

'Resigned to take the bill with its defects': the Catholic Church and the third Home Rule bill

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In its chronicle of events for 1912, *The Irish Catholic Directory* devoted just a single line to the introduction of the third Home Rule bill in the House of Commons.¹ This contrasted sharply with lengthy entries on the crusade against evil literature, intemperance, the sinking of *Titanic* and clerical obituaries. Even more striking was the silence of the Catholic hierarchy, which, as a body, did not issue any statement. This reticence should not, however, be regarded as episcopal disapproval. The bishops shared in the general air of expectancy that nationalist aspirations would be fulfilled by 1914: this was the product of the two general elections of 1910; the Parliament Act of 1911, which limited the capacity of the House of Lords to veto parliamentary measures; and the commitment of the Liberal Party under Herbert H. Asquith to introduce a third Home Rule bill. But for the hierarchy the possibility of Irish self-government presented both potential benefits and lurking dangers. Their responses to the bill and the deepening crisis of 1913 and 1914 were conditioned by two overarching factors.

1 *The Irish Catholic Directory* (ICD), 1913, p. 515.

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The first was their level of confidence in the leadership of the Irish Party. The second applied chiefly to the Ulster bishops: the prospect of exclusion from an Irish parliament imperilled their religious and educational interests. By the onset of the First World War, the spectre of partition had stretched their trust in the Irish Party and support for a Home Rule settlement to breaking point.

The hierarchy's support for the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) was far from monolithic. There were clearly discernible divisions apropos Ireland's political representatives at Westminster. The sceptics included the two episcopal big beasts – Cardinal Michael Logue, archbishop of Armagh and primate of All Ireland, and Archbishop William J. Walsh of Dublin – along with Bishop Edward O'Dwyer of Limerick and the ailing Archbishop John Healy of Tuam. Logue's lack of enthusiasm for the Irish Party had its roots in the 1890s, when the party was divided into bitter Redmondite, Dillonite and Healyite factions. The cardinal had little confidence in Redmond and Dillon, even after the reunification of the party in 1900, believing them too secularist, and was drawn, like Walsh, to Timothy Healy's championing of Catholic interests. The active support of Logue and the clergy saw Healy consistently returned in North Louth; most notably he narrowly defeated the official Irish Party candidate in the election in January 1910 by eighty-four votes. By the December 1910 election, however, the politically pragmatic, if reticent, Logue had jettisoned Healy.² The cardinal's condemnation of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) further distanced him from the IPP. He was not their only critic. Bishop Abraham Brownrigg of Ossory, for example, privately viewed the AOH as a danger to the faith and public order.³ But

2 See J. Privilege, *Michael Logue and the Catholic Church in Ireland, 1879–1925* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 81–90; F. Callanan, 'Healy, Timothy Michael' in J. McGuire and J. Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009), available online at <http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3903> (accessed 12 October 2012).

3 Brownrigg to William Walsh, 4 April 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, Dublin

among the hierarchy Logue was by far the most publicly vocal opponent. During a visit to Carrickmore in 1908, he declared the AOH 'a pest, a cruel tyranny and an organised system of blackguardism'.⁴

The position of the archbishop of Dublin was somewhat different. By 1905 Walsh had largely withdrawn from politics. Even as Home Rule reached its zenith, the paucity of letters between him and John Redmond is striking. In March 1912, conscious of the damaging impression, at such a vital juncture, that the archbishop was 'out of sympathy with the methods and policy of the Irish Party', Redmond urged him to send a subscription to the Home Rule fund and sought an interview to discuss aspects of the bill.⁵ He had to wait almost a fortnight for a brusque and dismissive reply: 'it is now some years since I made up my mind to have nothing more to do with Irish politics and that nothing in the world could now induce me to change my mind in the matter.'⁶ Throughout this period the archbishop was afflicted by poor health and preoccupied in 1913 with Dublin's labour unrest, and in 1914 with ultimately unfruitful plans to build a cathedral on Ormond Quay.

The highly conservative Archbishop Healy may have sympathised with William O'Brien in private, and they were certainly friendly, but he made no public pleadings in favour of the All-For-Ireland League. From about 1909 he was in poor health and an auxiliary bishop was appointed in 1911.⁷ Bishop O'Dwyer, a zealous champion of Catholic education, was also in the sceptics' tent. Following his death, Bishop Michael Fogarty of Killaloe delivered a panegyric in September 1917,

Diocesan Archives (DDA).

4 É. Phoenix, 'Nationalism in Tyrone, 1880–1972', in C. Dillon and H. A. Jefferies (eds), *Tyrone: history & society* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 770–1.

5 John Redmond to Walsh, 7 March 1912, Walsh papers, 377/1, DDA.

6 Draft Walsh to John Redmond, 20 March 1912, Walsh papers, 377/1, DDA.

7 P. Maume, 'Healy, John' in McGuire and Quinn, *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, <http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3895> (accessed 12 October 2012); P. Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish nationalist life, 1891–1918* (Dublin, 1999), p. 108.

in which he suggested that O'Dwyer's dissatisfaction with the party 'arose from impatience on his part with what he considered their want of manly spirit in pressing the claims of Ireland'.⁸ Distrustful of the party during the third Home Rule episode, O'Dwyer did, at least, curb his penchant for publicly criticising it.

