

## **NORTHERN IRELAND: FROM GOOD FRIDAY TO THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS**

*Owen Dudley Edwards*

The same reasoning which is now employed to vindicate the disabilities imposed on our Hebrew countrymen will equally vindicate the kiss of Judas and the judgment of Pilate. 'The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.' And woe to those who, in any age or in any country, disobey his benevolent commands under pretence of accomplishing his predications ....

We have not so learned the doctrines of Him who commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and who, when He was called upon to explain what He meant by a neighbour, selected as an example a heretic and an alien. Last year we remember it was represented by a pious writer in the John Bull newspaper, and by some other equally fervid Christians, as a monstrous indecency, that the measure for the relief of the Jews should be brought forward in Passion week. One of these humourists ironically recommended that it should be read a second time on Good Friday. We should have had no objection; nor do we believe that the day could be commemorated in a more worthy manner. We know of no day fitter for terminating long hostilities, and repairing cruel wrongs, than the day on which the religion of mercy was founded. We know of no day fitter for blotting out from the statute-book the last traces of intolerance than the day on which the spirit of intolerance produced the foulest of all judicial murders, the day on which the list of the victims of intolerance, that noble list wherein Socrates and More are enrolled, was glorified by a yet greater and holier name.

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T.B. Macaulay, 'Civil Disabilities of the Jews', **Edinburgh Review**, January 1831.

At length the little squadron came to the place of peril. Then the Mountjoy took the lead, and went right at the boom. The huge barricade cracked and gave way: but the shock was such that the Mountjoy rebounded, and stuck in the mud. A yell of triumph rose from the banks: the Irish rushed to their boats, and were preparing to board; but the Dartmouth poured on them a well-directed broadside, which threw them into disorder. Just then the Phoenix dashed at the breach which the Mountjoy had made, and was in a moment within the fence. Meantime the tide was rising fast. The Mountjoy began to move, and soon passed safe through the broken stakes and floating spars. But her brave master was no more. A shot from one of the batteries had struck him; and he died by the most enviable of all deaths, in sight of the city which was his birthplace, which was his home, and which had just been saved by his courage and self devotion from the most frightful form of destruction.

T.B. Macaulay, **History of England** (1855) chap. XII.

Macaulay had been a vociferous partisan of Catholic Emancipation in 1827-29 and, like his ally/opponent Daniel O'Connell, promptly followed it by crusading for Jewish Emancipation which would not be realised until 1858. Catholics and Protestants, nursing their mutual hostilities, ought to remember that their faiths have been united in persecuting Jews, agreeable and exemplary though it is to remember also the rare O'Connells and Macaulays. Macaulay's description of the end of the siege of Derry (1689) was later engraved on Derry's walls, and seems the inspiration for Walt Whitman's 'O Captain, My Captain' mourning Lincoln's assassination ten years after the publication of that part of Macaulay's **History**.

The ensuing essay anent the Referendum in Northern Ireland was commissioned by your editor long before it, and, inevitably, could not be completed until ensuing events had asserted themselves well after it. Such things are not peculiar to Ireland, but history elsewhere can be packaged more conveniently.

### **THE RELIGION OF MR ANTHONY BLAIR**

For all of Ireland's place as the proverbial British political graveyard, it dramatically aided several twentieth-century figures on their road to the

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premiership: Balfour, Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith, Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Callaghan, and it hardly weakened the fortunes of Churchill. On the other hand, Ireland can pull down what it has raised up: it prefers to do it for its own children but it will export the facility. The 1916 Rising, inspired and allowed to begin by the Tory Right, fulfilled its secret abettors' agenda by discrediting yet more of Asquith's personal Liberal followers, and he fell eight months later; Lloyd George survived the Treaty of 1921 signed with Michael Collins and his associates by about ten months, this time having eroded Tory support. William Whitelaw, perhaps the greatest Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, patched the Sunningdale Agreement together in 1973 but it fell on the SDLP's entirely iconic insistence on a Council of Ireland, whence the Ulster Workers' Strike and the downfall of Brian Faulkner, which reduced Whitelaw to politician rather than statesman, cleansed of trappings of success which might have improved on his defeated leader, Ted Heath, as an alternative to the rising rhetoric of Margaret Thatcher. Mrs (later Lady) Thatcher herself deserved to fall on Northern Ireland, which she had addressed with all the delicacy and finesse of King John: but it was time Scotland had a turn, it was on Scotland she had thrust the poll-tax, it was Scotland which began the poll-tax revolt, and it was the poll-tax that brought her down.

The Thatcher performance, raucous even in recollection, requires recall in the Blair context, since, politically, Blair is Lady Thatcher's child. He shares her respect for chauvinism as electoral fodder. His mandate for change from the Tories is far clearer than ever was hers against Labour, yet he seems to doubt the wisdom of the electorate in so forcefully making their choice, and ingratiates himself with Mr Rupert Murdoch in the apparent belief that the journals of public education, disseminated by that philanthropist, condition the mind of the electorate in ways Mr Blair's merits and those of his party and programme cannot hope to do. It is almost Nixonian in its self-doubt.

None of this bodes well for Blair solutions to Northern Ireland on any day of the calendar. Mr Murdoch is one whom all the warring political elements up there might well agree to loathe: the Provo-Shinners think him genocidal, the Nationalists think him anti-Catholic, the Unionists think him anti-monarchical, the Paisleyites think him Sodomitical. And all of them are intellectually sophisticated enough to despise his output with quiet but firm snobbery. Peculiar though it may seem, the politics of Northern Ireland can be as intellectual as those of Scotland, almost as intellectual as those of Wales. The Rev Dr Ian Paisley wrestles a fine, if narrow, text, and is justly esteemed for his pioneer research on the history of nineteenth-century Ulster Protestant Revivalism. Mr David Trimble is a legal educationist of parts, and

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a useful social scientist in seminar. Mr John Hume completed a most impressive postgraduate Master's thesis in his days as a trainee priest, at the prestigious theological College of St Patrick at Maynooth, on the subject of early nineteenth-century urban growth in Derry. Mr Robert McCartney, Q.C., has authority as a comparative analyst of legal rights and civil obligations, notably on the thought of Mr Justice Robert Jackson of the mid-century U.S. Supreme Court. Mr Gerry Adams is the author of fictions in the formal and the informal sense, and even his bitterest enemy might confess his short stories to possess gentle charms. They can have no complaints as to the intellectual quality of Dr Marjorie Mowlam, any more than they could complain of that of Dr Gordon Brown or Mr Robin Cook. But Mr Blair gives little sign of intellectual superiority to the average Murdoch reader (save that the average Murdoch reader takes Mr Murdoch and his wannabe opinion-makers much less seriously) and in areas of traditional Irish achievement such as Parliamentary debate, Mr Blair is sadly to seek. Morally, he is no more impressive, promenading as he does on Murdochry Row.

How then can this Smiler with a Wife command allegiance in such heavy brainstorms? Snobbery may overvalue itself here. It may well be that Mr Blair holds Ulster sway by virtue of his intellectual limitations, which merit respect of the kind normally restricted to the Royal Family. As the saviour of the Windsor dynasty, he may well recognise this. The simple-spoken George Washington won apotheosis from the most formidable intellectual elite to have led a revolution in human history. Mr Blair began in Northern Ireland with quite a staggering breadth of support from very many quarters, who read oracular meanings in his lightest cliché. In fact Mr Blair recalled nothing so much as President John Kennedy, and recalled him far better than anyone else has done (outwith the Family). There are contrasts. Mrs Blair's professional distinction has rightly won her respect on an intellectual level never given to Jacqueline Kennedy, who was shrewd, but imprisoned in a male chauvinist world. Kennedy, a pressman, handled public relations on an attractive human basis, luxuriating in press banter in and out of televised press conferences, and deploying a very efficient press secretary in Pierre Salinger who made himself liked by pretending to be a figure of fun. Mr Blair has foolishly surrounded himself with aides who have made themselves hated: his press coverage would improve immensely if his media manipulators could make themselves liked. Their inability in the proceeding thus far says little for their real utility to Mr Blair.

