

Ossi Päärnilä

RACE, RELIGION AND HISTORY

in the One-Ireland and
Partition Arguments, 1833-1932



STUDIA HISTORICA JYVÄSKYLÄENSIA

Ossi Päärnilä

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ABSTRACT

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Finnish Summary

Diss.

The study examines the ideological basis of the Irish partition and the arguments in favour of one or two Irish nation(s), through the philosophy of British Unionism and through the works of prominent Irish historians, concentrating on the decades of the Home Rule dispute and the first decade of the Irish Free State. An analysis and historical survey of nationalist concepts in the Irish context is included; the mostly futile attempts by modern scholars to develop a precise definition for the concept of nation are also followed.

Focusing on historiography and its importance in the process of nationalism, the influence of British and Irish historians, anthropologists and political writers is discussed, and, in particular, the role of Trinity College and University College scholars in Dublin is more closely examined. The major leaders of Irish Unionist and Nationalist opinion, William Lecky (1838-1903), Eoin MacNeill (1867-1945) and Alice Green (1847-1929) are thoroughly discussed and contrasted with the dissenting voices from Ulster politicians and Southern revolutionaries. The obscure mixture of religious and nationalist arguments in Pádraig Pearse's (1879-1916) rhetoric, as well as James Connolly's (1868-1916) working class "nation", are analysed and compared with MacNeill's historical vision. The attempts to integrate the Nationalist claim to the "nation's soil" with the theory of an ancient nation-state is documented, and MacNeill's vague arguments how the Ulster Protestants should have adopted the common national spirit are brought out. The first attempts to write a separate Northern Irish history receive a special attention, as well as the theories of a "new race" and nationality in Protestant Ulster. The irrelevance of *nationality*, in any meaning other than state citizenship, becomes obvious in the case of Ireland; few contemporaries of the Irish partition were, of course, familiar with modern approaches, such as cultural and ethnic identities.

The study shows how religious terminology in the Irish context was losing its validity as early as in the late 19th century, when the fallacies of race theories and new ideas of nationality inspired politicians and notable historians. It also shows how the chance to persuade the Ulster Unionists to join the common Irish state was ideologically lost through the obstinacy of the revolutionary leaders, including Eoin MacNeill, who clung to the dogma of an ancient nation-state, and the necessity of "de-Anglicizing" the whole society. Instead, the Northern Unionists appealed to the principle of self-government which, to contemporary observers, seemed to be more realistic. MacNeill's inconsistency in presenting his own arguments is revealed, but his indisputable merits in the adoption of modern views on the "Celtic race" are also emphasized.

Key words: Irish Nationalism, Ulster Unionism, historiography, Irish partition

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Finally, I wish to record the hospitality of Mrs. Beatrice Coleman in Dublin, and the patience and encouragement of my family; Marja Leena, Olli and Heli, who all have contributed most substantially to this work.

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ABSTRACT

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1 INTRODUCTION

This investigation explores and compares some historical aspects of traditional Irish Nationalism and Unionism¹ (including British Unionism) in the context of the Irish partition (the cultural and political division of Ireland). The general motivation for the study was to clarify racialist, religious and historical arguments in favour of one Irish nation, and the arguments against it, attempting simultaneously to integrate them with the partition process itself. This leads, of course, to the general question of how the contemporaries of partition perceived the concepts of *nation* and *nationality*, as means for understanding, accepting, or rejecting the idea of partition. In order to approach the endless research field of nationalism from a relatively new angle, the focus is primarily in Irish and British historiography.

This is not intended to be a new interpretation of Irish Nationalism or Unionism, nor a concise history of Irish historiography or partition, although the latter sets the political as well as the chronological frame for the study, but rather a conceptual clarification of conventional nationalist terminology in the partition context. It is also hoped that the combination of nationalist and racialist theories,

¹ According to John Whyte (late professor of University College Dublin), traditional Irish Nationalism can roughly be defined as a conviction that the people of Ireland form one nation, and that the fault for keeping Ireland divided lies primarily in Britain. In contrast, traditional Irish Unionism holds that there are two distinct peoples (nationalities) in Ireland, and that the main cause of troubles is the refusal of the Nationalists to recognize this fact. J. Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991), pp. 117, 146. Although softened by practical policies and treaties, these doctrines are still repeated in the propaganda of the extreme Nationalists and Unionists. The Constitution of 1937 for the Free State (The Republic of Ireland since 1949), still in effect, is based on the one-Ireland principle.

the role of religion in these arguments, and the connection of all these to history as a scholarly discipline and tradition will offer new insights into the partition process. The increased knowledge and understanding of historiography gives the latter dimension a special significance. In addition, a few specific aspects about the selected writers, and their conceptual framework, are discussed.

