, the divisions were deeper and more far reaching. In part this was a result of the special place of the Christian Church in Scottish life. In the absence from Scotland of many of the institutions of a political system, the Presbyterian Church enjoyed an inflated importance for Scots. Furthermore, that the national church was Presbyterian, rather than Episcopalian, was important because the more 'reformed' Presbyterianism gave greater opportunities of factionalism and schism than did the English national church, with its considerably lower rates of lay participation. Scottish Protestants spent most of the nineteenth century arguing with each other, rather than with Catholics, and produced a de facto pluralism which hastened secularization.⁽²⁷⁾

Political Impotence

Some reviewers seem to have misunderstood the argument which I and Tom Gallagher have advanced. Neither of us is arguing that the desire to discriminate on the grounds of religious or ethnic background is now entirely absent in Scotland. Rather we have argued that even those Scots Protestants who wished to maintain discriminatory practices were unable to do so. Even had they been united, their chances of success were undermined by their political impotence.

Protestant divisions might have been partly healed had there been a 'pork barrel' to bribe dissenters, and the power to punish those who could not be sweetened. But Scotland had few such resources. Since the Union of the Crowns, real power has lain in London. The elites therefore have tended to see London and cosmopolitan values as their main point of reference. The limited number of members of the elite who wished to maintain a Protestant ascendancy in Scotland did not have the power to fulfil their ambitions, and they had little to offer the Protestant working classes. In contrast, the Unionist elite in Ulster could make major concessions to the working class. They legalised the popular militias as the Special Constabulary⁽²⁸⁾ and they discriminated in housing and local employment policy.⁽²⁹⁾

The Ulster Unionists were popular enough to resist being incorporated in a united Ireland and for almost fifty years they had considerable control over many areas of life in Northern Ireland. Although subordinate to the British parliament at Westminster, the devolved parliament at Stormont could make its own policy on local government, employment, housing, education and policing; precisely those areas which would best serve to alienate the Catholic minority. The continued alienation of the Catholic minority then acted as a constant local reminder of the dangers to Protestants of incorporation into a united Ireland and hence maintained the religious and cohesion of the Protestant population.

Scotland did not have that degree of control over its own affairs. The

only Scottish institution that still had some influence was the Church and it was divided. The Scottish Unionists could not offer much to militant Protestants because they were a small part of a party which represented England and Wales as well as Scotland. An example of their powerlessness was the failure of two Scots Unionist members of parliament – Sprot (North Lanarkshire) and McInnes Shaw (Renfrew) – to have Scotland exempted from the provisions of the 1926 Catholic Relief Bill. Scottish matters generally, let alone relations with Catholics which were only a concern for part of Scotland, had little impact on the British parties. Taking the other side of the coin, voters in Scotland knew that there was little point in electing anti-Catholic politicians such as Ratcliffe or Cormack to Westminster. What could one or even ten militant Protestants in Westminster have achieved?

The devolution of some elements of public administration to the Scottish Office did not increase the ability of Scottish Protestants to discriminate against Catholics because the Office was controlled by the most cosmopolitan and 'anglicised' Scots. And the increase in 'planning' which has been characteristic of public administration in Scotland has been accompanied by the removal of power from local authorities through increased centralization.⁽³⁰⁾

Desire and ability interact. The obdurate reality of impotence is, for most people, enough to cause a gradual shift in desires until the situation that obtains is endorsed as being what was really wanted all along. A small proportion of mostly working class Protestants continue to wish to act in a sectarian fashion but the majority of Scots Protestants have, since the turn of the century, come to endorse a liberal culturally pluralistic tolerant society as being the sort of society they want.

The Elements of Religio-Ethnic Conflict

One very simple generalization can be drawn from the comparison of religious politics in Ulster and Scotland. The survival of Protestant politics requires an ideological element – a theory of the virtues of one's own people and the vices of some other group – and actual competition between the two populations. This does not mean that one requires actual competition between every member of both populations. The proposition is not refuted by pointing out that racist attitudes can be held by people in parts of America that have hardly ever seen a black. The 'actual' conflict can be fixed and made real for members of a society who themselves have not participated in it by the transmission of experiences through various media. Nonetheless, a sustained absence of actual competition for a large part of a population will reduce the plausibility and importance of the experience of the rest. This simple proposition explains the collapse of anti-Catholicism in Scotland and, by simple reversal, the maintenance of anti-Catholicism in Ulster.

The Highlands of Scotland retained a Calvinist evangelical Protestant faith but did not engage in any of the expressions of practical anti-Catholicism. The Orange Order, the main organisation for popular anti-Catholicism, has never had any support from above the Highland line. The Highlanders had the right theology for anti-Catholicism but not Irish Catholic immigrants. The Lowlands of Scotland were already well on their way to being a secular society by the time the Irish Catholics arrived in any great numbers. The main churches had either abandoned evangelical Protestantism or, even if they maintained it, had accepted pluralism. Of crucial importance is the observation that, as in most other societies, the urban working class of the Lowlands, the very people who were in day to day competition with the Irish Catholics, were not 'theologically' Protestant. The proletariat of Glasgow had the actual competition with Catholics but it lacked the ideological element to legitimate and sustain the conflict. The consequence of this is best seen if one moves from large-scale generalization to actual individuals and social movement organisations. Militant Protestant leaders in Glasgow such as Jack Glass and David Cassells (an independent evangelical with close links to Ian Paisley's Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster) are constrained by the absence of a general evangelical culture amongst those 'Protestants' who are prepared to campaign against Roman Catholics. They are forced to distance themselves from the supporters of the Orange Order and the recently formed paramilitary Protestant groups because they know (and their critics are quick to remind them) that the average Orangeman is not an evangelical, is not 'born again', is not a total abstainer, and does not keep the sabbath. Lowland militant Protestant leaders are forced to distance themselves from the only constituency which shares their willingness to protest against Catholics because that constituency possesses none of the other characteristics of evangelical Protestantism.