More immediately relevant to Northern Ireland, Mr Blair seems to be deeply religious in ways Jack Kennedy, for all his breaking the Catholic barrier to the U.S. Presidency, was not: here Mr Blair is much closer to the genius of

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the Kennedy family, the devout and utterly ruthless Rose. Mr Blair is High Anglican, modern variety, ready to communicate in the Roman Catholic as well as the Anglican Mass. Roman Catholicism is hostile to this: it is a dangerous action, voter-wise, which Mr Blair ceased under pressure. But his readiness to do so at all implies High Church religious motivation serious and personal, rather than merely socially conformist. Politically such conduct is most frequent either in High Tories, or in dedicated social crusaders contemptuous of personal luxury such as the present Episcopalian Bishop of Edinburgh, and Mr Blair hardly suggests the austerity, courage and fire of the Rt Rev Richard Holloway. The theory that Mr Blair would have sought a Tory career, had his wife not diverted him to a less cluttered road, would support this. But it does mean that he understands why Northern Ireland fights, which most British politicians no longer do (a son of the manse is not by definition a religious devotee, as political analysts seem to imagine). He may seem superficial in all else, but Northern Ireland may see in him a figure who genuinely feels the pain, and understands the devotional impulse. It also helps him to straddle some gaps: notwithstanding the occasional Roman Eucharist, Mr Blair counts as a Protestant in Northern Ireland (perilous as it would be to use such a term of Dr Holloway). Ireland also has the imagination to mix the religious and Kennedy images another way: Mr Blair has the slightly terrifying charisma which sometimes ends in assassination. The Northern Irish may recognise in him a potential fellow-victim.

### **THATCHER AND THE END OF TRUST**

The irrationalities of Mr Blair, or of any other monarch, are important in what they tell both of his performance and of public interpretations of his potential, but the rationalities may be more disquieting. The Unionist fear is that Mr Blair intends to scuttle in Northern Ireland, and hence the importance of the Good Friday agreement is that it commits him to more than might be expected of him. For the Economic Man would argue that Mr Blair should scuttle in Northern Ireland. It is expensive both in arms and men, and its removal would be a great saving. So, of course, would be the removal of the Royal Family, and Mr Blair has deliberately jettisoned a first-class opportunity of letting that slide into abeyance, by coming to its aid when Princess Diana's death left it in vital need of salvation. His chivalry may have snapped any remaining illusions of his links with traditional English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish Socialism, but it is comforting to Unionism. Traditionally Ulster Unionism has given the back of its hand to Royalty on occasion - George V, poor man, was viewed with suspicion of being a Home Ruler - but Unionism in its deepest traditions is Monarchist even if it has to

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make war against the Royal Government. It is a hard-headed argument, of the kind Ulstermen are said to like (irrespective of their Christian sect): if the Queen is to be saved, despite the expense, then Northern Ireland may be saved, despite the expense. And up to the Blair salvation of the Monarchy, Ulster Unionism had all too much reason to expect the worst from London, since its own betrayal by the very person closest to it in strident rhetoric, viz. Margaret, Lady Thatcher.

It is notoriously perilous to attribute historical events to the psychology of single individuals, but the origins of the Thatcher betrayal lay in the Thatcher vulgarity: the famous 'OUT ... OUT ... OUT' demagoguery of her press conference of Monday 19 November 1984 at the expense of the Irish Taoiseach, Dr Garret FitzGerald, whom she had given no reason to expect such a version of their talks on FitzGerald's Forum proposals on Northern Ireland. It is still difficult to make much sense of it, beyond the obvious points that Lady Thatcher's economic grasp was at best crude, that the academic economist Dr FitzGerald, in sharp contrast to her habitual courtiers, was a natural teacher who explained students' mistakes at kindly length, and that Dr FitzGerald's Ireland had profited and would profit greatly in European diplomacy from the Thatcher Grantham corner-shop notions that foreigners are best dealt with by shouting in English. She had involuntarily complimented Dr FitzGerald's magnificent European sense by treating him as she treated her non-Anglophone European partners, and, since Ireland had gleaned the rewards of the ill-wind Lady Thatcher had blown over an indignant Europe, Dr FitzGerald and his Irish allies and enemies might have been less surprised than they were.

Her effect was to inflame public opinion North and South among Irish Catholics nominal or otherwise: self-respect drove thousands of voters over to Charles Haughey and hundreds of recruits into the Provisional IRA. The Republic of Ireland exerted its unrivalled diplomatic powers in reply, President Ronald Reagan's father-in-law was given an honorary doctorate from Dr FitzGerald's University, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker 'Tip' O'Neill was entertained for six days in the Republic, and Lady Thatcher found the 'Special Relationship' gripping her like a vice. Presumably domestic advisers also reminded her that she drew a snob Irish Catholic vote unlikely to countenance her treatment of the leader of the Irish people as a booze-guzzler upbraided by a barmaid after hours in licensed Thatcher premises. In the event, she showed herself as sensitive to the susceptibilities of one group of Irish as of another, and the Anglo-Irish Agreement at Hillsborough was negotiated at American bidding in contemptuous

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indifference to the Ulster Unionists. The corner shop went after the most lucrative orders, regardless of who were the oldest customers.

Lady Thatcher did little good to 'small business' despite originating in it, but Ulster Unionism depended greatly on that mentality, romanticised with imperial rhetoric. She was the woman for huxter-shop Kipling, and the Orangemen knew her for one of themselves. Her defection was therefore appalling to them, and their ancient suspicions of London betrayal now received vindication in the marrow of their bones. Mr Blair's attractions lay in being unlike rather than like Margaret, Lady Thatcher, particularly in giving Northern Ireland so overwhelming a contrast to Lady Thatcher as Dr Marjorie Mowlam, who had entered politics through hatred of big-power nuclear bullying as much as anything else, and whose recovery from brain tumour gave her an experience of suffering and disability of which so many Ulster victims know so much.

Dr Mowlam deserves a special gratitude from feminists of both sexes, for her success in showing the dignity and delicacy of a stateswoman in forms analogous to that other intellectual in politics, ex-President Mary Robinson of the Republic. Lady Thatcher - for all of the justice of the Wildean 'Half of Mrs Thatcher's success arises from the no doubt unfounded rumour that she is a woman' - immeasurably injured the cause of women in politics, apart from personally doing all she could to impair the rise of women Tories. Dr Mowlam's formalities impress because she needs little resort to them: as a Hull Lecturer in Politics she evidently ruled her class by good humour, conviction, intellectual quality, and a sense of common purpose. Her predecessors such as Tom King, Peter Brooke, and Patrick Mayhew used formality as a fish uses water, inflaming the Northern Ireland crisis by their mere acts of relaxation. For all of the archaic ceremony of Orange or Corpus Christi parades, Ulster folk admire authority unencumbered by pomposity, but relish the pratfalls of Condescension. One very definite silent revolution in Ulster politics was the fall of the Unionist pseudo-aristocracy of Brookeborough and O'Neill, and the passing of the pious polysyllabic Papist prelate. The most conspicuous quality of Dr Mowlam is her dislike of bullying, including the social bullying of snobbery: fifteen years ago she and her colleague Michael Clark, introducing their **Debate on Disarmament**, neatly dissected the nuclear bullying masquerading as anti-bullying in Thatcher's rhetoric. At that time they wrote of the BBC (p. 28):

The views of those who criticise official and government policies are habitually misrepresented and distorted; they are often trivialised and evaded. They are, in short, not treated with respect. To describe the

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contributions made by critics as protest is to diminish them - protest is mere protest - it suggests that the critics cannot function on the same ground, the same level, as those they criticise.

And unlike so many of her Cabinet colleagues, Dr Mowlam remains in harmony with the spirit of her former writings. Many of the convulsions of the past thirty years have been due to elites claiming to speak for religious-political confessional groups many of whose votaries are struggling for very different utterance. The Paisley movement, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the Provo-Shinners (both as Provos and as Shinners), the Unionist paramilitaries, the McCartney Unionists, the various woman peace movements, the Ulster Workers' Strike, the Orange renaissance, and even Mr David Trimble and Mr Seamus Mallon themselves, grew out of private or public protests against persons whom the media and the London and Dublin governments had too readily assumed to speak for all their fellow-ethnics. Dr Mowlam may be accused of excessive patience in listening to Billy waving his orange rattle or Mick squealing his green pipes, instead of clearing her calendar to attend to the Belfast government she has finally got and still retains, but Billy and Mick may engender less heat if they are brought in from the cold. They may also inflate themselves a little more.

There will always remain the notion of Operation Creep. Much of Charles Haughey's vote was given him by persons who despised him, and many voted for him on the logic that the only person fit to deal with Lady Thatcher was a dirty crook. Dr Mowlam is liked and respected: would not Northern Ireland be unified if the Secretary of State were a person universally loathed? In the regretted absence of Mr Rupert Murdoch, the choice seems to be Mr Peter Mandelson. However exhilarating the cynicism of this proposal, it should go no further. Enough lives have been lost in Northern Ireland by political practical jokes as it is.