I have borrowed the title concepts from Walter Phillips, an English scholar who worked in Dublin in the revolutionary years. To him "race, religion and history" meant those human elements that had divided Irishmen. I would add that they belong to somewhat different categories as concepts and cannot, therefore, be treated quite comprehensively in this study. Race theories and racist beliefs are examined as arguments of their time, regardless of their modern scientific justification. Similarly, religion is treated, not as a problem of modern theology or church history, but as an argument in the partition debates. The religious aspect concentrates on the question of how contemporary observers of partition reacted to assumed religious issues. Historical interpretation by 19th- and early 20th-century scholars was more comprehensive, trying to give perceptions and definitions for all assumed qualities of a "nation", and also trying to explain the whole era of rising nationalism. When examining the role of historians in this process, the dual function of history - the object and method of study - becomes a central problem.

Language, despite its importance as an element of national identity, occupies a minor role in this study, because the language (English) used by the majority of Irishmen in the early 20th century was not itself a divisive factor. However, the revival and recreation of Gaelic Irish became a political issue, and not co-incidentally historians presented the major arguments in favour of a distinctive national language.

Because of the complexity of concepts involved with nationality and history, it was thought necessary to present a theoretical section in the beginning. It offers modern perspectives on the Irish nationality debate, and serves also as a basis of comparison and analysis for the historical section. The fact that historians "create" history, whether consciously or not, deserves an introductory chapter, too.

The different historical traditions in Ireland have been much discussed recently, especially in the context of historical *revisionism*; the debate concerning historians' role in writing national or anti-national history and his/her capacities to exercise "value-free" research. The debate has given valuable insights for this

study, although no sides have been taken in favour of any specific opinion. The main themes around revisionism are compiled in two recent works: *Interpreting Irish History* (ed. by Ciaran Brady 1994) and *The Making of Modern Irish History* (ed. by Dennis G. Boyce and Alan O'Day 1996), which also are useful surveys of Irish historiography. In the former, Hugh Kearney sees revisionism as a critical approach to received orthodoxy, i.e. nationalist rhetoric. He notes, however, that in recent years revisionism had partly become established orthodoxy itself, causing in turn criticism.² But as a whole, Kearney and most of his colleagues see the debate on revisionism as a healthy phenomena which only demonstrates how history should be a matter of rational debate and not a matter of dogma. John Hutchinson confirms Kearney's view in the latter work by asking, does not revisionism simply mean a willingness to revise received historical interpretations in the light of new questions and evidence?³ It is easy to agree that revisionism in the context of history research, whether in Ireland or somewhere else, needs no other explanation. There has been revisionism in English historiography, also, which questioned the celebration of the national "success story" and the "whig" idea that everything of value had been born and bred within England itself. A useful recent English presentation, with a strong "revisionist" view, is Edwin Jones's *The English Nation, The Great Myth* (1998).

Major 19th-century commentators of the nationality debate were historians, due to the importance of the *national story* in the theory of nations. Therefore I have selected the primary texts mainly from well-known historians and their widely circulated publications. The term *historian*, however, has not been strictly limited or defined. In many cases the sources of daily debate were popular history works written by academic and non-academic historians, politicians, journalists and other men of letters. Yet writers who were known as historians, or became such, often played a major role in the debates. Racial theories usually went hand in hand with historical interpretation as well, but a few prominent anthropologists have also been introduced. To a lesser extent (other) political writings, pamphlets and newspaper articles by scientists, politicians and editors

² Hugh Kearney, "The Irish and their History". In Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History* (Irish Academic Press, Blackrock 1994), pp. 246-9.

³ John Hutchinson, "Irish Nationalism". In D. G. Boyce & Alan O'Day (eds.), *The Making of Modern Irish History* (Routledge, London & New York 1996), p. 108.

have been used, as well as public announcements by governments and political movements. The selected writers have been dealt with rather as formers of opinion than individual thinkers, because the focus is not on the detailed development of their thinking or on what they deeply thought of Irish nationalities, but primarily on their message to the reading public in their prominent publications.

