

## **PROFILE OF A ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH IN SCOTLAND**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper considers a number of social and political issues relating to the people of St Mary's parish in Hamilton, ten miles from Glasgow. In 1996 the community celebrated one hundred and fifty years as a parish.

In 1755, Alexander Webster estimated there were just 16,490 Catholics in Scotland. By the last quarter of the 18th century the economically discarded Catholic peasants of the Western Highlands and Islands began to migrate either to the New World or to the industrialising Lowlands. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the numbers of Catholics in Scotland rose dramatically as a result of Irish immigration.

From the late 18th century, Catholics from Ireland responded to the demands of the land in Scotland by becoming reapers in the seasonal inflow and outflow of the time. In addition, during the first half of the 19th century, the Irish navy became a permanent fixture as harbours, canals, roads and railways contributed to Scotland's industrial revolution. However, it was with the mass exodus that accompanied the great Irish Famine of 1845-49 that numbers of Irish Catholics in Scotland increased markedly. Handley estimates that 100,000 of the Famine emigrants settled down in Scotland during this particular period. Although accurate statistics were not kept during these years, the 1841 census notes 126,321 Irish-born in Scotland, a

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figure which underestimated the Irish presence for it did not include the children of those born in Ireland. By 1851 under similar census conditions, 207,367 Irish born were recorded in the country (a figure which would probably have included Protestants from Ulster), around 7% of the population (Handley 1964). By 1878, there were 332,000 Catholics in the population, 9% of the total.

Despite some individual successes, mainly focusing on those who initiated personal services, as entrepreneurs and shopkeepers, the Irish Catholic immigrant community of the 19th and early 20th centuries was socially and economically amongst the lowest orders (Aspinwall 1984). The immigrants suffered discrimination and this reflected in widespread 'No Irish Need Apply' notices. Their desperate circumstances meant they took any available employment. In consequence, they lacked social and political power.

In addition to not having the church buildings to deal with the growing influx, the Catholic Church in was wanting in organisation and finance. Only after 1840, when the numbers of Irish settling permanently in Scotland increased, did the slow process of chapel-school building begin in the industrial districts of Glasgow, Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire. Among the first Churches to be built was St Mary's in Hamilton.

There are many recorded reports of discord between the existing Scottish Catholic Church and the newly emerging immigrant one (Handley 1964). A small missionary Church which had learned to keep its head down in an unfavourable environment encountered an unavoidable change in its character. For O Farrell (1972, p. 306)

Irish Catholicism has been more than the official pronouncements of the hierarchy: it is a set of values, a culture, a historical tradition, a view on the world, a disposition of mind and heart, a loyalty, an emotional psychology - and a nationalism.

Politically speaking, although they gradually supported the emerging Labour Party, there also existed for many Irish a pre-occupation with the historical relationship between their country of origin and Britain. In particular, since the days of Daniel O Connell, a number of Irish communities in Britain engaged in political agitation for some form of Irish independence while some took part in the more militant activities that occasionally coincided (Gallagher 1987). It is unlikely that St Mary's parishioners were any different from their counterparts across the Irish Catholic communities of Lanarkshire

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and the greater Glasgow area (allowing for differences relating to the area of Ireland from which they originated).

Nonetheless, increasing secularisation, the length of time the Irish have been in Scotland, marriage outside of their community and pressure to conform to the ways of the host community have all had an effect upon the identity of the present Catholic community in Scotland. It does not remain the cohesive populace it was once considered. However, as I have shown elsewhere, it does survive as a distinctive ethnic community, with its own political and cultural identity (Bradley 1995).

During the latter half of 1994, I administered a questionnaire to a sample of the current parishioners of St Mary's. Table 1 shows that around 50% of parishioners were regular mass attenders in 1994, a figure above the Scottish average of approximately 35% (the parish is made up of 1800 people). One hundred and twenty-eight mass attenders were given the questionnaire (between 10 July and 14 August) along with other parish members who volunteered to complete the survey away from the Church or who were interviewed on pre-arranged visits. In addition, I complemented the data with a series of interviews with around three dozen adults (aged seventeen to ninety-two) and about two dozen young people of Holy Cross High School in Hamilton (who were also part of the parish). Finally, some questionnaires as well as interviews were conducted among non-Church attending members of the parish. The data deal with residence, education, employment, politics, cultural affinities and opinions on three crucial issues for Catholics today, abortion, the maintenance of distinctive Catholic schools, and Ireland.