### **THE IRISH DEMENTION**

The citizens of the Republic of Ireland by and large do not want the unity of their island. They can think of few things they would like less than it. They are doing absolutely magnificently without it. But the rules of the political game demand that they insist on their unflinching desire for it. One may point to the eighteenth century (indeed in any discussion of Irish politics one usually does, sooner or later, in the pursuit of precedents either for oppression or for corruption): were not the Penal Laws against Irish Catholics formulated on the principle of expediting the instant conversion of

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Irish Papists to Protestantism, and would not the Irish Protestant episcopalian elite have turned a puer shade of green at the faintest prospect of the masses' entry on their palaces and power? So today's nominal Roman Catholic 97% of the population - growing more nominal every minute - express their conviction of the unity of Ireland, and know in their hearts that its arrival would upset enough apples to tempt a universe of Eves. The Republic's Referendum was a glorious unity of heart and head, of romance and reality, of nation and nature: official Irish identity told them to vote against Articles 2 and 3 of the existing Irish Constitution of 1937 the better to encourage the benighted Ulster Protestants voluntarily to embrace the unity of Ireland provided the Constitution abjured its official existence; unofficial Irish identity told them that to vote against Articles 2 and 3 was to wash their hands of six useless counties whose acquisition would be absurd. The Economic Man and Cathleen Ni Houlihan were locked in an embrace which would promptly have banned the two of them under the happily dead Censorship Board.

The history of the problem is Byzantine even by Irish standards. The Irish Civil War of 1922-3 which still provides the basis for the leading party divide in Irish politics, in traditional Provo-Shinner mythology divided the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty forces over the partition issue: in fact, the debate in the still illegal but democratically elected Dáil Éireann in December-January 1921-2 spent one-twentieth of its time on the loss of six counties. Recent historiography has shown (principally in the work of John Bowman) that the anti-Treaty leader Eamon de Valera was not really enthusiastic about ending partition; the pro-Treaty leader Michael Collins was, and secretly reinforced his nominal opponents in the Ulster IRA resisting a Northern Ireland government with which he was pledged to co-operate. After Collins's death, his heirs dropped anti-partitionism but their now constitutionalised opponents under de Valera made it a useful propaganda point. Once in power, de Valera's party were unable to fulfil their more extravagant election promises because of partition. Indeed it proved a Godsend. De Valera used it as the blissfully unattainable bedrock of negotiation over which to gain as many other concessions as possible: at the time of the Treaty itself he had sought to have the intractable Ulster issue used to gain all attainable concessions. It kept the Republic out of World War II, much to Britain's advantage, since Irish belligerence would have meant prompt German invasion and the establishment of Nazi rule across the Irish Sea: Britain's real needs from Ireland, such as dowsing the Channel port-lights on request, were fully complied with under the iron guarantee that Britain would never acknowledge this breach of neutrality in her favour.

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But when Churchill hinted at Irish unity in exchange for Irish belligerence, Dublin was no more ready to consider the idea than Belfast would have been. Naturally nobody wanted to admit either Britain's readiness to jettison Northern Ireland or Eire's refusal to acquire it. This was nevertheless the prelude to future realities, however ill-acknowledged. Ulster Unionists may tell themselves what myths they please about Mr Blair; but they are hardly equipped to recognise, as his greatest basis in their trust, the hostility of successive Dublin regimes to any serious Irish unity. The only terms Dublin would even consider would be a cession of the six counties to Ireland with Britain still footing the bill; the only terms London could even consider would be a prompt end of financial obligation in any handover to Dublin. One toys with the thought of indignant protests outside the British Embassy: GIVE US BACK OUR GRIEVANCE OR PAY THE PRICES. Irish partition was the Guardian Angel of the 26 counties. It kept them out of war, it kept them out of NATO with all its tiresome expenditure on unnecessary defence, it kept them out of the American bloc at the United Nations. It preserved a political equilibrium instead of throwing politics into a melting-pot induced by huge Protestant and Unionist incursions (could the Unionists hold a balance of power à la Parnell, and compel the Republic to embrace the Queen as the price of keeping this or that party in the sweets of office?) It prevented the immigration of a vast minority, Catholic and Protestant, with far more social requirements of the state than the Republic accepted. It kept the Roman Catholic Church with the shadow of its old power instead of establishing a pluralistic state under its nose, reeking with Paisleys and prophylactics.

How many people in their heart of hearts acknowledged what they firmly held to in their heads? In a few outposts, there were genuine anti-partitionists in the Republic: the remotest parts of South-East Munster, on the Cork, Kerry and Clare peninsulae, fed themselves on dreams of a grand crusade against oppression in a place so remote as to be beyond their ken, much more so than America; the nearest counties to Northern Ireland told themselves, in some cases accurately, that their own poverty would be alleviated by removal of the Boundary, and they cherished their religious animosities much more harshly and in much closer ratio than the rest of the Republic know. Their role in the Republic's Referendum was as high as 9% 'No' in stark contrast to everywhere else. In recent years a new constituency emerged: the hopeless, the down-and-out, the written-off, the destitute, the wretched of the Earth, sitting in their drug-haunted rabbit-warrens in no-go areas of Dublin and venting their rage on an indifferent and uncaring world by murder, by dope, and by voting Sinn Féin. The Provo-Shinners make much of their war against

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drugs these days, and call their murder victims dope-pushers when they feel some momentary need to give public opinion the courtesy of a transparent lie, but their links with desperate and destitute inner Dublin go back to their cultivation of its potential dope addicts. Drug-running became a profitable sideline when they accumulated fortunes in the international arms market. Today they can feed their political heroin to the same constituents they hooked on the real thing. Ironically, Northern Ireland is beginning to sustain a much fuller attack from a counterpart constituency: the no-hopers have been joining the Orange orders in recent years, and have been heard from in the worst scenes in Drumcree, not to speak of the church-pickets of Ballymena or the child-murders of Ballymoney. The Provo-Shinners inevitably made their leading converts in means rather than in ends.

Much of the rest of the Republic indulged themselves in coffee-cup anti-partitionism, or pub patriotism. Very little of it gave proof of its seriousness of intent by trying to work out in what ways Ulster Protestantism would need accommodation if anchored in the Republic, let alone what other ways would lead it to enter. People told themselves that there could be little objection to the Republic's civil liberties, with its Protestant minority the most coddled minority in Europe (apart from being obliged to eschew birth control, abortion, indecent books, things no nice Protestant would want to do anyway, divorce included). People were indeed happy to congratulate themselves on their virtue in circumstances which would ensure Ulster Protestants had no temptation to end partition on their side. People sang 'rebel' songs and told themselves these were no invasion of Good Neighbour policy. The increased strength of the Provo-Shinners benefited from the emotional common ground provided by republican rhetoric, prose or verse, song or story. If anything the genial Republic could flex its republican muscles by telling itself its adherence to the republican ideals posed no challenges to peace and prosperity in its own back yard. As Northern Ireland went through its various stages of trauma, some of the emotive blank cheques were presented for cashing. A section of Jack Lynch's cabinet were found to have fished for their political advantage to a point of indiscretion in 1970, as a result of which successive Dublin governments definitely discouraged anti-partitionist agenda. Ironically, the 1969 civil rights movement in Northern Ireland posed its major challenge by turning its back on the sterile anti-partitionism of the Catholic minority and demanding full and equal rights as British citizens, denied to them on security grounds. In a way, the Dublin cabinet scandals of 1970 were an indignant psychological backlash, insisting it was for Dublin to raise and lower the anti-partitionist temperature, not for Northern Ireland Catholics to start their own tactics,

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above all not by suggesting that Britain had current obligations as opposed to permanent oppressions - if the civil rights crusade succeeded, the case against partition would be lost. Similarly, the Provo-Shinners came into being in hatred of the British Army's entry into Northern Ireland to save Catholics under Protestant threat in 1969. The mass of the Northern Ireland Catholics had long been schooled by Church and nationalist leaders to hope for a never-never unification; it committed them to those leaders. In the heady atmosphere of the civil rights movement, the Social Democratic and Labour party swept away the old Catholic nationalists of Northern Ireland, but the rise of a new and vigorous Provisional IRA made them fearful of conceding the high patriotic ground. Led since 1979 by Mr John Hume (the subject of a valuable if densely-argued new political study<sup>1</sup>), the SDLP revived the 'Irish Dimension' while keeping active their new demand for civil rights. Mr Blair might understand: the people in 1969 had voted for a sea-change in Ulster Catholic politics and turned out the old anti-partitionists, but the victors lacked the self-confidence to accept the mandate. The SDLP inherited the same republican vocabulary, rhetoric, verse and mythology that had so long provided the emotive glue for its predecessors' machine. Granted, they were new men, and they know better. But their most durable leader, Mr Hume, brought his own Irish dimension.