A large episcopal middle ground – determined not to interfere in politics, supportive of the national cause and reliable subscribers to the parliamentary fund – separated the sceptics from the party loyalists. The partisans included younger prelates such as Charles McHugh, bishop of Derry, and the urbane Patrick O'Donnell of Raphoe. In an address of thanks to the priests of the diocese shortly after his inauguration in 1907, McHugh stated that priests did not cease to be Irishmen and that the laity looked on clergy as natural leaders and expected political leadership from them.⁹ He was not shy about offering such advice. O'Donnell, a friend of McHugh since their student days in Maynooth and bishop of Raphoe since 1888, was the member of the hierarchy closest to the Irish Party leadership. Augustine Birrell, chief secretary from 1907 until 1916, described him as 'not in the least like either Logue or Walsh. He was frankly a Nationalist politician with a tinge of enthusiasm in his nature.'¹⁰ A trustee of the party fund, O'Donnell was also an ardent supporter of the AOH and its national president, Joseph Devlin, who was elected nationalist MP for West Belfast in 1906. 'Wee Joe' reinvigorated the AOH, tied it to the Home Rule cause and gave it newfound respectability as a benefit society, but it remained avowedly sectarian in outlook.¹¹ Since 1890 the bishop of Raphoe had also corresponded

8 M. Fogarty, *The Great Bishop of Limerick: panegyric delivered by the Most Rev. Michael Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, at the month's mind of the dead prelate, in St John's Cathedral, Limerick, 18 September 1917* (Dublin, 1917), p. 16.

9 P. Donnelly, 'Bishop Charles McHugh of Derry diocese (1856–1926)', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2005), p. 221.

10 A. Birrell, *Things Past Redress* (London, 1937), p. 209.

11 É. Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism: nationalistic politics, partition and the Catholic*

regularly with John Dillon.¹² Denis Kelly, bishop of the tiny diocese of Ross and the hierarchy's financial expert, also merits mention in this context, though he was not as bound to the party as McHugh and O'Donnell were.¹³

Home Rule is Rome rule

Cries that Home Rule would amount to Rome rule grew in intensity as Home Rule moved to the top of the political agenda. Religious tensions were exacerbated, particularly in Ulster, by the muscularity of the AOH and by two papal pronouncements: the *Ne Temere* decree, which came into effect in April 1908, and the *motu proprio*, a papal rescript, *Quantavis diligentia* of October 1911. They were a godsend to anti-Home Rule pamphleteers. In essence *Ne Temere* was a housekeeping measure, providing for the first time one uniform set of marriage regulations for all Catholics.¹⁴ Under the canonical form, for a marriage to be valid it had to take place before a priest, who was a witness to that marriage. The decree did not, in fact, refer to the upbringing of children and generated little interest until the infamous McCann case in 1910.¹⁵ Alexander McCann, a Catholic, married a Presbyterian woman in a Presbyterian church in Ballymena. The couple subsequently moved to the Falls Road. The marriage broke down and McCann left home with his two children in October 1910. Shortly after this he attempted to have the younger child baptised in

minority in Northern Ireland 1890–1940 (Belfast, 1994), pp. 4–5.

12 This continued until 1921. See correspondence in John Dillon papers, MSS 6764/1–121, Trinity College Dublin Archives (TCD).

13 The 1911 census recorded 44,011 Catholics in the eleven parishes comprising this diocese, ICD, 1915, p. 266.

14 On the evolution of the rules of the Catholic Church governing marriage, see W. Van Ommeren, 'Ne Temere', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (second ed., Detroit, 2003), pp. 218–9.

15 See *The New legislation of the Catholic Church on Betrothals & Marriage: decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council approved and confirmed by His Holiness Pope Pius X. Authorised translation* (Dublin, 1907), pp. 1–8.

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the nearby St Paul's Catholic church but Mrs McCann apparently disrupted the ceremony. McCann then disappeared. This essentially private marital quarrel came to public attention under the shadow of *Ne Temere*. It was alleged that the marriage had ended when a priest informed the couple that their marriage was void and that they would need to remarry in a Catholic ceremony. This Mrs McCann refused to do, whereupon her husband departed with the children.¹⁶ William Corkey, her Presbyterian minister, prepared a letter of appeal to the lord lieutenant on behalf of Mrs McCann, who pleaded:

In my despair I am driven to apply to you, as the head of all authority in this country, for help. I am without money, and but for the charity of kind friends I would be starving. I want to get my children and to know if they are alive; and I have been told, kind sir, that if you directed your law officers to make inquiries they could soon get me my rights. Will you please do so, and help a poor heartbroken woman.

This emotive letter was published in *The Northern Whig* on 2 December 1910. It was accompanied by an editorial, 'Clerical kidnapping in Belfast', which warned starkly: 'To steal the children of a lawfully-married Presbyterian mother, and to turn them into Roman Catholics against her will – to tell her that she is a harlot and her children bastards – all that will come quite naturally after Home Rule.' This appeared just days before the general election and was used as propaganda against Joe Devlin in West Belfast. The McCann affair was debated in the House of Commons in February 1911 during a motion raised by the unionists. Seeking to defuse the issue, Devlin read statements from the priests in St Paul's. They insisted

16 See A. C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the Era of Joe Devlin, 1871–1934* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 129–30; M. Harris, *The Catholic Church and the Foundation of the Northern Irish State* (Cork, 1993), pp. 14–5; O. Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster, 1603–1983: an interpretative history* (Dublin, 1993), p. 180.

that they had never declared the marriage invalid. The nationalist MP claimed the affair was 'one of the most scandalous political dodges ever known'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the McCann case proved damaging. The situation was not helped by Cardinal Logue's Lenten pastoral in February 1911, which deemed anti-*Ne Temere* agitation as 'having been got up avowedly for the purpose of moving the civil authorities to fetter the action of the church and block the execution of her laws'.¹⁸

In this fraught atmosphere *Quantavis diligentia* further heightened anti-Catholic animosity by forbidding Catholics, under pain of excommunication, to compel ecclesiastics to attend civil tribunals. In Dublin the unionist paper *The Daily Express* seized on this as evidence of papal aggression and menacing Catholic power, and surmised that it would confer immunity from prosecution on Catholic clergy.¹⁹ Daily reports and commentary on the papal rescript featured in *The Daily Express* from 21 December until the second week of January 1912. In a letter to the press, published on 30 December, Archbishop Walsh attempted to check what he later regarded as 'the lurid representation of the decree ... based upon a total misconception' and stated that the exemption had lapsed in Ireland through long disuse.²⁰ He then became embroiled in a public quarrel with James Campbell, Unionist MP for Trinity and a prominent barrister, who asserted that the decree was indeed applicable in Ireland.²¹ In *The Motu Proprio 'Quantavis Diligentia' and its Critics*, a 110-page pamphlet published

17 Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, p. 131.