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**Table 1**

**Numbers attending mass (at 16th October 1994)**

6.30pm (vigil)	175
10.00am	260
11.30am	285
6.30pm	180
Total	900

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Of the 128 mass attenders surveyed there was almost an even spread between women and men. Sixty of the respondents were male and 65 were women. In terms of the age profile of the attending parishioners there was a similarly even spread (table 2).

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**Table 2**

**Age of Church attendants**

age	percentage
16 - 24	17
25 - 34	20
35 - 44	20
45 - 54	14
55 - 64	12
65+	16
<i>number</i>	<i>128</i>

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Related to questions of employment is an historical perception within the Catholic community of a society in Scotland frequently characterised by anti-Catholicism. One of the ways this sectarianism has traditionally manifested itself is in an exclusion from better employment as well as from some institutions and professions.

Forty-five percent of today's St Mary's Church attenders believe that discrimination in favour of Protestants is a social reality in Scotland. The fathers of the vast majority of the St Mary's respondents (60%) were found to be manual workers; the change in employment status observed with the current cohort (16% manual workers) suggests a more mobile generation in recent years. (The interviews also demonstrated that overall subjective job status and residential origins had likewise changed positively for many of these people.) One in five of the older cohort were in professional or technical posts while this number had more than doubled a generation later. Despite this mobility (which has resulted from many factors, and which may have assisted the breaking down of discriminatory barriers), and despite the

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fact that slightly over half did not believe that religion is a factor in determining employment, the figure of 45% believing that discrimination happens suggests that sectarianism in Scottish life remains potent.

These perceptions were somewhat substantiated on interviewing a cohort of the St Mary's parish. Only two respondents did not acknowledge sectarianism in the workplace. All of the others either had experienced it, knew of someone who had experienced it, or 'had heard about it'. A number of shops, companies and establishments were mentioned as being bastions of anti-Catholicism or as having discriminatory practices in the past. Although many of these have now gone or have been taken over by English or US companies, some are still in evidence in the area. The list is both local and national (including banks, the police, engineering works, shipyards, local shops, some elements of the west of Scotland mercantile class and a number of bowling and golf clubs in the area).

There was a consensus that things were not as bad as they once were and that this was due to the growth of Catholic, English and multi-national companies (Stepek, the Co-op and Woolworth for example) which were less inclined to discriminatory practices. Some respondents also believed that a sound Catholic education and working class access to higher education had improved the lot of Catholics. Many still believed that discrimination existed but that it was less obvious and often had to be carried out in secret.

### **POLITICS**

In the 19th century there was a strong Irish attachment to the Liberal Party mainly because of its adherence to Irish Home Rule and because of Conservative hostility to Ireland and Catholics in general (McCaffrey 1979). However, as the 20th century developed, social and economic conditions in Scotland began to be challenged by many of the working classes, including the Irish. As much of Ireland was to gain its independence by 1921-22, and with the civil war in Ireland causing much grief to the Irish abroad, they began to turn towards the Labour Party, a party that was viewed as being moulded in the best interests of the poor and the disadvantaged. Subsequently, many writers have referred to the close relationship between Catholics and Labour in Scotland for much of this century. Indeed, it is reckoned that one of the reasons the Labour Party has been such a strong force in some areas of Scotland and Britain generally is primarily because of this bonding (Gallagher 1981).

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Although Catholics viewed Labour as a political vehicle to assist them raise their standard of living and to gain a degree of equality in Scottish society, this was not reflected in their representation at some levels of the Party. The sensitivities of Protestants and secularists within Labour meant that for years its dominant figures recognised that to have Catholic candidates might have been detrimental to the Party. Indeed,

Catholic MPs were few in Scotland, only three, so far as one can judge, from the electoral guides in 1919-39 and only more numerous from the 1960s onwards. Even at the local government level, while they were more numerous, election results indicate they were fewer than their proportion in the population (McCaffrey 1983).