Dr Gerald Murray's **John Hume and the SDLP** is a fine achievement, is packed with invaluable information, and will be in constant demand by all serious students of Catholic Northern Ireland's recent past and present. But in common with too many social scientists, Dr Murray makes too little of the human factor, and tells us virtually nothing of his subject's background. He acknowledges Mr Hume's place as the most pan-Irish figure among SDLP leaders, but fails to explain why. And both present and past are closed to us if we fail to realise that Mr Hume began public life with his deepest ambitions Southern rather than Northern, and looks like finishing it in the same way. Mr Hume began as a clerical student at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, where the leadership of the Irish Roman Catholic clergy was educated. His contemporaries were of the stuff of which Irish Bishops were made. This was in the 1950s, when an Irish Bishopric probably bestowed more power on its incumbent than any other office in Ireland. The training in rhetoric, oratory, debate was far above the secular level: the only team by which I was ever clearly outclassed in my student debating career was a 'friendly' at Maynooth, far beyond anything I encountered on the road to winning the

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<sup>1</sup>Murray, G. (1997), *John Hume and the SDLP: Impact and Survival in Northern Ireland*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press.

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Observer Mace. Mr Hume may well have been in the audience that saw my just humiliation. His first sights, then, were on power in Ireland. No doubt he would have preferred a Bishopric in his native Derry, but it would have been as one of a 32-county bench of Bishops. As historian he studied the growth of this Derry from Protestant strong-hold to Catholic conquest, numerically speaking, and he would have mourned at the economic folly of partition's sundering of Derry from its natural hinterland in the peninsula of Inishowen, jutting farther northward than anywhere in Northern Ireland but nominally in the 'South'. Mr Hume quickly established himself in the 1960s as a spokesman of a new Catholic Derry, no longer prepared to hoard grievances but demanding action. His control over his city was incredible. When we met for the first time in 1969 he commented on having seen me at Mass that morning: there were about 1000 worshippers, I replied, astounded. 'You soon recognise the strange face', he smiled. Well might he smile. I was meeting him as the aspirant writer of a book on Northern Ireland, and I was being taught a lesson as sharp as any I learned in debating Maynooth. In plain language it meant that Mr Hume noted who went to Holy Communion and who did not, and that meant who had bad consciences - not necessarily on private sins - and who did not. It also meant that I was being shown what control he kept and how he kept it. Mr Hume's piety expresses itself in a frequent expression of humility: the eyes are downcast, the face sorrows, the general demeanour suggests a holy picture, probably 'The Heart Bowed Down'. But his training had fitted him for the mixture of piety and power, and it fitted him for life. He is the most successful urban boss in these islands.

Mr Hume might never have won his Bishopric, and Bishoprics are not what they were in the matter of power and allegiance. But he remained convinced that the future for Northern Catholicism lay in exerting its control over the Republic. For almost thirty years, as Dr Murray shows, he has kept the SDLP committed to its Irish dimension, where most of its other founder-leaders pleaded hopelessly with him to build bridges with the Protestant community, and build up the infrastructure, and encourage the rising youth. As Dr Murray also shows, he saw most of his fellow-founders off, discouraged youthful aspirants for power-sharing - however much Mr Hume championed power-sharing in Northern Ireland he had no use for it in his own empire - and proved as formidable to potential rivals as Dr Ian Paisley himself. The Irish dimension proved his friend in certain things, apart from the delicious pleasure it gave in calling successive Irish governments to heel in payment for their previous exploitation of the partition issue: they had talked of the grievances of Northern Ireland Catholics, they had even restrained the

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manoeuvrability of those Catholics, very well, their place in the hopes of those Catholics would be reaffirmed but at the price of their being subjected to those Northern Catholics - i.e. to Mr Hume. Mr Hume proved an adept in moving between the psychologies of the warring politicians of the Republic: did a Garrett FitzGerald hope for reconciliation of the Irish Protestant and Catholic communities in memory of his parents of mixed religious and geographical origin? Mr Hume would see him, and convince him that the Anglo-Irish agreement, a superb humiliation for the Protestants, was in fact ecumenical. Did a Charles Haughey cherish some memories of familial grievance from days of paternal residence among Ulster Catholics? Mr Hume had prescriptions to cater for him, too. On the other hand, as an Irish Bishop manqué he knew how to distance himself from Dublin politicians and to play them off one against the other. And his Irish perspective brought with it a stronger European perspective, whence he benefited himself and his city as MEP, working ably with appropriate allies headed by the Rev Dr Ian Paisley who shares his adept mingling of power and piety.

Ironically, his colleague Mr Seamus Mallon, for a time much less successful than Mr Hume in keeping sufficient distance from Mr Charles Haughey, drew his own lessons from his burnt fingers, and in the end it was Mr Mallon who fulfilled the dream of Mr Hume's old SDLP rivals in constructively building bridges across the sectarian divide. Mr Hume's tactical links with Dr Paisley were unlikely to endear him to Mr Trimble, any more than was Mr Hume's courtship of Mr Gerry Adams in an attempt to outflank the Provo-Shinners whom in the event he legitimised. Mr Hume won the kind of psychological victory he cherishes when at the election after the 1998 Referendum the SDLP emerged with the largest number of first-preference votes, triumphing over the Unionists. But Mr Mallon knew better than Mr Hume how deeply the party had been endangered by its Provo-Shinner flirtations, no less than by leaving so much of the aspirant politicians of Catholic youth in the outer reaches of power where the Provo-Shinners, newly respectabilised by Mr Hume, found them. Mr Hume's ultimate sights were on the Republic, above all the Presidency, from which his party barred him in 1997: Mr Hume's two seats were both vulnerable, the Westminster seat to the Provo-Shinner Mr Mitchel MacLoughlin in Derry, the MEP seat probably to the Paisleyites or else the Unionists, one or the other Protestant party a guaranteed winner in a by-election with all Northern Ireland as constituency. So Mr Hume's attempts to see off the Provo-Shinners ended in his being refused permission to leave his own Westminster seat which nobody save himself could now secure against those he hoped to make the victims, and in fact made the victors, of his diplomacy. But watch him in six

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years when the Presidency of the Republic comes up for grabs again. Meanwhile, Mr Mallon must watch him.

### **SCOTCHING THE SNAKE**

Mr Hume had inflicted two disasters on Northern Ireland, viz. the legitimization of the Provo-Shinners by the Hume-Adams talks, and the legitimization of the dilettante opportunism of Dublin politicians calling itself the Irish Dimension. Perhaps Mr Haughey did care - after all, Northern Ireland, whatever dark game he was playing with it, landed him in the dock in 1970 - and certainly Dr FitzGerald cared, so much so that his attempts at reconciliation drove Protestant and Catholic new poles apart after the Anglo-Irish Agreement. But in general Northern Ireland remained the wild card of the Republic's politics, and Dublin politicians garnered emotive votes by judicious demands, and velvet arm-twists, and a general exhibition of what Stanley Baldwin (speaking of Press Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere) called 'power without responsibility - the prerogative of the harlot through the ages'. Mr Dick Spring, Leader of the Labour Party in Ireland, now in coalition with Fianna Fáil's Albert Reynolds, now with Fine Gael's John Bruton, milked the Ulster issue with all the fervour of a Kerry emigration agent for the Bermudas: he was full in the forefront of publicity, and would be far, far away from any results not anticipated in the brochure. Stormont negotiations under the Tories featured a door with 'TANAISTE' among the well-appointed suites (meaning, with horrible symbolism for Gaelic-literate Unionists of whom there were now a few, 'HEIR-APPARENT': well might Myles na gCopaleen claim expertise in all the political systems of his country from Tanistry to Black-and-Tanistry): fortunately by Blair-time Mr Spring had fallen before the electoral wrath of a harlot-surfeited multitude.

The South postured; the North died. The Unionists feared the worst of the presence of Mr Spring: could their winter be far behind, so to say? The SDLP could congratulate itself on having got Mr Spring to the table, and having got the table to Mr Spring, hoping that it was more than an end in itself while the Unionists feared it was more than an end in itself and Dublin smilingly promised its voters eternal opposition to partition and eternal confidence in partition's durability. London might cherish remote hopes that Dublin might take over the problem, and Dublin might cherish nearer hopes that London would continue to assure Dublin it was 'IN ... IN ... IN' with no entrance-fee either. The Good Friday Agreement broke that vicious circle. It is still unclear whence the break was inspired, but in theory it should have been obvious enough after the Scottish and Welsh referendums. Mr Blair had

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declared for a federalist structure under Westminster rule, and after foolish Tory recrimination had finally bubbled into oblivion with the thought that devolution had been insufficiently thought through, some thinking began to go beyond the largest island. The idea of a Council of the Isles was an old one: the Scottish National Party had been toying with it for at least thirty years if not longer. The assumption back then was that Scotland and Wales would gain independence, that the Republic of Ireland would retain its, that Northern Ireland would retain its Stormont devolutionary status while civilising its record on voting and civil rights, and that England would join the gang in a cheery shake-hands-now-it's-over spirit: they had the British-American precedent of rapprochement, even if it had taken nearly two centuries to achieve, and then hardly on equal terms.