18 ICD, 1912, p. 484; Lenten Pastoral 1911, Logue papers, Arch/9/9/5, Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive (OFMLA).

19 *The Daily Express*, 21 December 1911.

20 *Irish Independent*, *The Freeman's Journal*, 30 December 1911; W. J. Walsh, *The Motu Proprio 'Quantavis Diligentia' and its Critics* (Dublin, 1912), p. 7.

21 *The Daily Express*, 6 and 9 January 1912; P. Maume, 'Campbell, James Henry Mussen 1st Baron Glenavy', in McGuire and Quinn, *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a1422>, accessed 12 October 2012).

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in early 1912, the archbishop refuted Campbell's claims, derided his qualifications 'as an interpreter of canonical documents' and drew attention to attempts to provoke outcry in the context of Home Rule.²²

This did little to dispel the anxieties of the main Protestant churches as religious and political fears proved mutually reinforcing. At the root of this was a lack of confidence in an Irish government to maintain civil and religious liberties for all. The McCann case became a **cause célèbre** and was the subject of extensive protest. The General Synod of the Church of Ireland denounced *Ne Temere*. In his pamphlet *Rome and Marriage: an examination of the recent papal decree, 'Ne Temere'*, Dudley Fletcher, Church of Ireland rector of Coolbanagher, feared: 'If a papal decree on marriage can break up a home in Ireland under British law, what fair play or toleration could we expect under a Roman Catholic Parliament in Dublin, with an executive responsible thereto?'²³ The perils of mixed marriages prompted the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church to appoint a committee on *Ne Temere* in 1911, which drew up a statement as to its nature and dangerous effects and sought to have the decree withdrawn.²⁴ The decree was also the subject of inter-church dialogue (together with national insurance, temperance and education) between the Church of Ireland and Presbyterian Church.²⁵ From 1908 intra-Protestant rapprochement was encouraged by the Lambeth conference, the decennial meeting of the Anglican church. Three years later the General Synod of the Church of Ireland appointed a committee to this end; likewise the General Assembly

22 Walsh, *Motu Proprio*, pp. viii, 28.

23 D. Fletcher, *Rome and Marriage: an examination of the recent papal decree, 'Ne Temere'* (Dublin, 1911), p. 8. On the Church of Ireland response to *Ne Temere* see A. Scholes, *The Church of Ireland and the Third Home Rule Bill* (Dublin, 2010), pp. 19–22.

24 *Minutes of the Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, vol. 12, June 1911, pp. 97, 108; June 1912, p. 377.

25 *Ibid.*, June 1912, p. 366.

established a Committee on Cooperation with other Evangelical churches in Ireland.²⁶

Quantavis diligentia and *Ne Temere* featured prominently and frequently in anti-Home Rule protests. At a convention in Belfast on 1 February 1912, over 40,000 Presbyterians feared that 'under Home Rule as foreshadowed, the parliament and executive alike are certain to be controlled by a majority subject to the direction of the authors of the *Ne Temere* and *Motu Proprio* decrees.'²⁷ As a subsequent resolution made clear, Presbyterian resistance to Home Rule could not be stated 'without fixing attention on the religious difficulty that lies at the heart of the question'.²⁸ Notably, fears of interference with religious liberty, denominationalisation of education and the endowment of the Catholic Church were all ranked ahead of the potential economic dangers of Home Rule. The convention had no confidence in any protections provided in the Home Rule measure: 'No safeguards which the wit of man could devise would prevent the Church of Rome from using the majority always at her command to further her designs. The security of the Protestant minority – their only security – is that they continue to be governed directly by the Imperial Parliament.'²⁹

The same motif featured in a memorial from 131,351 adherents of the Presbyterian Church read at the General Assembly in 1913. A motion receiving the memorial and declaring the determined opposition of the church to Home Rule was overwhelmingly supported by 921 votes to only 43 against.³⁰ In 1914 Rev. James

26 I. Ellis, *Vision and Reality: a survey of twentieth century Irish inter-church relations* (Belfast, 1992), pp. 3–7.

27 *The Irish Times*, 2 February 1912.

28 'Home Rule Statement prepared and issued in pursuance of a resolution of the Presbyterian Convention held at Belfast on 1st February 1912', p. 7.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

30 *Minutes of the Proceedings*, vol. 12 (June 1913), pp. 635–6. The best-known pro-Home Ruler was the Rev. J. B. Armour of Ballymoney.