However, observers such as Brand have demonstrated that the Catholic attachment to Labour and the commensurate lack of identity with other parties has given Labour a strong electoral base in west central Scotland (Brand 1978).

With reference to the St Mary's respondents, almost 60% of them reported themselves as Labour supporters, only 8% as Conservative, 12% the Scottish National Party (SNP) and 6% Liberal Democrat. In addition, those parishioners outside of the main body of the survey (ie, those still at school, older irregular Church going parishioners and the unchurched of the parish) also indicated 60% support for Labour. None choose the Conservatives or the SNP. The rest adhered to no particular party. Therefore, St Mary's parishioners have not shifted in Party preference in any significant numbers, despite being better educated, despite having entered better employment than their predecessors, and despite Labour frequently being viewed by many Catholics as pro-abortion and not supportive of Catholic schools (**Scottish Catholic Observer**, 20 September 1991 and **Flourish** July 1991). As Catholics, the parishioners retain a strong attachment to Labour.

Nonetheless, the interviews with St Mary's respondents also revealed that few of them were 'passionate' Labour supporters, though they had even less time for the other parties. There was a general feeling of disillusionment with British politics, that many politicians were the same regardless of party, and that Labour 'were the best of a bad lot'. Most interviewees felt that in the past Labour had been good on 'social justice' themes and had helped Catholics in their own economic and social struggles.

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A number of respondents displayed apprehension over Labour's abortion policy, and viewed the Party as being either 'fence sitting' or even a pro-abortion organisation. Likewise, some Labour representatives were viewed negatively for their perceived support for the ending of Catholic schooling; two respondents viewed the Conservatives as being better on these issues. One interviewee claimed,

Labour have probably done more for Catholics than any other Party, primarily because there have been a lot of Catholics involved with it. At the end of the day, politicians are self seeking. They don't support Catholics the way they should on abortion.

A seventy-three year old female respondent believed that Labour were 'bad on moral matters. Homosexuality and pornography is being allowed by them. On social things and working class matters they're good'. An older parishioner believed that 'Labour wouldn't help Catholics now. They are all educated men now and not working men rising up'.

A seventeen-year old parishioner of St Mary's stated that her mother was a Labour activist, though she herself was not politically aware. For the moment her attachment to Labour was a family one. One fifty-seven year old male interviewee remembered some priests trying to encourage their parishioners to support the Conservatives, because of the Communist influence on Labour. However, the communists that he knew remained practising Catholics.

Corresponding to Brand's data for Catholics and the SNP in the 1970s, the SNP find a lack of support in St Mary's parish. This was also confirmed in the Monklands East by election of mid-1994 (*The Scotsman*, 28 June 1994, and McCrone 1995). On the question of Scottish government, St Mary's responses were not fundamentally out of line with those of the wider community (accepting the results of the numerous polls of recent years, eg *Herald*, 9 February 1995; see also McCrone 1995). Sixty-eight per cent believed Scotland should be better understood or have an Assembly while 19% support independence.

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**QUESTIONS OF THE DAY**

*Schools*

Any contemporary student of Catholic affairs in Scotland will observe that issues regarding the maintenance of Catholic schools and the issue of abortion are crucial. In relation to Catholic schools, most of the Protestant Churches in Scotland are implicitly or explicitly against, though a number of individual Protestants (including some ministers) have expressed their worth in the 'fight' against secularism. In addition, there is a growing lobby among secularists (including humanists, atheists and agnostics) who also wish them to be removed. There are also some Catholics who would like to see them ended.

The Labour and Conservative Parties follow a similar line on the issue, both stressing that they prefer all schools to be non-denominational, but, so long as Catholics wish to maintain the schools, then the parties will defend them. The SNP are of a similar opinion, though it was in fact a prominent representative of theirs who indicated support for the schools in the strongest terms. Some Catholics viewed the supportive statements of Jim Sillars as an SNP bid to attract the Catholic vote (Sillars 1991). Nevertheless, other politicians view the issue as one to be avoided. Sillars's defence of Catholic schools and the context within which he placed the issue was one of the first occasions such a prominent politician did this. In 1991, he stated that:

The charge of divisiveness against the Catholic community is a tactic employed by those whose true intention is not integration - but the abolition of Catholic schools

Bigotry he says, continues to exist,

and pop up in the most unexpected of places, sometime disguised as liberal thinking....The day Scotland is relaxed enough to recognise separate Catholic schools as the absolute right of a community which contributes to the enrichment of our national life and ethics, and is therefore not questioned as to its rights, Scotland will have arrived.