I forget whether the SNP ever formally adopted the policy so often mooted at its Conferences without the time-table reaching a vote, and it may be that if it was enacted the record has gone forever since Mr Alex Salmond made like the old lady caught up in a basket seventy times as high as the moon and swept the webs off the sky. But the policy made excellent sense, could Northern Ireland become a viable entity. The Council - sometimes it was called a Confederation - was to meet in various capitals, but there was one school of thought that favoured a permanent location in the Isle of Man, home of the oldest representative assembly in these islands. The SNP in general kept away from the Northern Ireland problem as from a Typhoid Mary, but in its crude way it had realised a couple of profound truths: that Northern Ireland, demographically, was no Czechoslovakia to be devoured by the Republic on the plea of fellowship with its Sudeten German (i.e. Ulster Catholic) minority; and that the Northern Ireland problem would remain intractable so long as all parties kept thinking in terms of Ireland/England. It was hard work: if the English were ignorant about Scotland and Wales, the Irish (outside the nine counties of Ulster in and out of the Republic) were abysmal; the English did not want to know, the Irish simply did not know. Various figures made Irish-Scottish and Irish-Welsh cultural, athletic and even religious connections. Nevertheless Conor Cruise O'Brien in **Neighbours** (1980) rightly stressed the Irish nationalist irritation at the intrusion of Scotland and Wales with their unfulfilled national agenda, their primarily Protestant identities, and their firmly constitutional politics. Sinn Féin as a slogan ('We Ourselves') repudiated nineteenth-century linkage with Welsh and Scottish nationalism, and Irish nationalism's capitulation to violence rejected sister movements immune from the same sickness. Yet Unionism had made some Ulster-Scottish links, whether from its establishment, from its evangelicals, from its educators or from its fraternal

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organisations. Constitutional nationalists began to look closer at non-English Britain if only as an alternative to Mr Hume's dream-visions in the Irish Dimension. The idea of adopting the 5-alive Council that surfaced in the Blair-Mowlam box of tricks may indeed have trickled in from the SNP whence most Labour devolutionary thought has derived one way or another, either through defectors, or through students of rival party thinking.

The Council of the Isles is as fully prescription for the future as the Irish Dimension is a prison - or perhaps a poison - from the past. It acknowledges the fluid state of identities within our islands, and encourages us to get perspective on ourselves by comparative analysis. But in one respect Mr Blair's use of it has implications so far apparently hidden from him. His Welsh policy offers devolutionary powers so meagre that they almost cost him his referendum. His Scottish policy he seems anxious to whittle down to similar toothlessness. He even employed his spin-doctors (or they spun for him while he slept) to declare the Northern Ireland Referendum total on the Good Friday Agreement bigger in its figure of acceptance even than the Scottish Referendum majority: this was a flat lie (Scotland voted 'Yes' by 74%, Northern Ireland by 71%) but the media, headed by the BBC on Northern Ireland Referendum Result night, bought it. But this sort of pick-pocket statesmanship is suicidal. Mr Blair wants a Scottish Parliament which will reaffirm his neo-Thatcherism, and will take it in bad part if it does not. But a Scottish parliament which settles for clone-Westminster identity will not deserve to exist. Moreover, if Mr Blair wants to take seriously the one point in his year of office which merits respect - Northern Ireland - he must give breathing space to his innovation, the Council of the Isles. That Council simply will not work if its British membership is England supported by clones, castrati or chihuahuas. Northern Ireland, if not the Republic, will want to take Scotland seriously. Mr Blair, by listening to his courtiers, is impairing his great achievement in Northern Ireland. To succeed in Belfast, he should hope for victory in Edinburgh for Mr Alex Salmond. To do him justice, Mr Blair currently seems to be doing all he can to bring about that desirable result, but presumably not by intention. He would have served his turn by a Parliament of Canavans, but having regarded that as *lèse-majesté* he now faces much more critical victors. He had better prepare to make the most of them.

The Council of the Isles invites all parties to grow up, and to work together to deal with a problem which could be disastrous to them all. Unlike the Irish Dimension, it is a complex, pluralistic association, but its Scottish aspect reasserts an Ulster identity whose culture had been slighted in the recent past. Scotland is not very proud of Orangeism, but it has every reason to value the

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general common inheritance with Ulster, from Dalriada to Donegal. Its Presbyterianism is enmeshed intellectually and spiritually with that of Ulster, its Catholicism has as its primate an Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh born in the Glens of Antrim. Its celebration of St Columba commemorated a figure of Scotland and Ulster simultaneously, and he had countless successors of dual identity all the way to James Connolly, Patrick MacGill, Bernard MacLavery. It has Masonic links and Covenanter traditions. The famous Ulster covenant of 1912 is founded on the Scottish movements of 1637 and 1644 which took quick root among the Ulster Presbyterians. The first Northern Ireland premier, Sir James Craig, Viscount Craigavon, was the product of an Edinburgh school, Merchiston Castle. Unionists who felt alienated, disinherited, dispossessed by the threat of subordination to a pan-Irish culture can now allow their roots to flourish and renew their cultural strength as never before. Ulster Methodism can comparably reinvigorate itself by contact with Wales. But to these obvious counterparts to nostalgia in the Irish dimension must be added the much more important self-discovery for all in their new identities and relationships. Mr Blair has come up with a winner, and must not be permitted to impair it by vanity and parochialism, much as a spoiled child might destroy a toy he has made with skill and patience, petulantly punishing himself under the illusion he is hurting others who are taking him insufficiently seriously. Or in other words, the Council of the Isles must grow up, and so must its founder.

### **ADAMS AND EVIL**

The strangest factor in the Referendum was the knowledge that the Good Friday agreement had the support of a faction committed on a purely 'cuckoo' basis, anxious to put every other group at odds with the state of Northern Ireland to whose destruction it was committed. Messrs Gerry Adams and associates were and are playing for the favour of Mr Blair at everyone else's expense. The ideal result from their viewpoint was to drive as many Protestants as possible into the 'No' camp during the Referendum and, after it, to drive as many Protestant 'Yes' voters as possible into voting for candidates pledged to oppose or to wreck the Northern Ireland Assembly. If they could not win enough support today for the No-men, Messrs Paisley, Paisley and McCartney, they would win even more tomorrow. The more Protestants who repudiated the agreement, the more Mr Adams, Irish Roman Catholicism's answer to Burns's 'Holy Willie's Prayer', could drip in the Prime Ministerial ear his sanctimonious message that on his side is virtue and Erin, on theirs is the Saxon and guilt. And Mr Blair likes people who like him and like his solutions, and so Mr Adams would make the fastest rise in

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history from pariah dog to prize poodle, a rabid poodle, guaranteed to give its benefactors hydrophobia enough to keep them - but not their money - across the water, yet still a poodle. They would then settle accounts with their old sponsor John Hume: it would be the godfather who would receive an offer he could not refuse, as he was edged into elder statesmanship, Nobel prize, Irish Presidency, or any other honorific retirement, while his former colleagues were chewed to ribbons on the ground that they were pro-British.

What Mr Adams made of the Good Friday Agreement was Operation Barabbas. Barabbas having murdered as many as he could in the name of God and his country, or else maimed them, widowed them, tyrannised over them, blackmailed them, drug-saturated them, orphaned them, made the name of their country stink to the heights of Heaven and the name of their religion recover the cruelty once linked to it by the wildest of Protestant Paisleys alone - having done all of this, Barabbas demanded absolution without retribution, and the crucifixion of every available Christ. Mr Adams's gifts are numerous, but in the context the greatest was this, that he demanded his blood-sacrifices accompanied by acceptance of his virtue in making the demand. His associate Mr Martin McGuinness seems ready to take our lives without demanding our admission of his virtue in doing it. His other associate Mr Mitchel McLoughlin may demand our admission of his virtue, but does not seem ready to take our lives. But Mr Adams is fortunately unique: the Big Bad Wolf masquerading this time as door-to-door salesman who signs up the Three Little Pigs in a hire-purchase testimonial to his desirability as their consumer. If acceptance of a Good Friday Agreement with Mr Adams does not appall Protestants in itself, his exertions in sanctimony might be trusted to drive them into violent opposition to it. His allusions to weapons decommissioning, therefore, are not only brazen in their indifference to agreements, but specifically designed to ensure no Protestant could trust him, or could trust themselves if they did not repudiate him at every electoral opportunity.