It is practically impossible to define specifically to what extent others than "educated" people - scholars, teachers, journalists, lawyers, politicians, priests, students - read books at all in 19th-century Ireland, because there is a research gap in this area. The problem, however, is less essential for the purposes of this work which focuses on available printed material, for any reader, and on how the arguments were used in public debates and declarations. Although we cannot document the impact of nationality theories on the minds of the great "masses", we know that the ideas of leading historians and political philosophers were filtered down in text books, newspapers, pamphlets and political declarations, thus reaching a larger audience than the original books. The ideas of the "authorities" very often were copied and used as arguments by less-known writers which in turn spread the "message", whether distorted or not.

The works selected date from roughly the 1840s to the late 1920s. The time span of the Irish partition is, of course, very much a matter of taste. It would not be unusual in Irish histories to start the whole question from the times of Cú Chulain (a legendary Ulster king), but normally Thomas Macaulay's speech in 1833, in which he casually pointed out the possibility of two Irish governments, is mentioned as a starting point for the political partition. Political histories of partition often start from Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill, 1886, if not from the liberals' victory in the elections of 1868. From the pre-Macaulay period the historian Robert Martin, who in 1843 predicted that the Ulster Protestants would ultimately ruin any attempt to re-establish autonomy for Ireland, is worth noting. The period of home rule debates 1885-1920 offers the largest selection of popular Irish histories and books with historical elements. The 1920s were a challenging phase for the "testing" of the new elements in a dual history: a national history of divided Ireland, and a Unionist Northern Irish history. Partition was sealed by the three-partite boundary treaty of 1925 between the Free State, British and Northern Irish Governments, but I have chosen 1932 as the closing year, because it marked the end of the Free State ideology due to the opposition's (Fianna Fáil)

victory in elections. Moreover, in 1932 professor Eoin MacNeill, the embodiment of the Free State moderates, restated in an official Government publication that there had existed an ancient Irish nation-state. This was the last time when his vision appeared prominently in public.

The bulk of materials is divided between British Unionist, Anglo-Irish (and southern Irish) Unionist, Irish Nationalist and Ulster Unionist writers. To a great extent these categories represent the main lines of political opinion, although in specified questions opinions might be uniform. Almost without exception the writers who wrote of Unionist Irish history can be classified as “Unionist” historians, i.e. tendentious for the cause, and similarly historians of Irish Nationalism committed themselves to their topic. The scholar-politician was indeed, as Alvin Jackson has remarked, as much a Unionist as a Nationalist creation.⁴

The problem of nationality is not extended to the origins of the writers. For example, those who wrote in England and clearly took a British view, are placed in the British Unionist section regardless of their place of birth. Among the British writers there are famous historians and political writers, such as Thomas Macaulay, John Mill, Anthony Froude, Edward Freeman and Augustin Birrell, and a few prominent anthropologists such as Arthur Keith. Anglo-Irish historians are represented mainly by Trinity College scholars Alexander Richey, William Lecky and Walter Phillips (an Englishman). Irish Nationalist historians include Alice Stopford Green, Eoin MacNeill, Stephen Gwynn, David Hackett, James O'Connor, Hugh Law and some less known writers. Although Pádraig Pearse and James Connolly might not be classified as historians, their ideas of Irish nationality cannot be disregarded. Writers of Ulster history and supporters of the Ulster Unionist cause include racial theorists, editors and politicians such as John Harrison, James Woodburn, Thomas MacKnight, Ernest Hamilton, Ronald McNeill, and the more professional historians Ramsay Colles and David Chart. Of Irish (or half-Irish) writers Lecky, Eoin MacNeill, Alice Green, MacKnight and Ronald McNeill are more thoroughly examined because of their vital role in the one or two-Ireland debate.

The following specific questions were set for the study:

- 1) How did the British political establishment, especially the historians, see the

⁴ A. Jackson, “Irish Unionism”. In Boyce & O’Day (eds.) 1996, p. 122.

Irish separatist movement and the Unionist resistance to it, in relation to the Imperial philosophy of the "British nations"?

2) How did principal racialist, religious and historical arguments support the concept of one Irish nationality, or the "second" Irish (Unionist) nationality?

3) What specific role was performed by Irish historians in creating and maintaining the one or two-Ireland beliefs?

4) How did the nationalist leaders of opinion, principally Eoin MacNeill, Alice Green, Pádraig Pearse and James Connolly, explain Ulster's position as part of the one nation, despite the Unionists' resistance?