For Sillars, Catholic schools are

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a test of whether the non-Catholic majority is able to acknowledge the laudable tenacity with which the Catholic community holds to its faith in an increasingly secular society.

A number of options were put to the St Mary's attendants regarding the schools question; each respondent was allowed to answer positively to three of the six answers. Eighty-four per cent of respondents believed that, in a free society, Catholics should be allowed to educate their children in a Catholic way. Forty-six per cent expressed the view that bigotry existed before Catholic schools and they were not to blame for its existence in Scotland. Twenty-seven per cent of parishioners believed that Scotland is quite an anti-Catholic country, and many people here would do anything to weaken the Catholic faith, while 65% of respondents supported the schools because they viewed them as central to Catholics. They were, said one respondent, 'important in a world that cares little for God, so that their children could be reared in the Catholic faith'.

Those opposed to Catholic schools were represented by 6% who thought they 'caused bigotry and sectarianism and should be abolished'. Five per cent of parishioners believed that 'they were not needed anymore and Catholics should be educated along with children of any and of no religion'.

These results were confirmed over the course of interviews. One seventeen year old, presently attending the local Holy Cross High School, believed that if there were no Catholic schools the faith 'would go to pieces. They would be left to think for themselves. The Catholic faith would be weaker and moral values would be affected'. A seventy year old respondent said that if the schools had to end, 'it would be a worse situation than we are in now. I don't think the kids being brought up now are all that interested in religion. The situation is getting worse over religion'. In fact, many others expressed a similar sentiment; that they were displeased at the state of religion in schools and in society generally, and that it would deteriorate further if there was any change in circumstances. Such a view was prevalent among all the age groups interviewed. One fifty-seven year old parishioner concurred: 'The Church of Scotland will disappear if they don't bring religion back into the educational system. The family is vital but schools shape the kids whether we like it or not'. Most of those of the fifth and sixth year at Holy Cross and who are parishioners of St Mary's also supported Catholic schools.

Contrary to much of the opinion expressed in the media, and at least in relation to the Church going parishioners of St Mary's, the overall conclusion

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arising from these figures and interviews is that there is overwhelming local support for the retention of Catholic schools where they exist in Scotland. Indeed, the support is striking in its coherence and in its uniformity. In addition, the arguments in support of the schools on the part of many, if not most, Catholics focuses on the development and growth of a secular Scottish or British society which is viewed as modern Catholicism's greatest enemy.

#### ***Abortion***

Abortion can be viewed as one of the main moral questions for the Catholic Church in the latter part of the 20th century. Like the schools, it is also a divisive issue in Scotland, one that has a social and political dimension to it.

It is also apparent that the issue threatens the relationship that Catholics have traditionally had with Labour. The main political parties in the country have similar policies on abortion, in that they support the 1967 Act which many Catholics believe has led to abortion on demand. However, Catholics have invested much time and commitment over three-quarters of a century to the Labour Party and some feel that the Party is using and abusing their support in a way that goes against their beliefs.

In 1991 the Labour Party banned the anti-abortion grouping, 'Labour Life' because the pressure group's policy went against party policy. The then Archbishop (now Cardinal) Winning responded to Labour on behalf of the Catholic Church in Scotland:

The pro-life credentials of individual candidates and of political parties should, I believe, play a crucial role in deciding who we vote for....We should think long and hard before we vote for someone who is prepared to permit the killing of unborn babies.