Hence my sister Ruth reported in the Dublin **Sunday Independent** on 17 May on the eve of the Referendum the words of a Unionist: 'Them Shinner bastards claim to want a "Yes" vote, but they're doing everything to make it certain that the majority of our crowd will vote against.' Balked in this, but only narrowly, Mr Adams redoubled his repulsiveness. The Unionist majority for the Good Friday Agreement had scarcely been proclaimed before Mr Adams's dulcet tones could be heard across the sectarian divide beseeching the Orangemen to abandon their marches. That ensured that whatever else might befall, there would be hell at Drumcree, and Mr Blair would be on Mr Adams's side. But Mr Adams had others to bend to his will

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as well as Mr Blair. Was not the Rev Dr Ian Paisley showing signs of his seventy-two years? Was not his failure to gain a Unionist majority for 'No' a cause of cruel fear that his days were numbered? Could nothing revive his waning fortunes and reGideonize his trumpet? Mr Adams had but to send the right man to blaspheme before him, and Dr Paisley would be himself again. The Provo-Shinner candidate in the Paisley constituency was no mere chiseller milking the graveyard vote: he had made the graveyard before seeking its vote. Mr Joe Cahill was exhumed to drip the blood of his murdered countrymen in the faces of the Protestant voters. His venerable commitment to the Republican cause was exhumed with him, as he recalled with some sadness how his sentence of death in 1942 had been commuted, thus preventing his giving his life for Ireland. His audience were left to join him in regretting his survival which ensured the sacrifices of so many others at later dates by no wish of theirs. His wartime ally, Adolf Hitler, had after all predeceased him, leaving the memory of holocausts which Mr Cahill gallantly strove to equal. Even the most jaded auditor of Dr Paisley's denunciations of Roman diabolism must acknowledge that they had received new fuel. But could Protestants also see that every vote cast for Dr Paisley would advance the fortunes of Mr Cahill and his friends?

Now let Mr Adams rejoice and wax fat on every grievance real or imaginary which had every inspired his gelignite or armalite! The Protestant oppressors were driven either under the yoke of Good Friday Agreement with him, or into opposition which enthroned him above them by the right hand of their masters. Barabbas was on his way. Hitherto, what future was there for Mr Adams and his colleagues? They - even they - could not bomb Northern Ireland into extinction, county by county, Slaughterhouse-6. They - even they - could not preside over a Republic whose 26 counties wanted them even less than the 6, Catch-32. They could observe the fine Irish Republican principles of denying free speech to rivals and foes, of torturing dissenters and libertarians, of asserting their constituency was generations dead and generations yet unborn. But they were nobody's Michael Collins, however much they might have learned from his biography by their admirer Mr Tim Pat Coogan recording his acceptance of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 while maintaining private warfare up to and including the assassination of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson. The Republic's luxury in Popular-Front Provo-rhetoric stopped far short of replacing the admittedly English-derived Irish judicial system with the Provo-Shinner alternatives of kneecapping, beating, and other traditional forms of grievous bodily harm. Mr Adams might have reasserted Irish culture sanctified by the Stone Age, but Sandycove and Stillorgan Road had no desire to import Mr Adams's justice for themselves.

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The Good Friday Agreement offered an alternative: they could not rule Ireland, so at least - if only enough Protestants threw up at the sight of them - they could rule Britain, or rather rule Northern Ireland on behalf of a gradually opting-out Britain. Unionists were getting the message. Some of the wealthier ones were buying new homes in Argyle. Some of the poorer ones were being ethnically cleansed in Pomeroy.

The Rev Dr Ian Richard Kyle Paisley mentioned the last point in a pre-Referendum TV *And-the-next-Paddy-please!* patronised by David Dimbleby so offensively as to make one yearn for Irish unity to line up against him and inform his incessant interruptions that all their author cared about was the sound of his own voice. (It is this logic that inspires thoughts of Mr Peter Mandelson as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland: the difficulty is that his doubts about democracy might win him friends or allies.) Dr Paisley could not leave well alone, however. He justly charged genocide of Protestants on the Irish border, but ensured that the very serious issue would be dismissed by his bracketing it with the decline of 26-country Protestantism from 10% to 2.5% since 1920, an early self-exile under tolerably good economic terms. The Rev Doctor is not what he was, or rather is reverting too much to what he was. In his rise to fame, he had a robust racist tinge to his anti-Catholic diatribes which is returning to him in a wider context. A recent broadcast made him sound more anti-Jewish and anti-African than anti-Catholic, but it was all the same thing born of inter-war xenophobia dear to readers of *Bulldog Drummond*. (He once described Secretary of State Tom King as 'a yellow-livered cur', an expression hardly known outwith the Bulldog breed.) The tediously repetitive diatribes against him by journalists who find him an easier target than domestic xenophobes (Lord Tebbit, Mr Murdoch, Mr Jack Straw, Mr Andrew Neill, Mr Brian Wilson, &c) do him less than justice by insisting his favourite word is 'No': he is anything but negative in his attitudes to fund-raising in or out of his opulent church. What is becoming less positive is his vocabulary of Christianity. My own Roman Catholicism makes me a little suspect in questioning Dr Paisley's religious intensity, and yet many of his fellow-Protestants, after initial close links, have found themselves suspecting him of greater zeal for money and power than for God, frequent, not to say peremptory, as he is in addresses to the latter. His anti-Catholicism, as no doubt he might argue, is no more anti-Christian than was the zeal of Torquemada, Bloody Mary, the Duke of Alva, &c against heretics. But after the Referendum he threatened to nail Mr Blair's flesh to the fence, and it is difficult to see how a Christian can employ language of this kind without qualms: in so doing he either likens his opponents to his Redeemer, or likens

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himself to that Redeemer's (Roman) persecutors. It is no more insensitive than the language in which he liked to taunt Papists, but all Christians, including his own flock, must find the promiscuous use of such language blasphemous, not to say disgusting in the extreme. The other great Unionist touchstone, the sacrifice of the Ulstermen at the Somme in 1916, is profaned also by the phrase. The soldiers left hanging on the old barbed wire were nailed by their flesh, and very horribly they died too: at least they deserved respect rather than having their sacrifice belittled by Dr Paisley's annexation of it for purposes of bankrupt vituperation.

Even Dr Paisley's most like ble characteristic, his love for his family, is assuming an ominous note. His children in their time have elicited quite unexpected public affection for their father - e.g. in the Republic - by their clearly genuine assumption that everyone must love Daddy. It is notorious that when they were being brought up discipline had to be left to Ms Eileen Paisley: the flail of the Lord was never raised against his little ones. When Ms Bernadette Devlin announced her own pregnancy out of wedlock, and the press with no feelings for charity asked Dr Paisley for his comment, he silenced them well and truly with the great reply 'He that is without sin amongst you, let him cast the first stone!': Ms Devlin had once called on him for what proved ill-fated negotiation but he had not forgotte that he had come home to find her p aying on the floor with his infants, in which he had happily joined. Her collapse into blood-lust was probably a genuine grief to him. He was and is no feminist, certainly. An innocent American interviewer's pre-Referendum suggestion to him that President Clinton might visit Northern Ireland won the roar 'Lock Up the Women of Ulster!', which was pleasing, but not progressive.

But the massacre of the innocents, the little boys of Ballymoney, which might have won some genuine sympathy from him merely elicited from his own son the argument that the murderers were drug-rivals, or family dissidents, or anything but the fruit of sectarian hatred so long inflamed by Dr Paisley (for all the excellence of his constituency work among all creeds) if generally with less sanguinary results than flow from the sectarianism of Mr Gerry Adams. But Mr Adams, unlike Dr Paisley, does not admit it to be sectarianism. The Reverend Doctor has at least the merit of frankness on that score. As he remarked to Mr David Dimbleby, for whose intelligence he had evidently made small allowance, 'I've never denied that I was a Protestant!'

## **THE TRIMBLING OF THE VEIL**

Mr John Hume's career brought his party to the top of the numerical greasy pole, and his party reckoned that another such victory would be too Pyrrhic for survival. Mr Gerry Adams's historical citations may be selective, not to say dishonest in the extreme, but he is on sound ground should he remember that the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1918 was primarily outflanked by the then Sinn Féin on ageism. The old had clung on too long. Mr John Hume kept youth in its place, wherefore youth may find another place: but Mr Hume's apotheosis out of harm's way may enable Catholic youth to rise inside the SDLP as well as outside it. Dr Paisley, so closely resembling Mr Hume in his discouragement of lieutenants and juniors (outside the immediate Paisley family), is perhaps in even greater danger than Mr Hume of seeing his kingdom divided and given over to the Medes and Persians. Mr Seamus Mallon may stop the SDLP rot, and his courage and energy in building up a Northern Ireland Government in tandem with Mr Trimble may even win back the future from Mr Adams. Mr Peter Robinson has few such hopes for the Democratic Unionists. In his time he ran Dr Paisley closer than did any other of his Reverence's short-lived No. 2 men, but the Rev Doctor profited by Mr Robinson's ill-timed raid into the Republic, persuaded him that the horrors of the Inquisition awaited Protestant martyrs in Dublin, induced him to plead guilty, and was rewarded by a Dublin district justice of such unspeakable magnanimity that Mr Robinson has never recovered from it. Mr Robinson has been obliged to bite his nails and count his millions from the ice-rink enriched by the European Union so eloquently denounced by himself in his political capacity. Meanwhile, Dr Paisley disdains new blood other than his own; however ambivalent his views on new bloodshed. His attacks on the Pope for so long have turned him into a Pope on his own, with an equal inability to question his own infallibility.