There is plenty of research by distinguished historians available on different sections of this work, and the general framework of politics and ideas can be, to a great extent, reconstructed on the basis of their work. There is, for example, a useful study on the relations between religion and state politics in Britain by David Hempton (*Religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland*, 1996). Furthermore, there are biographies and special studies on MacNeill, Alice Green, Connolly and Pearse, but I believe that there is still room for new interpretations of their views and tactics about the Irish nationality, partition and the Ulster problem. Relevant studies are referred to in appropriate places, but I would like to add that the following recent publications have been very useful in constructing the political frame for the period in question: Dennis Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics* (1996 ed.), E. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism* (1996) and James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity since 1885* (1995).

The main chapters are very much designed to stand alone, and can therefore be read in different order if the reader so wishes. I have consciously omitted a discussion of the different phases and alternatives in the Irish land boundary question, which I have examined earlier⁵, because, in my view, the boundary options were less significant from the ideological point of view.

⁵ O. Päärnälä, "Nationalismin rajankäyntiä Irlannissa" in *Wie es eigentlich gewesen*, Aira Kemiläiselle omistettu juhlakirja (Studia Historica Jyväskyläänsia 18, Jyväskylä 1979), and "Irlanti: katolilaisten ja protestanttien vähemmistökyseymys" in P. Raento (ed.), *Yhdessä erikseen, Kansalliset konfliktit Länsi-Euroopassa* (Gaudeamus 1993).

2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 Concepts and definitions

To interpret the Irish partition merely through the concepts of nation and nationality, either historically or as a present-day reality, would be an exclusively limited approach. Not only history as discipline but also (other) social sciences have developed new approaches to minority-majority questions. However, during the decades when the partition took form and was finally executed, concepts and theories concerning nationality overwhelmingly dominated public debate on the subject, and to condemn them today as anachronistic would make the whole process look incomprehensible. Besides, historians are still arguing, explaining and questioning nationalism and their own relation to it. Therefore, in order to identify basic concepts and their modern interpretations, parts of recent debates in the Irish context are introduced in the following.

It is most important to realize that the concepts are constantly changing, reflecting the endless debate - often struggle - on state boundaries, citizenship and minority rights. Nowadays discussions on the Irish partition usually focus either on the general problem of the divided country, or the Northern Irish minority question, from which many of the following examples are derived. There are, of course, cultural minority groups in the Republic of Ireland, too: Protestants, Jews, "travelling people", native Irish speakers, even a marginal group of Germans¹, but

¹ Of Irish minorities, see, for example, John Coakley, "Minoriteter i Irland: et sammenlignende perspektiv", in Sune Jungar (ed.), *Självstyrelserregioner och minoriteter i Europa* (Ålands högskola

only in Northern Ireland the classic Protestant-Catholic division has been, to a certain extent, preserved till the present day as an indication of nationalist aspirations.

Of standard definitions concerning nationalism, available in dictionaries, we learn that the English word *nation* covers both the "lower" or "primitive" nations and high cultural nations.² *People*, often used as a synonym for nation, refers to the inhabitants of a (nation) state. For example, Pádraig Pearse, the Irish revolutionary, in his famous phrase assured that "the people are the nation".³ Historically the concept of people also refers to those who "had to be governed" by the higher political elite; king, lords, parliament etc. In many 20th-century constitutions, such as the Irish Constitution (1937) and the Finnish Form of Government (1919), all political power was derived from people.⁴

Country, another word often used synonymously instead of *nation*, refers more concretely to the area where the people live, but also to the whole system and values of the society in the same way as *Motherland* or *Fatherland*. "The country of Ireland" usually refers to the whole island (and its archipelago). A *nation* (or national) *state* is normally understood as a state where the population is homogenous in regard to *nationality*, or where the great majority represents the same nationality. This obvious circular explanation historically results from the confusion between the concepts of nation and state. Nationality in everyday speech usually refers to different "nations" of the state, or populations still dreaming of a state. Nationality can also mean *national characteristics*, i.e. features that separate one nation from another. Therefore the word nationality (or nation) is commonly used about populations possessing a distinctive ethnic background, identity (feeling of togetherness) and common cultural elements, such as language.

The question of what constitutes a nation was set in 19th-century scientific

1989:1), pp. 25-52.

² See, for example, latest editions of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, and for comparison *New Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus of the English Language* or *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*.

