RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Party Faithful in Ireland and Germany

Kimberly Cowell-Meyers

Greenwood
PUBLISHING GROUP

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

This page intentionally left blank

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Party Faithful in Ireland and Germany

Kimberly Cowell-Meyers

PRAEGER

Westport, Connecticut
London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cowell-Meyers, Kimberly, 1970–
Religion and politics in the nineteenth century : the party faithful in Ireland and Germany / Kimberly Cowell-Meyers.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0–275–97185–6 (alk. paper)
1. Christianity and politics—Catholic Church—History—19th century. 2. Christianity and politics—Ireland—History—19th century. 3. Catholic Church—Ireland—History—19th century. 4. Christianity and politics—Germany—History—19th century. 5. Catholic Church—Germany—History—19th century. I. Title.
BX1505.C69 2002
274.15′081—dc21 2001057732

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Copyright © 2002 by Kimberly Cowell-Meyers

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, by any process or technique, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2001057732
ISBN: 0–275–97185–6

First published in 2002

Praeger Publishers, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.praeger.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48–1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Jason and June and David

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Tables ix

Preface xi

1. Introduction 1

2. Catholicism in the New German Empire 15

3. Catholic Mobilization in Wilhelmine Germany 25

4. Irish Catholicism in 1870 57

5. Irish Catholic Mobilization in the Late Nineteenth Century 73

6. Conclusions 103

Selected Bibliography 131

Index 141

This page intentionally left blank

Tables

1. Kulturkampf Laws or Administrative Actions 21
2. Members of the *Zentrumspartei* in the Reichstag 33
3. Percent of *Zentrum* Electoral Support 36
4. General Election Results in Ireland: MPs 79
5. Irish Catholic MPs 80

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

This study emerged from a strong commitment to understanding more about the conflict in Northern Ireland. As a child, I lived with my family for a time in London during the period of the Irish Republican Army's first mainland campaign. I have memories of the pub at the corner of our street being bombed and Harrod's in sandbags. I grew up after that in safe, suburban New Jersey, where kids were Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish in equal and oblivious proportions, and I grew more and more confused about the essence of a conflict that would pit people who seemed so similar and lived so comfortably with each other in one context against each other in another. As a person whose primary political socialization occurred as a British subject, when I was a teenager I learned of the British role in Ireland with increasing internal dissonance.

Upon graduating from college, I was invited by a family friend to work with him in the British Parliament on "the Irish problem." I met many of the inside players at the time in a civil setting known as the birthplace of democracy and gradual, mediated constitutional change. Juxtaposing that context with the kind of security threats accompanying work in Northern Ireland politics that most Americans took for granted would never be a part of their lives left me marked forever.

Most of my work focused on Northern Ireland. But a presentation on the politics of identity by Professor Clive Wilcox of Georgetown University sparked the comparison with Germany. Professor Wilcox was working on a study of minority communities in Europe and explained that he had observed members of minority communities in Germany, whether they were Catholics in a mainly Protestant area or vice versa, doing more minority-identifying things—attending church more, joining church-based organizations, and so on—than did members of majority communities. What seemed counter intuitive to me about that behavior—people differentiating themselves from the majority, calling attention to their differences, rather than attempting to fit in or blend in—piqued

my curiosity. The more that I learned about minority communities in Germany, the more I became aware of the intensity of historical Catholic-Protestant conflict in places outside Ireland. How Catholic-Protestant conflict was substituted by this kind of identity politics in contemporary Germany but remained intense in Ireland and why that happened became the central focus of my subsequent research.

In my experience no academic achievement is a fully individual undertaking. This book has benefited from the assistance and support of many colleagues and friends. I would like to thank Professor Saul Newman, Professor Diane Singerman, and Dean William LeoGrande of the School of Public Affairs at American University for the time and energy that they devoted to this project and for the wisdom that they imparted. Dean LeoGrande's unending support, unswerving confidence and ardent advocacy for me have won my undying gratitude. Professor Margaret Anderson of the University of California, Berkeley and Professor Tom Garvin of University College, Dublin enhanced the project directly through substantive comment and indirectly through their own inspiring example of scholarship well written, insightful, and never devoid of humor. Professor Terence Murphy in the History Department at American University read portions of the book and provided very useful criticism and scholarly advice. For their willingness to wrestle with the tough issues that this study presented and for the commitment of their enthusiasm and brainpower, I am thankful to many graduate students in the School of Public Affairs and the School of International Service at American University, especially Jason Meyers, Grant Benson, and Burcu Akan. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, who have been as faithful and supportive as the words could convey, and Jason, who sacrificed, endured, and inspired so much. To them this book is dedicated.

1

Introduction

Tout commence en mystique et finit en politique.

Charles Péguy

In the centuries since Martin Luther nailed his theses to the door of All Saints Chapel in Wittenberg in 1517, Roman Catholics and Protestants have vied with each other for political power and spiritual or moral influence. The wars of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation ended with the inauguration of the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (the religion of the prince is the religion of his people) in much of Europe. Left in their wake was a nascent practice of religious tolerance and accommodation. In the nineteenth century, however, the flames of the sectarian conflict flared again in Europe. Intense sectarian conflict consumed the Northern European states of Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland, where Catholics and Protestants lived together. Conflict between secularizing and more devout strains of Catholicism also abounded in Southern and Central European Catholic states such as Austria, Spain, and Italy. These conflicts, "between *the aspirations of the mobilizing nation-state and the corporate claims of the churches*" were "the decisive battle" of the nineteenth century,[1] earning it recognition as "both the archetypal period of secularisation and a great age of religious revival."[2]

Despite cultural and structural differences, the church-state conflicts in Europe had very similar dynamics. In every case, state- and nation-building elites held common attitudes, prejudices, and suspicions about Catholics. Catholicism, it was believed, was the religion of the past and was incompatible with the modern state. Both Protestants and secularizing Catholics saw the international or supranational character of the Roman Catholic Church as an impediment to national unification and a challenge to state sovereignty. Their fears were reinforced by the actions of the church, specifically, Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors of 1863, which condemned both liberalism and the separation of church and state, the promulgation of the dogma of Papal Infallibility of 1871, which asserted the pope's temporal authority, as well as the powerful "Ultramontane" movement in the church to centralize power in the Roman See.