But Mr Gerry Adams remains the great recruiting-sergeant for extreme Protestant Unionism. The Stone Age Protestants, ready to assert their manhood by acts of inhumanity as great as any he has perpetrated, defended or shrugged off, almost won for Mr Adams the Protestant-shed blood bath at Drumcree for which he yearned: only the Ballymoney innocents saved Northern Ireland from the effects of the Adams designs. Dr Paisley was on view at Drumcree, but not with conspicuous profit. Who did benefit? The Orange Order? It marshalled an impressive following, but it must have been horribly aware that its tail is now wagging it in ways that may produce results no nice dog would want to talk about. The murderers of Ballymoney? One of the best things that has happened is the almost universal Protestant

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reaction to this (and young Rev Paisley's folly in itself signalled his father's desperation): the Innocents did not die in vain, apart from the unanswerable truth that, like so many victims of principle in Northern Ireland, they did not ask to die at all. It will be a cold future for the Innocents' butchers, thanks be to God. They are one form of paramilitary who will get no voter support. But the Protestant paramilitaries who have, and in many instances supported the Good Friday agreement, remain the most visible proof of Dr Paisley's political weakness. The real men of blood know him too well as the voice that, without fighting, taught the rest to fight. For decades the Rev Doctor has been the Ulster Duke of Plaza-Toro: when there was any fighting, he led his regiment from behind, he found it less exciting. It might ill become a minister of God to indulge in fisticuffs or bloodshed, yet this hardly accords with the verbal licence the Doctor gives himself. But the pattern has been visible as far back as the Burntollet march thirty years ago: loud and long the Doctor bellowed, but the heat of battle was borne by the troops of Major Ronald Bunting, and who, for the last thirty years, has seen Major Bunting? Gary MacMichael, son of a father who gave his life to guard the wilder shores of Paisleyism, contemptuously spoke on the eve of the referendum of his Reverence 'bolting for the door' when he 'sees the enemy', and various other Yea-sayers answer his 'No' with the reproaches of Shakespeare's ghosts cursing his Richard at Bosworth. Dr Paisley still gives a great - or holy - show, but he seems to have no new tricks and will probably take his party with him when he goes.

And will the Democratic Unionists then fall a-squabbling like Cromwell's generals, each for themselves, and let the mantle be grabbed by one another, and rent in fragments most of which will be quietly retailored for Dr Trimble (or reTrimbled for Mr Taylor)? Will the dissident official Unionist hopeful Mr Jeffrey Donaldson find a larger audience than his mirror, to which to lead all dissident official and Democratic Unionists? Or will the grand beneficiary be Dr Paisley's recent ally Mr Bob McCartney of the UK Unionists? Mr McCartney seems the best prospect for pickings from the Trimble dissidents and the Paisley legatees: he has much more staying-power and more experience than Mr Donaldson, more marbles than the Rev Willie MacCrea, no inevitable inadequacy alongside a paternal yardstick, like the Rev Master Ian Paisley, no occupational stake in sectarianism, like the Rev Martin Smyth. He has 5 members in the Assembly, and, however small by DUP standards, it looks good for the future. Yet he was disappointing in the Referendum and Election. In attacking the Peace Women, he stumbled into the pits of male chauvinism, while seeking status as the more attractive face of Unionism. He abjures any ostensible appeal to anti-Catholicism even if he

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has been seen snuggling up to Dr Paisley, possibly with a view to measuring him for future consumption. He is fast with jeers against opponents such as 'rent-a-mob', unpleasantly reminiscent of U.S. white Southern explanations of civil rights activism in the 1960s: indeed, for all of Mr McCartney's anti-sectarianism he frequently seems to sigh for the days of Unionist rule in the worst days of religious discrimination before even the feeble experiments of Captain Terence (later Lord) O'Neill. In debate he can sound pedantic and cynical, a little like the late Eamon de Valera at his worst. yet his side has an excellent case, however much its success chiefly benefits Mr Adams. The Unionists are in serious danger of seeing their inheritance eroded, and their future mortgaged to the London-Dublin duet where today British protection is only maintained by Irish indifference. Mr McCartney has the intellectual resources to build a party, but as of now, even more than Dr Paisley, he must think positively, having something on offer in place of Dr Trimble. To date he only leads a Bring-Your-Own Party. Dr Paisley at least offers his personal miracle-play, in his own theatre, running almost as long as **The Mousetrap**.

Mr McCartney has been silent over Drumcree, since he is no Orangeman and it is inescapably a sectarian issue. It is also - temporarily - a cul-de-sac, and it is to his advantage to show himself the leader who will continue the intransigent Unionist struggle by other means. Yet it was only the Innocents who prevented Drumcree becoming the flashpoint for a new war, under probably new, but definitely sectarian, leadership. Mr McCartney, like Messrs Trimble and Mallon, has for the moment won by default, although they are doing far more than he. Certain options seem closed to him. The Unionist resistance to the Good Friday agreement swirls around Orange self-expression, and this, however symbolic, is nothing on which to build a future unless its symbolism can be made universal. Mr McCartney should now take stock of his own situation. He was courageous in his opposition to the Good Friday agreement, but he must face up to the probable price that would be paid for its wreckage: rule by the Nazi-Soviet pact of Blair-Adams, with neo-paramilitaries of Protestant origin, and the Catholic and Protestant moderates obliterated at the polls. At best, in such circumstances the UK Unionists would be in a condition of permanent constitutional disapproval, rejected by their fellow-democrats Protestant or Catholic, and despised by the men of violence on every side. There may be much to say for Mr McCartney's dislike of the present arrangement, but he cannot protect himself by pulling a Pontius Pilate on the outcome. Otherwise he makes himself Mr Adams's creature far more destructively than Mr Trimble has done. And the Referendum lost the Unionists their veto by majority right: the No-men are now the minority; the Catholics are among the majority.

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Mr McCartney was in the past a cogent critic of the Republic's constitutional irredentism and domestic hostility to church-state separation. But the very quality of his arguments demands that he now use the Republic's abandonment of its anti-partitionist claims *de jure*, and of its clerical domination *de facto*. He cannot simply throw aside his former arguments because they are now irrelevant. Constitutionally the Republic formerly threatened Northern Ireland Protestantism and now does not. In fact, for all of Mr Bertie Ahern's omnipresence, the Republic has formally announced its decline in relevance - save in the vital question of security, to which it is now fully committed, without the reservations its irredentist claim hitherto imposed.

Mr McCartney will oppose the paramilitarist representatives taking their seats in the Assembly without their weapons being taken out of service. (One feels the mystification of 'decommissioning' should be decommissioned: it sounds as though they are inviting Mr Adams to renege on his unpaid bills to gun-runners.) Mr Adams and his friends, and no doubt the Protestant paramilitaries, will decommission nothing, not even their astrologers. If they like, they could hand over a few mouldy pieces of equipment bought from the Black and Tans, and call it compliance, but their present tactics turn on blank refusal in the hope of stimulating solid Protestant non-co-operation with themselves (to their delight) and with Mr Blair (to their advantage). What Mr McCartney should do is to pillory their default in the sky with his choicest pearls of eloquence, and throw himself thoroughly into support for cross-border security at the expense of Mr Adams's undercover friends and theoretical enemies as they continue the war Mr Adams had nominally ended. The Irish *Gárda Síochána* will be delighted to support R.U.C. crackdowns, thirsting as they are for vengeance on Mr Adams and his fellow-patriots for the blood of their own murdered comrades. At a hurling or possibly Gaelic football match against the *Gárda*, Mr Adams's son, whose athletic enthusiasm does not apparently extend to his father's political and military activities, found himself injured within ten minutes and was carried off the field crippled after 25, reportedly snarling as he went 'And my father want us to unite with these fuckers!'