The editorial of the official journal of the Archdiocese of Glasgow, **Flourish**, continued the Archbishop's theme, but, in addition, took the political dimension of the argument a step further:

Is Labour, any more than any other party, best poised to reflect our Christian priorities? The dilemma is evident in its grudging attitude to Catholic schools but it is thrown into sharper relief by its pro-abortion policy - an issue which no Catholic can regard as marginal....Significantly, during voting on that Bill [the Embryo Act],

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several Labour MPs stood at the entrance to the pro-life lobby making the Sign of the Cross, whilst jeering at others, saying 'the Pope says go that way'....The time has come for Catholics to make their views known to the party which traditionally expects their support: the time has come to let it be known that 'care' can never mean 'kill' (**Flourish**, July 1991).

The press, as well as at least one Catholic Labour MP in Scotland (who is in fact against abortion), criticised Winning for interfering in politics and attempting to influence party political choice (**Herald**, 5 July 1991).

As far as Winning is concerned he is attempting to raise a fundamental issue of Catholic moral and social belief to a higher political platform. Winning believes that if housing, nuclear weapons, education and perceived cutbacks in the NHS are issues of political and moral importance, then even more so is abortion, particularly given that; 'one in five pregnancies in Britain now ends in abortion'. Of course, this belief is shared by many ordinary Catholics and a number of Catholic Labour MPs. The Cardinal argues that he is attempting to educate Catholics to vote not out of habit, but based on what MPs and parties say about issues. Winning argues that Catholics, like anyone else, have a right to use the opportunity 'to shape the parties we have'.

The Labour Party in Scotland remained relatively silent amid the furore. For some Catholics, this may reflect the Party's concern that if such religious matters became key political issues they might lose much of their Catholic constituency. One leading newspaper commented upon the link in Scotland between these issues and religious identity. It pointed out that 'mixing abortion, Labour and the Roman Catholic Church makes a powerful west of Scotland cocktail' (**Herald**, 7 July 1991).

The 'attack' by Winning and **Flourish** was not simply an attack on Labour or an attempt to introduce morality into politics on one issue. Since its founding in the late 1970s, **Flourish** has also emphasised what it regards as the lack of a moral element in the policies of the Conservative Government. Arguments against the Government's perceived cutbacks in the health service, their treatment of the poor, and Government sanctions policy on South Africa have been a recurring theme.

Catholic letters to the press were generally supportive of the Archbishop. Several believed that it was crucial that the issue should have an important place on the political agenda:

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any political ideology which considers unborn life to be part of the Age of the Disposable must be confronted. Archbishop Thomas Winning, president of the Conference of Bishops of Scotland, has chosen to do so now, not a day too early....It is commonplace for politicians to set the political agenda: this stratagem is a usurpation of the role of the electorate (**Herald**, 11 July 1991).

Future Scottish Shadow Secretary, Tom Clarke, contributed to the debate by writing for the **Catholic Observer**, following the publication of the controversial **Flourish** article. Clarke fully supported the Archbishop's stance. He also resurrected a key element in the 'old' Catholic identity by making an appeal to the Catholicism and socialism of John Wheatley, arguing that Catholic hopes and aspirations for 'improving the quality of life' were still to be best found in the Labour Party (19 July 1991). Here an issue with direct religious overtones can be seen to possess the capacity to create another dimension to political cleavage in Scotland, as well as to influence a possible re-alignment of voters.

In the present study, the parishioners of St Mary's were also asked their opinion on the question of abortion. Seventy-two per cent of respondents agreed with the survey question, 'do you believe in the teachings of the Catholic faith that abortion is always wrong, except when the life of the mother is threatened?'. In addition, the same percentage of parishioners believed that 'from the moment of conception everyone is one of God's children'.

Contrary to this stance, 10% of Church attenders at St Mary's agreed that abortion is a 'woman's right to choose'. Only 2% of those surveyed agreed that abortion was an acceptable method to control the world's population. Although there remains some deviance from the general Church arguments against abortion, it is clear that a large majority of Church attenders of St Mary's are united in their opposition to abortion. Again the statistical evidence was given further credibility when a number of parishioners elaborated on their opinions on abortion.