Despite the intensity of these nineteenth-century conflicts, in most of Western Europe today Catholic-Protestant conflict is nonexistent or is significantly diminished. While it is true that many major political parties in these advanced industrialized democracies still have religious ties, religion is no longer the principal electoral or political cleavage in these societies. Strong Christian Democratic parties that are confessional in character (i.e., their agendas and platforms reflect a moral or religious perspective) and have constituencies that define themselves as religious exist in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, but these have not precluded the emergence of class and ideological movements in this century that cross the sectarian divide. Instead, these parties largely fall outside the "normal" left-right continuum represented by parties from the communist or socialist point of view, to the conservative. The implication is that the battle of the nineteenth century really was "decisive"; the intense sectarian conflicts of the previous century were somehow resolved.

In Ireland, however, religion has never disappeared as a principal cleavage in society. It has instead been reinforced. In the Republic of Ireland, for example, Catholicism is an integral part not just of the character of the nation but also of its official institutional and constitutional composition. For example, the Irish Constitution, approved by the Dail (the Irish parliament) and popular referendum in 1937, made "divorce unconstitutional, banned the import and sale of contraceptive devices, and regulated dance halls, besides incorporating Catholic teaching on the family, education, and private property"[3] and granting the Catholic Church a "special position" in the new Irish state. Some of these provisions have been modified, although only very recently; the special position of the Catholic Church was revoked in 1978; access to abortion[4] and divorce was approved through referenda in 1992 and 1995, respectively. The influence of the Catholic Church has diminished in recent years, yet to this day, the majority of Irish hospitals and schools continue to be owned or operated by the church, the Dail is convened with a prayer, the legal calendar begins with a "prayer service;" and the Angelus is rung on public broadcast stations.[5] Undeniably, Catholicism retains a "moral monopoly" in modern Irish society.[6]

Perhaps more importantly, religion continues to define the cultural and "national" identity of individuals and groups on the island as a whole.[7] Protestants overwhelmingly identify themselves as Unionists or Loyalists, loyal to the Crown of England and all that it represents. Catholics are much more likely to be "nationalists" or Republicans, identifying themselves with the Republic of Ireland and its moral claim to the territory of the whole island of Ireland and the cultural and mythical traditions of Irish nationalism. Moreover, religion may not just coincide with political perspectives but may actually constitute the basis of them; in scholar Steve Bruce's analysis, for instance, Protestantism forms the essence of Unionist identity.[8] According to Colin Coulter, "Irish nationalism has . . . clearly borne the inscription of Catholicism."[9] Even for "liberal" Unionist scholars, fear of incorporation into the oppressive Catholic state south of the border is cast as the raison d'être of Unionism.[10]

Sectarian conflict on the island of Ireland remains intense and deadly, particularly in the six counties of Northern Ireland. Why? Why does religion continue to divide the people of Ireland in violent ways?

PEACEMAKING AS PROCESS: IRELAND'S TROUBLES IN THE CONTEXT OF WESTERN EUROPE

This study considers the problem of continued conflict on the island of Ireland from a comparative and historical framework. The approach is unique in focusing on the history of sectarian relations in Western Europe as well as in Ireland.[11] Given that other European societies struggled with similar conflicts in the nineteenth century, the patterns and experiences of those societies should shed light on the continuation of sectarian conflict in Ireland today. In these other situations in Western Europe, conflict between Catholics and Protestants was channeled, managed, and even, over time, more or less resolved. Yet, while most theories on the Irish problem consider the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland as an anomaly or an anachronism in modern and industrialized Western Europe, rarely do scholars acknowledge the bitterness of the Catholic-Protestant conflict in other European states as recently as a century ago.[12] I believe, however, that looking at how other societies experienced and dealt with similar kinds of conflicts will facilitate identification of the uniqueness of the Irish situation and place it in context. It is possible that the process that unfolded elsewhere in Western Europe and led to integration and accommodation between sects might also have occurred in Ireland in the absence of certain variables or in the presence of others. Whatever brought "peace" between Catholics and Protestants in other Western European societies might also have brought peace to Ireland.

Because relations across sectarian lines in other places in Western Europe have improved, the fact that Catholics and Protestants were pitted against each other historically in Ireland does not by itself explain continued sectarian conflict today. It is tempting to take the popular approach that Catholics and Protestants have always opposed each other; hence, their contemporary struggles are understandable given that history. But reducing the ongoing conflict in Ireland to religious or historical determinants neglects the other forces that weighed in and interfered in the process by which the "decisive battle" was transcended in most other European societies. My point is that we must open the analysis to the other forces that may have interfered in this process. I believe that a better understanding of the dynamics of the historical conflict in Ireland and the development of separate nationalisms based around religious identity will improve the chances of finding a lasting solution to Ireland's Troubles.

THE COMPARISON

What process occurred in other parts of Western Europe that led to peace across community lines? How did other societies respond to, and deal with, their intense sectarian conflicts? In twelve European countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Catholics, in response to the new, hostile domestic or international environment of Protestant nationalism, created