³ *Political Writings and Speeches by Pádraig Pearse* (Talbot Press, Dublin 1952), p. 341 ("The Sovereign People").

⁴ Of the Irish Constitution of 1937 and its background see, for example, Mark Tierney, *Modern Ireland since 1850* (Gill and MacMillan, Dublin 1978), pp. 207-8. In the Finnish Form of Government *kansa* would be translated as people.

thinking, and most often race, religion, history and language were offered as main elements of nationality. They were presented to explain the vitality of the *nationalist movements* which claimed the right to establish a state of their own on the basis of the *nationality principle*. This seemingly clear political idea was advocated, for example, by the famous English philosopher John S. Mill (1806-1873). The equation of nation with state was one of the main propaganda themes of the nationalist movements, and contemporary scholars who tried to make sense of the concepts, did not always perceive the difference. The ambiguity still exists, due to the fact that the discipline of history was formed, as science, *after* the emergence of nationalism, and after the forceful adoption of nationalist rhetoric in politics. Late 19th and early 20th-century European science, despite its attempts to rationalise political language, took nation as a given concept that itself needed no questioning.

In dictionaries the political side of *nationalism* is defined as advocacy of "national unity", autonomy or independence, but it can also mean devotion to one's "nation", national spirit, national conscience, national ideology, or the whole historical process that led to the founding of new "national states" in the 19th and 20th century.⁵ In the latter sense nationalism was a product of the French Revolution which from its beginning tended to identify nation, state and the geographical borders. The ideas of democracy were strongly connected with nationalism, especially in Ireland where the expansion of political rights to the Catholics was a major nationalist issue. *Patriotism* as a concept comes close to nationalism. In revolutionary France, a patriot originally referred to opponents of the king and the aristocracy, i.e. supporters of the "people's power", but outside France it became associated with wealthy bourgeoisie, military class and aristocracy, and their expressions of loyalty to the state. Consequently, Henry Grattan, leader of the Irish Protestants in the late 18th century, is usually portrayed as a prototype of a patriot - not a nationalist. The Irish 19th-century Nationalists were also called *separatists*, because they demanded separation from the ruling state, or at least separate administration. Separatism was not only a spiritual scheme, it also encouraged protectionist ideas for future national economics, which in the later Sinn Féin policy became a central issue. Ulster

⁵ See, for example, Aira Kemiläinen, *Nationalism. Problems concerning the word, the concept and classification* (Studia Historica Jyväskyläensia III, Jyväskylä 1964), p. 7.

Unionism was also characterised as separatist in relation to the rest of Ireland, because the Unionists resisted all-Ireland autonomy and independence. As a political programme this was comparable to that of the Southern Nationalism, although the aims were opposite.⁶

Political independence was not the only desired change in the Irish Nationalist movement. It also demanded the restoration of the "native" culture, including language, to a dominant position. For this purpose history was sketched out as a moral story in which the desired values were presented as having existed ages ago, before "alien" invasions. This typical mixture of nostalgia and futurism, recognisable not only in Ireland but in many revolutionary movements, has been analysed by Tom Garvin (1987). According to him, the common revolutionary theme is the rejection of the present moment, which is shared both by a conservative, "reactive", and a radical, "progressive" revolutionary.⁷ The fact that revolutionaries do hope that the present time would only be an inconvenient, temporary phase, is perhaps self-evident, but Garvin's theory is well demonstrated in the Irish revolutionary rhetoric. Pádraig Pearse, as a conservative revolutionary in Garvin's category, expressed his vision of history in the words addressed to the English military court: "To refuse to fight would have been to lose, to fight is to win, we have kept faith with the past and handed a tradition to the future..."⁸ In these words a carefully formulated nucleus of the nationalist ideology is crystallized: a faith in the common past and a trust in the common future.

The ideas of nationality were not developed and circulated only by revolutionaries, such as Pearse, but also by moderate "evolutionaries"; leading historians, philosophers, anthropologists, politicians and editors of the time. Although the reading audience often was limited to educated classes and political circles, we know that the arguments of academic writers were used in political

⁶ There is no need, for the purposes of this study, to discuss further the general abstract theories on the birth of nationalism that focus, for example, on relations between the metropolitan and the borderland, emergence of modern newspapers, modernisation of the state or the growth of capitalism and industrial societies.

⁷ Tom Garvin, *National Revolutionaries in Ireland 1858-1928* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1987), p. 107-108.