Many respondents believed that television and the media were pro-abortion. A seventy-three year old stressed that the media influenced thinking: 'people don't think for themselves and believe all they read in the papers. SPUC films are not allowed on TV which means they are censored'. Some people believed that the media were in fact afraid of the issue. One parishioner in his twenties said, 'the media accepts abortion; its totally for it. If we didn't have

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the faith and we were taking our information from the TV then we would all support abortion. Most MPs are pro-abortion'. Another man in his fifties stated that 'generally speaking, I think the media has helped create the climate where it is accepted and in some cases promoted'. A similarly aged women respondent perceived the media as 'pushing it, and if you're against it on soaps and such things then they always show you to be a Catholic'.

A member of the St Mary's parish in his sixties argued that 'the media is supporting it, and the media's influence would lead them to allow euthanasia. I do sympathise with young girls' problems today though'. Another older woman believed that 'the media they're for it. Contraception should rule out abortion today. The media had a lot to do with the law changing in 1967'.

Those attending the local school were not unlike their elders in their view of abortion. One girl in fifth year said that 'the media is trying to show it as an option. Some people are brought up to see it as an option. There are other options and there's too much advertising for abortion as well'. 'The media is mostly for it, pro choice and women's movements and things like that' said a male pupil. A schoolmate considered 'I feel they're very biased towards the woman's choice, the freedom of choice. They don't care so much for the child'. 'They seem to suggest it's a woman's choice, they're more pro abortion' argued a female pupil.

There is a recognition of the problems that arise from a sexually promiscuous society, and some sympathy for the predicaments of young girls who view their lives as being out of their control if they experience pregnancy. Nonetheless, throughout the various age groups of the St Mary's respondents, there is clear opposition towards abortion.

### ***Ireland***

As with most other 19th century Catholic parishes in west central Scotland, St Mary's owes its existence to the arrival of Irish immigrants during the 19th century. The spread of the Irish diaspora because of economic, political and religious factors in Ireland meant that the core identity of Catholicism also spread to Britain and the USA.

The political, cultural and social identity of today's Catholics in Scotland has been a matter of some debate in recent years. Important in this debate has been the relationship between second-, third- and fourth- generation Irish Catholics in Scotland to their country of origin.

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Extensive Catholic involvement in agitation for a perceived free and independent Ireland largely ended with the creation of the Free State in the 1920s, and since then activity to promote the 're-unification' of the country has been minimal and limited. Nonetheless, in terms of St Mary's respondents, almost 70% of them support a united Ireland, 16% don't know while only 7% believed in the unionist ideal. Additional questions put to the interviewees were intended to analyse further current Catholic perceptions of the Ireland-Britain problem.

Although the St Mary's parishioners support a united Ireland, they have disparate views on the origins of the problem and of how it is developing. A seventy-three year old female stated that, 'it was Britain in the beginning, but I'm totally against the IRA methods and killing doesn't solve anything'. An eighty year old male Church attender said, 'I have sympathy with the aims of the IRA but not their methods. The Unionists are impostors from Scotland. Northern Ireland was always totally undemocratic and the Unionists hid behind the British Government'. One parishioner of Italian descent believed that, 'the British Government is to blame, though I would be scared if they withdrew. I don't know if there will be an end to it'. A parishioner in his fifties who had previously been a member of the Anti-Partition League also blamed Britain.

Some parishioners were quite passionate on the subject. One man in his sixties stressed that, 'the problem is one of British forces occupying Ireland. It may take another civil war to sort it out, so be it. Let the Irish people sort it out themselves'. One lady in her eighties whose parents had come from county Mayo said, 'England took the north of Ireland and many other countries. The whole of Ireland is Irish, though now with the English it's all confused. The north never belonged to Britain'.

Although less articulate than the older generations, pupils at Holy Cross expressed similar views to their elders. One sixteen-year old girl argued; 'It's moved away from the original issue of occupation, slaughter and killing of Irish people. The British had no right to be in Ireland. But now the Troubles are about terrorism and bombs. The past has to be remembered if they're talking about it, but it's like extremists in Iraq and Iran now'. A male pupil of the same age said, 'the UK is to blame. They should have let them get on with their own lives, 'cause its a different country anyway'.