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Bingham, the moderator of the General Assembly, described the Ulster Volunteer Force as ‘a great and noble army of men... preparing to defend themselves and us from the dangers that threaten our citizenship, liberties and religion’.³¹ Northern members of the Church of Ireland exhibited similarly trenchant opposition.³² Yet in Dublin a meeting of southern unionists in January 1913 protested against the introduction of religious difference into party politics and disapproved of the identification of the Irish Protestant churches with a particular party.³³

As might be expected, the Catholic bishops staunchly defended their position on confessional lines. They were not, however, insensitive to the political ramifications. Many bishops were all too aware of the easy political capital accruing to opponents of Home Rule, even if based on unionist misconceptions. Writing to Archbishop Walsh in early 1912, Cardinal Logue was ‘sorry Your Grace is getting so much trouble with the Orange newspapers. It is almost useless to trouble about them. They want a pretext for a political cry, and no amount of explanation will stop them.’³⁴ In a revealing letter to the archbishop of Dublin, Bishop Brownrigg questioned the wisdom of the Holy See in imposing such legislation without consultation: ‘It is said that the legislation is only tentative but that will not be taken into account by our enemies who can do any amount of injury to religion in the meantime.’³⁵ He believed that Walsh, with due deference to the Holy See, could not have adopted any other position in respect of the *motu proprio*. Archbishop Thomas Fennelly of Cashel believed that a statement from Rome approving Walsh’s publication (that the decree

31 R. F. G. Holmes, ‘The General Assembly and politics’, in R. F. G. Holmes and R. Buick Knox (eds), *The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1840–1990* (Belfast, 1990), pp. 175–6.

32 See the essay by Andrew Scholes in this book.

33 *Irish Independent*, 25 January 1913.

34 Logue to Walsh, 7 January 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, DDA.

35 Abraham Brownrigg to Walsh, 6 January 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, DDA.

did not apply in Ireland) would quell the disquiet and safeguard the anticipated Home Rule bill.³⁶

Curiously little was made at the time, or has been since, of the successful libel action taken by six priests and Robert Browne, bishop of Cloyne and uncle of famous photographer and *Titanic* survivor Father Frank Browne, SJ, against the proprietors of the Scottish newspaper the *Dundee Courier*, for alleging religious intolerance in Queenstown. In an article on 15 August 1911, the *Dundee Courier* charged that the priests and the bishop had abused their religious influence over the laity in 1909 to procure the indiscriminate dismissal of all Protestant shop assistants in the employment of Catholics and to ruin the business of a Catholic shopkeeper who had refused to discharge a Protestant employee.³⁷ In his address to the jury, Alexander Ure, KC, senior counsel for the plaintiffs and the lord advocate, claimed that as an example of disreputable journalism the case was, in his experience, without parallel and that 'political intent did not entitle a man to make a shameless and infamous attack upon other men's private character'.³⁸ Cardinal Logue believed that Browne, in winning his action, was not only 'defending his own character but the good name of the Bishops and priests of Ireland'.³⁹ In an effort to demonstrate that Protestants had nothing to fear under Home Rule, Bishop McHugh nominated David Hogg, a Protestant Home Ruler, for the Derry seat at Westminster in preference to Sir Shane Leslie, a Catholic convert. The bishop signed the nomination papers along with Samuel Patton, the Presbyterian chaplain to Derry prison.⁴⁰ Others such as Bishop Patrick Finegan

36 Fennelly to Walsh, 6 February 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, DDA.

37 *Irish Independent*, 21 and 23 December 1911, 22 March 1912; ICD, 1912, pp. 512–3.

38 ICD, 1912, p. 513.

39 Logue to Walsh, 12 March 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, DDA.

40 *The Irish Times*, 27 January 1913; Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster*, p. 188; F. J. Madden and T. Bradley, 'The diocese of Derry in the twentieth century,' in H. A.

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of Kilmore expressed publicly the hope that Home Rule would be ‘a solvent for the aimless, but bitter, hatreds that for too long have divided Irishmen’.⁴¹

As Home Rule drew closer the political necessity to reassure unionists that Irish self-government was not inimical to their interests became acute. To this end Jeremiah MacVeagh, MP for South Down, published two pamphlets in 1911. *Home Rule in a Nutshell: a pocket book for speakers and electors* contained, as its subtitle indicated, ‘a brief exposition of the arguments for Home Rule, and answers to the objections raised’.⁴² MacVeagh treated the religious dimension separately in *Religious Intolerance under Home Rule: some opinions of leading Irish Protestants*. This attempted to counter the so-called ‘religious bogey’ by inviting leading and representative Irish Protestants to state their views. The responses were then compiled and published. One of the most interesting came from the pen of Lord Pirrie, chairman of Harland & Wolff shipyard. Although a firm opponent of the first and second Home Rule bills, his attitude had softened greatly in the interim, and by 1911 he was a firm supporter of the Liberal government’s plans for Home Rule:

There is no fear that the impending inauguration of an Irish legislature will have, as one of its results, the religious persecution of Protestants...

On the other hand, I confess with shame that in the past the spirit of religious intolerance has been and is even now, although in lesser degree, prevalent amongst a portion of the Unionist population of Ulster.

Jefferies and C. Devlin (eds), *History of the Diocese of Derry from Earliest Times* (Dublin, 2000), p. 245.

41 *Anglo Celt*, 8 November 1913 cited in D. Gallogly, *The Diocese of Kilmore, 1800–1905* (Cavan, 1999), pp. 243–4.

42 J. MacVeagh, *Home Rule in a Nutshell: a pocket book for speakers and electors* (Dublin and London, 1911). The pamphlet was a response to the many manifestations of unionist electoral propaganda in Britain, for example *The Truth About Irish Home Rule (by one who knows)* (Dublin & Belfast, 1911).