⁸ The court sentenced Pearse to death for his role as the leader of the Easter Rebellion, and he was shot on 3rd May, 1916. Quoted in Thomas M. Coffey, *Agony at Easter. The 1916 Irish Uprising* (Penguin Books, Baltimore 1971), p. 262.

propaganda. They were also copied by less able writers and revolutionaries. The most talented historians often wrote "the last word", because they drew evidence from different sources and digested various theories.

National ideology, in the general sense of the term, has been defined, for example, by Anthony D. Smith, as a belief that the world is divided into nations, each with its own individuality, history and destiny, and which are the source of all political and social power.⁹ In other words, as John Hutchinson puts it, this belief maintains that humanity is divided into culturally distinctive communities which should be politically autonomous.¹⁰ A *nationalist* can then be defined as somebody who believes in the uniqueness of national identity, him/herself being member of a nation, and who feels loyalty to the state founded by that nation. Without denying the impact and political consequences of this belief, we should acknowledge that the latter, the object of this faith, exists merely in the believer's mind, and that only the state is an observable fact. Although often a very strong political obsession, nationalism in the said meaning is not necessarily the same as *jingoism* which is based on the believed superiority of one's own nation.

The common use of the words nation and nationalism often leads to circular explanations. Either an already existing political entity is defined as a "nation", or the political intentions of the observed community are explained - afterwards - as a result of "nationalism". In several classical studies on Ireland and Northern Ireland the same pattern of language can be observed. For example, Dutch geographer M. W. Heslinga argued (1971) that Ulster Unionism is "essentially a form of nationalism", on the basis of their separate political affinities, religious affinities, traditions and symbols, although the Unionists rarely call themselves a distinctive nation. To Heslinga nation was a matter of spirit; a distinct cultural entity, a community aware of real or imagined differences between themselves and other people.¹¹

Due to the ambiguity of definition, many of the modern scholars prefer to avoid the terms nation and nationality, or accept them only in the meaning of

⁹ A. D. Smith, *National Identity* (Penguin Books, London 1991), p. 74.

¹⁰ Hutchinson 1996, p. 109.

¹¹ M. W. Heslinga, *The Irish Border as Cultural Divide* (Van Corgum Assen 1971, latest ed. 1979), pp. 55, 62. Heslinga saw Ulsterism as a counterpart of Scottish and Welsh nationalism and admitted that the word nation defied a precise all-inclusive academic definition.

citizens of the state. The political concept of *citizens* (of the state), i.e. people under legislation of a certain state - regardless of nationality - implies relations between the individual and the government within a limited territory, but omits linguistic, ethnographic and historical aspects. The boundary between different citizenships merges basically with that of the states, dual citizens, stateless persons and others excepted. It is possible to place every individual in one state, although not always voluntarily. The equation of nationality with given citizenship does not, however, satisfy those who feel that they live in the wrong state. The Northern Irish conflict, for example, is often explained simply as a problem of citizenship, i.e. that a large (Northern Irish) minority would rather be citizens of another state (Republic of Ireland) than the majority who prefer British citizenship. To claim that the Irish land boundary is artificial, or that it should not exist at all, implies the reverse side of the same point of view.

To interpret the Northern Irish minority problem as a question of citizenship may be too simplified, but at least it offers an approach to problems of state management. The ideal of citizenship requires loyalty from "below" and government from "above". The government's authority in Northern Ireland was a problem ever since its creation in 1920-22, due to the lack consensus about the democratic forms of government. After the revival of sectarian violence in 1968, rejection of authority was made easier by the sense of lacking effective government, which in turn encouraged and recreated revolutionary tradition in Northern Ireland. In this respect Richard Rose's classification (1976) of the Northern Irish population is not perhaps out of date. He extracted three main groups: *fully allegiant*, that is, people who are prepared to support the existing government and obey its basic laws; *ultra-loyal*, that is, those who conditionally obey the laws, but reserve the right to defy any (British) law that in their regard would interfere with their self-defined rights; and *disaffected*, those who do not support the government, but are prepared to comply with the laws for pragmatic reasons. Finally, the smallest yet not marginal group are the *rebels*, who openly reject political authority and fundamental laws.¹²

The division between the concepts *political* and *cultural nation* can be traced