Mr McCartney claims that the new constitutional arrangements will create an unstable 'state in transit' and will institutionalise sectarianism. But neither seems reasonable. Sectarianism is so well institutionalised as it is that the new arrangements can do no more than recognise it, and may - just possibly may - do something to erode it. Certainly the understanding between Messrs Trimble and Mallon offer something better in cross-party common purpose than we have had before. Needless to say, the long memories of historians

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and combatants will wheel out ancient precedents: are we not back to the ill-fated power-sharing of 1973-74 brought down by Glenn Barr and his fellows in the Ulster Workers' Strike? That was an elite against a proletariat. This is not. The Rev Dr Paisley is about as proletarian as the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster: it is impossible to think of an Irish prelate, popish or Protestant, who could approach his institutional wealth. The thugs of Drumcree - as opposed to the supportive respectable citizenry - have nothing of the stature of Barr, just as their opponents on the other side are no James Connollys or Peadar O'Donnells. Equally, Mr Trimble may have no great anti-sectarian record - it won't compare, for instance, with that of his lieutenant Mr Ken Maginnis, MP (Assembly Election organiser but himself remaining at Westminster) who once fought shoulder to shoulder with Seamus Mallon defending a bar in which they were both employed against destructive thugs; it won't compare, at least in previous formal utterance, with that of Mr McCartney; neither Mr Maginnis nor Mr McCartney is an Orangeman and Mr Trimble of course is, having footed it feately yesteryear at Drumcree hand in hand with the Rev Dr Paisley - Torvil and Dean in Orange sashes liberating Unionist body-language in directions much denounced by the Doctor on other occasions. (As the old Orange song put it 'On the twelfth day of July ... everyone is gay'.) But Mr Trimble is an experienced academic, accustomed to working with and teaching Catholics, and is only varying his theatre of co-operation: he mingles well with Catholics in informal surroundings, and draws easily on advisers of Catholic as well as of Protestant origin. Brian Faulkner, of the 1973-74 power-sharing, was so anti-Catholic by nature that he once vomited on a platform denouncing Catholicism: the rebellion against him was by people who knew his whole nature opposed the co-operation with Catholics imposed on him. He had previously lured Prime Minister Ted Heath into imposing internment and Falls Road search-and-destroy operations, which sundered the Catholics from the British Army they had welcomed with cups of tea in 1969 to the IRA's horror. Faulkner, indeed, was anti-Catholic in ways Glenn Barr was not. Mr Trimble's reputation as a hard-liner from the time he stood for Unionist party leadership was much exaggerated, and as we now know certain colleagues, credited then with greater moderation, have proved decidedly more anti-Catholic and anti-compromise than he. He could and did sound like a wintry wind sensing out the arthritic joints of an opponent, but sectarianism is not his natural game, however much he felt it his intellectual duty to don his Orange sash. But above all, the Sunningdale 'Power-Sharing' was inaugurated by an elitist negotiation alone; the Trimble-Mallon government is based on thorough democratic consultation by Referendum.

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As for the 'state in transit', Mr Trimble can do much to give it stability, and Mr McCartney can aid him. Mr McCartney in any case must choose his anti-sectarian company more carefully: it will hardly do to explain one is not anti-Semitic when supporting Herr Hitler, so to say. Mr McCartney can turn himself into a sensible, non-sectarian opposition. And Mr McCartney really must come to terms with the Council of the Isles. We are making a new Scotland, and we want to build it up by constructive discussions with his like. An obsessive refusal to study comparable societies with historical links is no friend to Northern Ireland. The way to answer spurious fishing in Northern Ireland waters from the Republic is to make the most of the real new dimension, and its novelty should be no source of objection to Mr McCartney. And Mr McCartney must look around the present state of this UK, if non-sectarian Unionism is not to go moribund when the heat revives at Drumcree. In any case, Mr Trimble must rethink Drumcree. His address to the issue of avoiding sectarianism, must seek to comprehend it. I propose him the following solution.

Proclaim the Twelfth of July a National Holiday, with a Proclamation drawing attention to its traditional honoured status in both communities. The Battle of the Boyne was a victory enthusiastically supported by His Holiness Pope Alexander VIII, fought in fact on the First of July which date was altered to the Twelfth in harmony with the Calendar reforms instituted by Pope Gregory XIII. William III represented a coalition of Catholics (numerically the largest proportion of his supporters), Lutherans, Anglicans and Calvinists: as Dutch Stadtholder (far the most important of the offices he bore, in his eyes) he governed the multi-religious Dutch on principles of mutual respect. Irish Penal Laws against Roman Catholics were passed during his reign, though much worse were to follow his death, but the punitive attitude of his security-obsessed, land-hungry allies, disgusted him: he always regarded sectarianism as a contemptible form of politics. His main purpose in life was to check the self-aggrandisement of one European power at the expense of the rest, a view in which many Irish of many denominations have sympathised over the centuries. Let there be processions in his honour and that of the cause of liberty, by all means, with the proviso that all ecclesiastical dignitaries in Northern Ireland be expected to take part in it. Every Orange procession should include at least one Roman Catholic priest, and preferably a Bishop, preferably marching alongside counterparts of the Protestant denominations represented, of which there should be as many as possible. All state dignitaries will be expected to participate in such celebrations, especially all members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Naturally any procession which does not make all participants welcome will

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be banned without appeal: any person seeking to provoke public disorder or otherwise induce ill-feeling should be treated like any other criminals. Meanwhile, the Republic, as co-signatory of the Good Friday Agreement and fellow-participant in relevant cross-border security exchanges, will treat Northern Ireland security threats as it would threats to itself: it is, indeed, doing so for Britain today.

Clearly there can be no objection on behalf of James II/VII raised by Northern Ireland Catholics. Few if any of their ancestors fought for him, since most Irish in his service followed him or others overseas. Nationalist comment execrated, or, more specifically, excremented his name for having fled at the Boyne with alleged uncomplimentary remarks about his Irish soldiery. Support for James demanded a common government for the three Kingdoms, albeit through separate Parliaments: the Council of the Isles offers much greater flexibility. So nationalistic an Irish Catholic historian as James Carty wrote his schoolbook account of the Siege of Derry applauding the courage of the Protestant defenders against a foreign army. Northern Ireland needs not to ditch its past, but to unify it. The William Carleton Summer School, for instance, flourishes in Clogher, Co. Tyrone commemorating the great short-story writer, folklorist, novelist, social critic and observer, and Protestant convert from Catholicism. The Catholic and Protestant Bishops sit together in the centre of the hall at its opening meeting, heading its patrons. History and Literature are the richer for the celebration of Carleton, but so, too, are the mutual respect of the religions and their traditions. We do not seek to destroy a frequently abrasive past: we want to understand it and draw more positive benefits from it. And it can only be achieved together.

Similarly, the future can only be achieved together, regardless of fleeting patrons, Machiavellian allies, and righteous opponents. It remains the horrifying truth that the Innocents' death may alone have prevented civil war.

And it is not enough to congratulate ourselves on that deliverance, with such concessions to good taste as we may manage to formulate. Henceforth, every politician should be forced to make peace the first priority: real peace. Every decision should have as its first test: is it more likely that people will live or die because of this? It is the question to put to all lobbyists, grievance-mongers, inch-takers, ground-holders, filio-pietists, demagogues, theocrats. Democratic majorities of all groups have spoken. Henceforth, we must build or die.

Even St Matthew

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### **POSTSCRIPT [1 OCTOBER 1998]**

St Matthew's Herod was moderate. Northern Ireland keeps Herod a competitive designation, and he may well become a privatised industry among sectarian groups. The Orange loss of control over Protestant crusaders at Drumcree is privately acknowledged: so the proposal for multi-faith sacerdotal presence would firmly require the Lodges to give their celebration the high Catholic support it had during the Boyne, or else to admit that they cannot answer for their own Festival whence they must therefore dissociate themselves. Despite its history of anti-Catholicism, Orangeism did a great deal of good, improving the lives of its votaries and lightening their grim industrial destinies: if Orangefolk are proud of that, they will not want to have what they regard as their decent history dishonoured. They must either affirm their rejection of the inhumanity of the Ballymoney murderers, or else admit they are powerless against the profaners of their cause.

The appalling tragedy of Omagh has had one clear achievement. SDLP Councillor Pat Macdonald pinned Mitchel MacLoughlin when he came to inspect the damage to Sinn Fein credibility at Omagh, and demanded a condemnation: 'how many more of our people are to be blown to bits while you peruse the dictionary?' Mr MacLoughlin capitulated and issued the long-refused condemnation of an IRA atrocity, and Gerry Adams followed grudgingly but firmly, at last putting blue water between himself and his erstwhile comrades. He and his associates are now formally severed from the option of returning to violence if insufficiently bribed. His strategy of playing for ultimate political control in Northern Ireland continues, and he will profit by the SDLP want of infrastructure, just as he has benefited by knowing more about multi-MP drives under PR instead of concentrating on front-runners, as the SDLP did. The latter have learned, and post-Omagh will have more common ground between the Mallon and Trimble followers. Both can gain from the huge descent of Sinn Fein in popularity among all communities after Omagh. Apart from anything else, Mr Gerry Adams still gives enough reason to suspect his benevolence towards the entire community after his past history and ideological allegiance to violence, impolitic though it has become. As the Unionist intellectual Chris McGimpsey put it in speaking at a Tribune meeting to the Labour Party Conference where Mr Adams was also a speaker, 'what is the difference between the Spice Girls and the IRA? The difference is that Gerry has definitely left the Spice Girls'. There will be many more drag acts before Mr

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Adams is finished with us, but for the moment his efforts will be to ensure his former friends embarrass him a little less. His time-honoured methods of ensuring it are nasty, but no more than any of them deserve.