Happily the evidence that this unfortunate spirit is on the wane is indisputable.⁴³

Both pamphlets were attacked in a unionist counterblast, *The Home Rule 'Nutshell' Examined by an Irish Unionist*, published by the Unionist Associations of Ireland. The recent papal decrees and examples of clerical interference in elections, such as that by Cardinal Logue in North Louth, were ventilated.⁴⁴ In an effort to neutralise fears of insidious Rome rule, Redmond published an article on nationalism and religion in *Reynolds's Newspaper*, listing occasions when the laity resisted Vatican intervention in Irish affairs.⁴⁵ This alarmed the Catholic hierarchy. In a letter to Walsh, Logue feared overcompensation by the Irish Party towards its rivals in religion by consenting to clauses in the Home Rule bill 'directly pointing to and restricting the actions of Catholics... We want no Catholic ascendancy; but we do not want Catholics logged and muzzled as if they were furious dogs.'⁴⁶ The bogey of religious intolerance proved impossible to quash.

Education

The sensitive area of education was the hierarchy's long-standing and key vested interest. There were three principal points of concern.

First, to ensure a Catholic ethos, Catholic control of all aspects of the educational infrastructure had to be maintained. This was jeopardised by the advance of secularist legislation. The abolition of school boards in England and Wales and the creation of local education authorities based on county councils under the 1902 Education

43 J. MacVeagh, *Religious Intolerance under Home Rule: some opinions of leading Irish Protestants* (London, 1911), p. 42.

44 *The Home Rule 'Nutshell' Examined by an Irish Unionist* (Dublin & Belfast, 1912), pp. 57–62.

45 Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster*, p. 189.

46 Logue to Walsh, 24 March 1912, Logue papers, Arch/9/3/3, OFMLA.

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Act had set an unwelcome precedent. The Education bill of 1906, which was not carried into law, was even more alarming, with clause four proposing that the local authority would have absolute power as to the appointment of teachers.⁴⁷ School ethos was of signal import in Ulster as a means of sustaining a community that was both Catholic and nationalist or conversely Protestant and unionist.

The second point of concern was the tendency of the government to attach nondenominational strings to the grant of public money.

The third anxiety was simply the magnitude of that grant. Inadequate funding, especially in the expanding secondary-school sector, was a perennial grievance. When forwarding his subscription to the parliamentary fund in 1911, Bishop Joseph Hoare of Ardagh hoped ‘the coming Home Rule Bill may satisfy our desires especially in the financial clauses’.⁴⁸ At a prize-giving ceremony in St Columb’s college in June 1913, Bishop McHugh, the school’s former president, contrasted the starved condition of secondary education in Ireland with the generous funding received in England and Scotland. He claimed it would require an annual grant of £120,000 to put Irish schools on an equal footing. The bishop urged that the financial relations between Ireland and London be settled on equitable terms *before* the passing of Home Rule, lest Irish schools remain underfunded.⁴⁹

The Home Rule bill

In 1911 and 1912 finance rather than Ulster was considered the greatest obstacle facing Irish Home Rule.⁵⁰ The Primrose committee,

47 Redmond to O’Donnell, enclosing a confidential memorandum regarding the Education bill, 1906 and the Single School Areas bill, 1912, John Redmond papers, MS 15217/3, National Library of Ireland (NLI).

48 *The Weekly Freeman*, 22 April 1911 cited in D. W. Miller, *Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898–1921* (Dublin, 1973), p. 269.

49 ICD, 1914, p. 516.

50 P. Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland: the Ulster question in British politics to 1914*

comprising experts without political associations, studied the financial relations between Britain and Ireland and investigated how sufficient revenue could be raised for Ireland to meet its needs. The balance between income and expenditure had deteriorated significantly in recent years. Between 1896 and 1911 Irish revenue had increased by 28 per cent, whereas government expenditure in Ireland had risen by 91 per cent, mainly due to land purchase and welfare benefits.⁵¹ Bishop Denis Kelly was the Irish expert on the committee and he kept Redmond abreast of developments. The Primrose report on the fiscal arrangements of home rule favoured full fiscal autonomy with the imperial exchequer assuming liability for all Irish pensions already granted. When the committee unanimously passed its report, Kelly wrote enthusiastically to Redmond that 'six months' thought and study have confirmed me in the view... that in the altered circumstances a bold and full measure of Home Rule has a better chance of success than a half-measure'.⁵² In the event, the Primrose proposals were ignored, with only token concessions to fiscal autonomy in the Home Rule bill.

In the 1912 Lenten pastorals of the Irish bishops an unmistakable air of expectancy regarding the impending Home Rule bill jostled with warnings against immoral publications, excessive drinking and the dangers of socialism. That optimism gave way to resignation once the details of the bill were revealed. As feared, the financial provisions fell very far short of fiscal autonomy. Bishop Kelly would accept them, he told John Dillon, only 'with repugnance' because 'Ireland is not mistress in her own house'.⁵³ Imperial taxes would continue to be levied in Ireland and paid into the Imperial

(Brighton, 1980), p. 44.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

52 Kelly to Redmond, 6 October 1911, Redmond papers, MS 15199/4, NLI.

53 Kelly to Dillon, 17 January 1912, Dillon papers, MS 6766/41, TCD.

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Exchequer.⁵⁴ Under clause fifteen, the Irish parliament had power to impose independent taxes and to vary or discontinue imperial taxes. Such powers were, however, subject to a number of restrictive conditions. For example, there was no entitlement to impose new customs duties, and imperial customs and excise duties could only be varied by way of addition.⁵⁵ The cost of land purchase, old-age pensions, national insurance and the constabulary would initially remain imperial services. A ‘transferred sum’ would be paid into the Irish exchequer until such time as Irish revenue and expenditure balanced for three consecutive years. The clear implication was that the Irish parliament would be encouraged to tighten its belt. Though acknowledging that the ‘hands of the Irish Party are tied’, Cardinal Logue was disappointed at their lack of fight. ‘I have always thought,’ he wrote to Walsh, ‘that the finance arrangement of Mr Gladstone’s 1893 Bill would have left Ireland in poverty and misery. This bill is little if at all better.’⁵⁶