¹² Richard Rose, *Northern Ireland. A Time of Choice* (The Macmillan Press, London/New York 1976), concluding chapter. For other constitutional aspects, see Jennifer Todd, "The Conflict in Northern Ireland: institutional and constitutional dimensions", in Myrtle Hill & Sarah Barber (eds.), *Aspects of Irish Studies* (The Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1990).

back to the 18th and 19th-century French, German and Italian philosophers and political thinkers.¹³ Many of the modern historians are still charmed by the assumed contrast between politics and culture. John Hutchinson, for example, claimed in 1987 that cultural nationalism has received little scholarly attention compared to political nationalism with its mass mobilizing strategies against the state, although "the struggle for nationhood in the modern world has everywhere been preceded by emerging cultural nationalist movements".¹⁴ Therefore Hutchinson saw cultural nationalism worth examining "as a distinctive form of nationalism". Later he has argued that, at least for analytical purposes, Irish cultural nationalism should be differentiated from political nationalism, observing that at times ambitious intelligentsia turns to cultural strategies when the politics of political nationalists seem to be breaking down.¹⁵ In any case, it should be noted in this context that cultural and linguistic regions seldom exactly follow the boundaries of existing states. Many of the individual's several identities (identity of profession, gender, age, social class etc.) connect people irrespective of the state boundaries.

The subjective or self-definition method of "recognising" a nation deserves a few critical comments. The method implies that the national preferences of a population are derived either from public election statistics or through questionnaires and inquiries. In 1983 Edward Moxon-Brown (Queen's University, Belfast) examined the national identity of Northern Irish Unionists, using a list of emblems from which he remarked that subjective criteria - i.e. feeling of belonging to certain "nation" - go beyond the others. In summary he reported that "opposite

¹³ The fatherhood of political nationalism, or state nationalism, is usually granted to the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831), who set the state above the people, claiming that the former represented Divine idea. To Hegel there were no other nations in history than state-nations. A few contemporary philosophers, such as Johann G. von Herder (1774-1803), and later romantic writers claimed that nations were products of the Nature, and should therefore develop their own characteristics and freedom like the human individuals. Friedrich Meinecke (1862-1954) suggested that the nation can simultaneously, or at different times, appear in history either as "Staatsnation" or "Kulturnation".

¹⁴ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism. The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (Allen & Unwin, London 1987), p. 2.

¹⁵ Hutchinson 1996, p. 111. One could argue against his view of changing strategies by assuming that cultural activities of a nationalist may still be tactical and subjugated to the main political aim.

national feelings are at least part of the story".¹⁶ Dennis Pringle (St. Patrick's College, Maynooth) expressed the same conclusion in stronger terms when he concluded that both the self-definition method and checklist approach forces one to conclude that the Ulster Unionists are a separate nation compared with the Catholics - in other words that in Northern Ireland, as well as in Ireland as a whole, lives two nations. The only alternative, according to Pringle, would be to claim that there is only one nation in Ireland and Britain taken together.¹⁷

The strong tendency towards circular explanation in the self-definition method has to be stressed, because the labels used for nationalities are not called into question, i.e. the enquirer has taken for granted that there is a quality called Irishness, Britishness etc., without defining its contents. Besides, the several identities of individuals often make an exclusive choice difficult. The identity of the Protestants and the Catholics in Northern Ireland, for example, is divided not only nationally, but also regionally. According to several inquiries, the feeling of provincial Ulsterism in certain contexts is stronger than Britishness or Irishness.¹⁸ In conclusion, if national self-definition is doubtful when classifying existing populations, it is even more doubtful as a method of historical analysis because of its subjective nature, and because the opinion of ancient populations is seldom documented.

Many scholars, especially in politology, still find the concept of national identity useful and have tried to give it measurable qualities. A. D. Smith defined it as a collective, cultural phenomena, built on an individual's many identities. Its fundamental features are "an historic territory, or homeland, common myths and historical memories, a common mass public culture, common legal rights and duties for all members, a common economy with territorial mobility for

¹⁶ E. Moxon-Browne, *Nation, Class and Creed in Northern Ireland* (Gover Publ. Co., Hampshire 1987, first ed. 1983), pp. 1-2. His characteristics of national identity were 1) the idea of a common government, 2) relatively close contact with each other, 3) a territory considered as "home", 3) certain distinguishing features like language, religion, literature, customs, history (but not necessarily all of these), 4) common interests and goals, 5) the consciousness of being a "nation" in their own minds.