Conclusion

The comparison of relations between Protestant and Catholics in Scotland and Ulster suggests that the factors important for the continuation of sectarian politics are: (a) the degree to which religion plays a part in the shared ethnic identities of the populations at the time they come into contact; (b) the extent to which conflict between the populations reinforces the part played by religious elements in the ethnic identity; and (c) the degree to which the populations involved have the power to act in support of their own interests. If one wishes to move beyond the already rather abstract notion of the interaction between internal fragmentation and external threat, the comparison of Scotland and Ulster suggest that the single simplest point that can be made concerns the degree of secularization. Confining ourselves to Protestantism, we can suppose that the internal dynamic of Protestantism is fission. Especially in the non-Lutheran cases, Protestant churches (until the modern era in which

orthodoxy has been largely abandoned) have tended to divide. Protestantism inadvertently encourages pluralism. Exceptional circumstances are required to retard this dynamic and the classic exceptional circumstance is that of being confronted by a large population which shares a religious identity antithetical to that of the Protestants. In such a circumstance pluralism is not possible because it will mean not religious liberty for all but submersion and erosion. What is crucial then is the period in which the initial contact between the two populations occurred. The Protestants arrived in Ulster in the early eighteenth century. The Catholics arrived in Scotland in the nineteenth century.

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References

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5. B Murray, *The Old Firm: sectarianism, sport and society*, Edinburgh, Mainstream, 1984.
6. For a good discussion of the involvement of the Irish Scots in Irish politics, see I Wood, 'Irish immigrants and Scottish radicalism, 1880-1906', pp. 65-89 in I MacDougall (ed), *Essays in Scottish Labour History*, Edinburgh, John Donald, 1978.
7. T Gallagher, 'Catholics in Scottish politics', *Bulletin of Scottish Politics*, 1981, Spring, pp.21-43. It should be noted that the community of interest shared by most of the Catholic councillors gave them more influence greater than their numbers.
8. See S Bruce, *op.cit.*, Chs 2 and 3. The Scottish Protestant League and Protestant Action are also described in T Gallagher, 'Protestant

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9. G Payne and G Ford, 'Religion, Class and Educational Policy', *Scottish Educational Studies*, 1977, 9(1), p.90.
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 11. *ibid.*
 12. Payne and Ford, *op.cit.*, p.97.
 13. G Brown and R Cook, *Scotland, The Real Divide: poverty and deprivation in Scotland*, Edinburgh, Mainstream, 1983.
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 16. D McRoberts, *Modern Scottish Catholicism: 1878-1978*, Glasgow, Burns, 1979, p.237.
 17. For the most recent figures for church membership and church attendance, see D Brierley, *UK Christian Handbook; 1987-88 Edition*, London, MARC Europe/Bible Society, 1987.
 18. P L Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, London, Collins, 1982; B R Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion*, London, Oxford University Press, 1976.
 19. S Bruce, 'Authority and fission: the Protestants' divisions', *British Journal of Sociology*, 1985, 36(4), pp.592-603.
 20. L Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965; E Durkheim, *Suicide*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975; G Simmel, *Conflict*, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1965.
 21. McRoberts, *op.cit.*, p.228.
 22. P A Compton, 'The demographic dimension of integration and vision in Northern Ireland', pp.75-104 in F P W Boal and J N H Douglas

- (eds), *Integration and Division: geographical perspectives on the Northern Ireland problem*, London, Academic Press, 1982.
23. McRoberts, *op.cit.*, p.240.
 24. Gallagher, *op. cit.*.
 25. Those who wish to claim that anti-Catholicism remained strong in the main churches, even into this century, often point to reports such as *Report of the Committee to Consider the Overtures on Irish Immigration and the Education (Scotland) Act 1918* which the Church of Scotland's General Assembly formally accepted in 1923. Anyone with experience of large bureaucracies will appreciate the value of committees and reports in side-tracking enthusiasts whose views or enthusiasm are not shared by the majority. The image of the Kirk (and most other such organisations) built up from the committee reports it has considered (or even accepted) would be a wildly inaccurate one. What is more significant is an obvious lack of willingness to act. For all some ministers were willing to voice anti-Catholic sentiments (and more were unwilling to publicly oppose them), the Kirk did not campaign against the 1918 Education Act which incorporated Catholic schools into the state system on such favourable terms that 'Rome on the rates' is not an especially exaggerated description.
 26. J Kellas, *The Scottish Political System*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, Ch.6; C Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Scotland 1914-1980*, London, Edward Arnold, 1981, Ch. 4.
 27. For a detailed account of the links between fission, pluralism, the rise of tolerance and secularization, see S Bruce, *A House Divided: a sociology of Protestantism*, Oxford, forthcoming.
 28. M Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: the formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 1920-27*, Dingle, Brandon Press, 1983.
 29. P Buckland, *The Factory of Grievances: devolved government in Northern Ireland, 1921-39*, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1979.
 30. On the Scottish Office and local government in Scotland, see J Kellas, *Modern Scotland*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1980, Ch.8.