With the financial facet practicably immutable, the hierarchy turned its attention to the religious aspect of the bill, which was essentially contained in clause three. Logue, O’Donnell and Kelly were nominated to scrutinise the measure ‘as far as it affects religious interests’.⁵⁷ In practice this meant educational interests. For the most part clause three replicated the provisions regarding religion in Gladstone’s 1886 and 1893 Home Rule bills. The Irish parliament would have no power to make laws establishing or endowing any religion; impose any disability or confer any privilege or preference or advantage on account of religious belief; or impair the right of a child to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious

54 Government of Ireland. A bill [as amended in committee and on report] to amend the provision for the government of Ireland (2 & 3 Geo. 5 c. 14).

55 *Ibid.*, c. 15.

56 Logue to Walsh, 22 November 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, DDA.

57 Logue to Walsh, 20 November 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, DDA.

instruction. The furore over *Ne Temere* appears to have influenced the insertion of a sub-clause that religious belief or ceremony could not be made a condition of the validity of any marriage. An Irish parliament would have no authority to divert the property or, without consent, alter the constitution of any religious body without adequate compensation.⁵⁸ During the committee stage of the bill this provision was extended, under clause forty-two, to guarantee against appropriation of the property of Trinity College and Queen's University Belfast.⁵⁹

Unsurprisingly, the potential impact on Catholic education dominated the bishops' consideration of the bill in November 1912. As Conor Mulvagh has discussed, Logue and O'Donnell sought the legal counsel of James Murnaghan, barrister and professor of jurisprudence at University College Dublin. Tellingly, six of the eight questions put to him pertained to education.⁶⁰ Logue feared that the safeguards for Protestants embodied in the bill would limit Catholic freedom of action as 'so many fetters riveted to our limbs'.⁶¹ The cardinal seemed underwhelmed by Murnaghan's opinion that clause three would leave the law as it stood, and there is an unmistakable note of resignation in his comment that 'that is the most we could hope for'.⁶² Innately pessimistic, Logue was particularly fearful for the denominational status of teacher-training colleges in the light of Augustine Birrell's amendment that every school receiving public money should be open to all.⁶³ It was O'Donnell rather than Logue who communicated with Redmond; Kelly was in Rome at

58 Government of Ireland. A bill [as amended in committee and on report] to amend the provision for the government of Ireland (2 & 3 Geo. 5 c. 3).

59 *Ibid.*, c. 42.

60 See the paper by Conor Mulvagh in this book; Miller, *Church, State and Nation*, p. 289.

61 Logue to O'Donnell, 5 November 1912 cited in Privilege, *Michael Logue*, p. 93.

62 Logue to Walsh, 3 December 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, DDA.

63 James Murnaghan to Walsh, 14 November 1912, Walsh papers, 377/1, DDA; Logue to Walsh, 12 December 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, DDA.

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this time. When Murnaghan's opinions belatedly reached Redmond in December 1912 he believed that it was too late for alterations. Moreover, the Irish Party leader maintained that 'some of the suggested amendments are of a character which would instantly arouse all the latent anti-Catholic feeling in England, and would create a storm around our heads which would in all probability wreck the Home Rule Bill'.⁶⁴ He did, however, offer reassurance about training colleges. If anything, Redmond's dismissive response demonstrates clearly the limits of episcopal authority and input. Logue was resigned to accept the bill, commenting bleakly: 'We were promised a generous measure of Home Rule. Now that the bill is through Committee it looks to me like a skeleton on which to hang restrictions.'⁶⁵

The spectre of partition

By the beginning of 1913 these concerns appeared almost trivial as the Home Rule saga entered a new and ominous phase. In the House of Commons, on 1 January, Edward Carson, the effective leader of the Ulster unionists, unveiled a modified strategy with a resolution, which was defeated, to exclude the entire province of Ulster. For Redmond partition remained unthinkable, though he was willing to contemplate Home Rule within Home Rule, which in turn was anathema to the Ulster bishops. As tension rose in Ireland with the formation of unionist and nationalist paramilitary forces, the Irish Party was compelled to accept some form of separate treatment for Ulster. Rumours of compromise were deeply unsettling for northern nationalists. In a letter to Redmond on 9 October 1913 Bishop O'Donnell stressed the 'growing apprehension on the part of a good many Catholics and Nationalists in the North of Ireland in reference

64 Redmond to O'Donnell, 12 December 1912, Redmond papers, MS 15217/3, NLI.

65 Logue to Walsh, 12 December 1912, Walsh papers, 383/5, DDA.

to conference schemes'.⁶⁶ While he assured the nationalist leader that they would go to great lengths to meet unionist concerns, 'nothing could justify cutting this [nationalist] minority off from their claims under the Bill, and deliberately leaving them under a harrow that might be worse than what they have endured'.⁶⁷ Revealingly, he also emphasised fears of the detrimental impact that exclusion of the north-east would have on Catholic education.