One lady in her forties was quite clear on her perceptions: 'a united Ireland would be an ideal situation, but I see that the Protestants have a point of

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view. Money is a problem. Better for Catholics but not for Protestants. Historically the British are to blame, but its more complex today'. One teenager had a similar viewpoint, 'all solutions seem to have a downfall though a united Ireland seems the best one'. Another respondent believed that the 'resolution will lie in demography. All of Ireland has to be included in a democratic referendum. Protestants will start to leave and come to Scotland. Not the end of the Troubles, but they will change'.

A feature of many younger perceptions is the part that television has to play in their ideas. Indeed, this would also be the case with many of the older generations. Nonetheless, a number of young people were honest in that they stressed how uninformed they were about the situation. Some authors argue that the media has been dominated more with questions of violence than with the social, economic, cultural and political issues at stake in Northern Ireland (Curtis 1984). It is striking that despite a general distaste for violence, and the often negative portrayal of Ireland (Bradley 1995) through the eyes of the British media and establishment (which on the whole has been hostile to Irish nationalist expressions), the consensus of opinion in St Mary's is in favour of a united Ireland. This ideal retains widespread support among the offspring of Irish immigrants in Scotland (Bradley 1995).

McConnell opines that, 'an obvious factor in the maintenance of [Irish] identity is visiting Ireland'. His survey of second-, third- and some fourth-generation Irish in Britain revealed that 'two thirds of respondents have visited Ireland as against a fifth of the general population', with more having 'visited Northern Ireland than population proportions between the two parts of the island would suggest but those who say they have visited Northern Ireland or both parts of the island tend disproportionately to come from Scotland and Northern England' (**Irish Post**, Oct 1994 to Feb 1995)

Of course, McConnell's findings are tempered by the fact that some people will have visited Ireland anyway, on the basis of proximity etc. Many people in Britain have, in the last twenty years, visited Spain and Greece on package tours, and few will see this as significant to their identities. However, to a degree this is balanced by the context of an anti-Irishness among many elements in Scottish and British society, and the 'probability' that many would not, as a result, be interested in visiting Ireland. Although it is difficult to make concrete the conclusions of McConnell by way of the St Mary's results, many interviewees expressed the view that there was indeed a substantial difference in visiting Ireland and in visiting another country; some did feel that they were returning to their heritage. Also noted was the fact that

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for third and fourth generation Irish in the poorer areas of the parish, going on holiday was generally problematic; Ireland, like Spain and Greece, was not an option.

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**Table 3**

**Age groups of parishioners visiting Ireland**

age	percentage visiting Ireland	number in age group
16 - 24	60	22
25 - 34	70	24
35 - 44	70	24
45 - 54	90	18
55 - 64	100	16
65+	80	21

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In terms of where in Ireland the respondents frequented, some had visited relations, but many were unspecific in their answers. All over Ireland, pilgrimages, holidays and touring were among the most common responses of those who came into this category. For others, though, all six counties of Northern Ireland had been visited as well as having been passed through by those parishioners who visited Donegal. Fourteen counties were mentioned as having been visited in the Republic of Ireland with Cork being popular. In terms of those who specified where in Ireland they had been, Dublin was the most popular destination.

In relation to visiting Ireland, the St Mary's results are similar to those of McConnell's survey. Indeed, 76% of St Mary's parishioners have visited Ireland. When this figure is controlled for age we still find that Ireland stands as a significant attraction for most of the St Mary's respondents (table 3). If we consider that only a fifth of the general population have visited Ireland and that if we hold that a visit to Ireland is related, to an extent, to the maintenance of identity for those of an Irish background, then clearly this feature of the St Mary's parishioners is partly a manifestation of their Irishness.

## CONCLUSION

In Scotland, Catholics retain their own educational attributes within the state system. Among other things, this assists in giving many of them a differing moral and sometimes political character, even agenda. Throughout the St Mary's Church attenders' attitudes towards abortion and Catholic schools, and in their ties to the Labour Party and Ireland, we see some of the reasons for the distinctiveness of the Catholic community in Scotland.

It is important to remember that the vast majority of respondents to this survey were Church attenders and their answers were, to a degree, determined from that perspective. Nonetheless, the survey is particularly significant in how it reflects some of the contemporary attitudes of a section of Catholic Church attenders in Scotland.

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