In his Lenten pastoral in February 1914, Logue presciently forecast that 'this year is fraught with vital issues for the destinies of our dear country'.⁶⁸ As various exclusion schemes were mooted by the cabinet and unionist opposition mounted, the Ulster bishops grew increasingly apprehensive. It was inevitable that it should be so. Four dioceses – Armagh, Derry, Clogher and Kilmore – straddled the mooted six-county border, while two others – Dromore and Down & Connor – were situated entirely within the north-east corner. In February Bishop McHugh made clear his concern that the fate of northern Catholics was being marginalised at Westminster. As Phoenix has argued, the prelate's misgivings were a reflection of grass-roots feeling in Counties Tyrone, Fermanagh and Derry, and they could not be blithely dismissed.⁶⁹ Despite assurances from Joe Devlin that 'nothing will be done that will not have the sanction and support of all our friends in Ulster', the bishop, in consultation with O'Donnell, proposed a nationalist meeting in Derry.⁷⁰ As he explained to Redmond:

The Orange faction is never done crying out intolerance and publishing what they would suffer under H[ome] Rule, but there is not a word

66 O'Donnell to Redmond, 9 October 1913, Redmond papers, MS 15217/4, NLI.

67 *Ibid.*

68 *Irish Independent*, 23 February 1914.

69 Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, p. 11.

70 Devlin to McHugh, 19 February 1914 cited in Harris, *Catholic Church*, p. 48.

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about what Catholics and Nationalists in Ulster would suffer if the Orangemen got control... The great object of the meeting was to give the Liberal Party to understand that the Nationalists of the North have their rights as well as the Orangemen ... to see that there were two sides to the Ulster Question.⁷¹

The Irish Party leader appealed for the meeting to be called off and McHugh consented with great reluctance. Derry was the cause of further alarm in March when Redmond again prevailed on the bishop to cancel a proposed route march by Irish Volunteers, believing it 'a fatal mistake, also the best means of playing into [the] hands of Carson as almost certain to lead [to] terrible consequences and render our position here much more difficult'.⁷² McHugh succeeded, but only after threatening to have the march denounced from the altar.⁷³ The political situation was beginning to spiral out of episcopal or party control.

Much depended, of course, on how exclusion was defined. Around mid-February O'Donnell appears to have met the IPP leadership in London. In the event of exclusion proving unavoidable, the prelate recommended the scheme proposed by Horace Plunkett: that Ulster should have the right to vote itself out after a period of not less than ten years.⁷⁴ David Lloyd George's county option favoured initial exclusion for any individual Ulster county for three years before coming under Home Rule. O'Donnell recognised the risks this posed: 'The perils to the party in the L.[loyd] G.[eorge] scheme are formidable. Even if we supposed the country willing in all the circumstances to accept or tolerate it, the party would not be safe without wide con-

71 McHugh to Redmond, 28 February 1914, Redmond papers, MS 15203/5, NLI.

72 Telegram Redmond to McHugh, 20 March 1914, Redmond papers, MS 15203/5, NLI.

73 McHugh to Redmond, 21 March 1914, Redmond papers, MS 15203/5, NLI.

74 *The Irish Times, Irish Independent*, 11 February 1914; Miller, *Church, State and Nation*, p. 297.

sultation amounting to a mandate.⁷⁵ Redmond was forced to accept the scheme in early March, ostensibly as 'the price of peace'.⁷⁶ But winning acceptance for this formula was no easy task. He dispatched emissaries to elicit the support of prominent northern nationalists, including the Ulster bishops. Devlin met McHugh, O'Donnell and Tohill, the terminally ill bishop of Down and Connor,⁷⁷ with 'eminently satisfactory' results.⁷⁸ Given Logue's antipathy towards the AOH, Jeremiah MacVeagh and James Lardner, MP for North Monaghan, visited Ara Coeli, the cardinal's residence in Armagh. MacVeagh reported to Redmond that the cardinal recognised that the bill had to be saved: 'Of course he doesn't love the concessions but will not object.'⁷⁹ The bishops were prepared to rally behind the party as long as a unionist administration with possible control of education was not established in Belfast. Despite their endorsement, the bishops' private views were another matter. Logue confided to Walsh: 'I fear the concessions on the Home Rule Bill will be a bad business for us here in this part of the North. It will leave us more than ever under the heel of the Orangemen. Worst of all it will leave them free to tamper with our education.'⁸⁰ Bishop McKenna of Clogher hoped that southern unionists would not accept exclusion. He admitted to Michael O'Riordan, rector of the Irish College in Rome, his fear that if temporary exclusion was granted and worked reasonably well then it would almost certainly become permanent.⁸¹ Asquith's doubling of the moratorium to six years merely intensified this anxiety.

Holding out for a clean break of six counties, Carson rejected the

75 O'Donnell to Redmond, 25 February 1914, Redmond papers, MS 15217/4, NLI.

76 D. Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond* (London, 1932), p. 268.

77 He died on 4 July 1914 and was succeeded by Joseph MacRory in August 1915.

78 Gwynn, *Life of John Redmond*, p. 269.

79 MacVeagh to Redmond, n.d. [6 March 1914], Redmond papers, MS 15205/4, NLI.

80 Logue to Walsh, 13 March 1914, Walsh papers, 384/4, DDA.

81 Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, p. 152.

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county option as it could guarantee him only four. As the political situation deteriorated rapidly with the Curragh incident, the UVF gun-running and increased enrolment in the Irish Volunteers, the threat of civil war grew progressively more real. This is captured by O'Donnell in a letter to Redmond in early May:

A marked change for the worse has gradually come over the attitude and spirit of Ulster Unionists ... there is a bad 12th of July spirit even where it was not known for long years. I should not be surprised if it were worse in the included counties than in the N.E. In the N.W. the Unionists are constantly saying they will fight.⁸²

Ultimately the impasse over the geographical area to be excluded proved intractable, and the outbreak of the First World War, merely postponed a resolution of the Ulster conundrum. In the spring and early summer the Ulster bishops were placed in an invidious position. They had deferred to Redmond's wishes while at the same time attempting to moderate the anxiety of the faithful. In Derry, for example, McHugh called for no public rejoicing when the Home Rule bill passed its third reading in May lest it be construed as provocation and spark disturbances.⁸³ Yet among the Ulster bishops a lurking fear intensified that they might be sacrificed in the interests of political expediency.

The death of Pope Pius X on 20 August 1914 and the election of his successor, Pope Benedict XV, preoccupied the hierarchy during the early weeks of the war. Logue spent six weeks in Rome at this time and had considerable difficulty negotiating a passage home, returning on 29 September.⁸⁴ Redmond's achievement in placing the

82 O'Donnell to Redmond, 9 May 1914, Redmond papers, MS 15217/4, NLI.

83 *The Derry Journal*, 25 May 1914.

84 Logue to Walsh, 12 September 1914, Walsh papers, 384/4, DDA; ICD, 1915, p. 538.

Home Rule bill on the statute book on 18 September was undermined by its immediate suspension and Asquith's assurance that special provision would be made for Protestant Ulster. Messages of congratulation were forthcoming from the archbishop of Cashel and the bishops of Kerry, Elphin, Clonfert, Kildare and Leighlin, Raphoe and Portsmouth.⁸⁵ More telling is the number of prelates who did not write. No statement regarding Home Rule was made at the meeting of the Irish episcopal conference on 13 October 1914, but two resolutions touched on the war. The first declared that the supply of chaplains for Irish soldiers at the Front was inadequate. The second directed the clergy to remind the faithful of the sufferings of Catholic Belgium and to encourage them to subscribe to the Belgian relief fund.⁸⁶ A total of £27,000, or an average of £1,000 for every diocese, was raised by December 1914. Bishop Browne of Cloyne pressed for the contributions to be published in the press because of the belief that 'those who are opposed to us in religion or political sentiment parade what they have done, which is not much, and show a disposition to belittle, or suppress the publication of the generous contribution of our poor people'.⁸⁷

Conclusion

The third Home Rule crisis demonstrated the limitations of the Catholic Church's political influence. The bishops were important figures, but they proved largely unable to shape the political process. The sense of hopefulness evident in 1912 quickly gave way to resignation and then to the dread among the northern bishops that their interests, especially in education, would suffer in any compromise with unionism. During the tribulations of 1914 the

85 ICD, 1915, p. 537.

86 Ibid., pp 540–1; Bishop Robert Browne to Walsh, 29 October 1914, Walsh papers, 384/4, DDA.

87 Browne to Walsh, 31 December 1914, Walsh papers, 384/4, DDA.

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Ulster bishops moved from being disenchanted with Redmond's faltering policy to losing all faith in him. This was compounded by the formation of a coalition government in May 1915. Bishop Fogarty of Killaloe, hitherto a strong party supporter, deemed the 'coalition with Carson on top... a horrible scandal and intolerable slight on Irish sentiment'. In the same letter he pronounced Home Rule 'dead and buried' and suggested that Ireland was 'without a Nationalist Party'.⁸⁸ For his northern colleagues the *coup de grâce* was Lloyd George's ill-fated partition scheme in the summer of 1916. All bar O'Donnell publicly disavowed the proposals. Bishop Joseph MacRory of Down and Connor, McKenna and McHugh sent messages of support to an anti-exclusion meeting in Omagh, one of several in the north-west, on 7 June. For McKenna, partition was simply 'unthinkable' and 'repugnant to every patriotic Irishman no matter what his political views'.⁸⁹ The Irish Party leadership pinned its hopes on gaining acceptance for the proposals at a representative nationalist convention in St Mary's hall, Belfast, on 23 June. Redmond sought Logue's views on the composition of the convention and requested a meeting with the Ulster bishops. Fearing 'a project to cut off Ulster except Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal', Logue arranged a meeting on 16 June in Dublin, where it would attract less attention.⁹⁰ The bishops insisted that a plebiscite be held in each excluded county at the end of the war, a proposal to which Redmond would not agree. The extent of the breach between the Ulster prelates and the party was captured in a frank letter from Bishop McHugh, writing from Dublin on 19 June, to Alderman James McCarron, which was published in *The Derry Journal*:

88 Fogarty to Redmond, 3 June 1915, Redmond papers, MS 15188/5, NLI.

89 *The Derry Journal*, 9 June 1916.

90 Logue to Bishop of Down and Connor, 7 June 1916, Logue papers, Arch/9/3/1/1, OFMLA; Logue to Redmond, 11 June 1916, Redmond papers, MS 15201/9, NLI.

As Irishmen, the bishops cannot but regard with feelings of deep regret the admission of the principle of a divided Ireland ... But what causes more alarm to the bishops than the voluntary surrender of the National ideal is the perilous position in which religion and Catholic education would be placed were those proposals, so imperfectly understood by the public, reduced to practice. If the provision is only temporary... why is a New Executive to be established in Belfast with all the machinery of an independent body... It is said that these are not the proposals of the Irish Party. I grant they are not. But I say to stand up in defence of them, to suggest the acceptance of them, is just as bad as to be branded with the dishonourable reputation of having fathered them.⁹¹

Despite episcopal repudiation of the Lloyd George proposals, Devlin's supporters ensured that they were approved at the Belfast convention. This pyrrhic victory inflicted irreparable damage on the Irish Party. The nightmare scenario of a local Ulster settlement led Logue to declare famously that it would be 'infinitely better to remain as we are for fifty years to come, under English rule, than to accept these proposals'.⁹² His was a new spin on the well-worn three-word creed: Ulster says no.

⁹¹ *The Derry Journal*, 21 June 1916. On this episode see Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism*, pp. 28–33.

⁹² ICD, 1917, p. 517; *The Derry Journal*, 21 June 1916.