¹⁷ Dennis G. Pringle, *One Ireland, Two Nations?* (Research Studies Press, Letchworth 1985), pp. 34, 259-260. In principle, Pringle's "checklist" was not different from that of Moxon-Browne's: a common 1) language, 2) culture (literature, folk habits etc), 3) ideology (oral tradition etc), 4) history, and 5) integrated economy, 6) an identity with a common territory.

¹⁸ Whyte 1991, pp. 68-69.

members". From these elements Smith derivates a "working definition" of a nation: a named human population sharing these components.¹⁹ Like most of the attempts to define a nation, also Smith's definition is rather a description than a universal formula. Common rights and duties already necessitate some kind of political structures, and so the mystery of potential nationalities remains. Consequently, there is little hope of classifying exhaustively which historical communities possessed potential qualities of national identity and which did not.

It was commonplace in academic Irish histories, before the "revisionist" debate, to present the first seeds of nationalism in the context of the 17th or 18th-century Protestant society, if not in the medieval Anglo-Irish colony.²⁰ However, the use of nationalist concepts in earlier than 19th-century context has since been radically questioned by a younger generation of Irish historians. At first these historians tried to evade the semantic problems by using *cultural* or *ethnic identity* instead of nationality. George D. Boyce in his early work *Nationalism in Ireland* (1982) claimed that already in the 16th century the Anglo-Irish (or Old-English) were "evolving the idea of a national identity based on religion and love of the *patria*" and that the Gaels had by the same time developed their "cultural identity" into a "national identity".²¹

Boyce's terminology was in the half-way of abandoning "national" in favour of more modern concepts; since then, other scholars pointed out that the word nation itself was not used earlier than in the late 18th century in the meaning that included the common people. Dennis Pringle remarked (1985) that not until the 1840s was there a general nationalist ideology in Ireland that included the vast bulk of the Catholic population as citizens of a common state, and only after 1916 did the ideology of a fully independent Irish nation gain full support of the majority.²² Pringle, of course, was formally right in his notion that the term nation makes little sense without nationalist ideology, because it means projecting a nationalist frame of reference to a period when the concept itself had not yet

¹⁹ A.D. Smith 1991, p. 14. Smith sets apart national identity from any concept of state which to him exclusively refers to public institutions.

²⁰ See, for example, Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland* (Methuen & Co, London 1952), p. viii: "The Irish nation becomes visible after 1603...", and J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland* (Faber & Faber, London 1981), chapter VIII: "The Emergence of the Protestant Nation".

²¹ G. D. Boyce *Nationalism in Ireland* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1982), p. 19.

²² Pringle 1985, pp. 262-3, 268.

achieved historical existence. Thomas Flanagan, in the massive *New History of Ireland* (1989), specified cautiously that in the 19th century many "Irelands" existed, if by this term is meant neither a geographical expression nor a society, but rather a perception of "cultural identity".²³

The concept of *ethnicity* or *ethnic group* nowadays generally involves description and interpretation of culture and cultural differences between populations, much in the same way as *nationality* was understood earlier. Ethnic group can roughly be defined as a group of people who share at least some cultural, linguistic or racial characteristics, have at least partly a common origin and who feel that they belong together. Very often ethnic identity is seen as a kind of a prototype or an embryo of national identity. A. D. Smith has noted that religious identities, as well as ethnic identities, are derived from the same cultural elements; values, symbols, myths and traditions. In Smith's view, "purely religious" communities often ended up as exclusive ethnic communities, like the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.²⁴

Early European scientific thinking took it for granted, or at least assumed, that nations had developed from biological races, and that mankind could be divided into species according to the physical characteristics of populations. Due to this assumption the word race itself, in the English language, gradually became one of the synonyms for nation.²⁵ In everyday speech today, racial attributes are still used about populations, implying that a great number of individuals in that population, perhaps the majority, share some distinctive physical features which are different from the neighbouring or surrounding population. Without going deeper into this topic, the difference between the concepts of *racism* and *racialism* must be recognised. The latter generally refers to arguments based on assumed

²³ Thomas Flanagan, "Literature in English, 1801-1891". In *A New History of Ireland*, vol. V (Clarendon Press 1989), p. 509.

²⁴ Smith 1991, pp. 6-7. Smith makes a difference between 'world religions' that sought to overstep and abolish ethnic boundaries, and religious communities which coincided with ethnic groups.

²⁵ The best known example perhaps is "The Island Race" (i.e. the English/British), a title used by Winston Churchill. G. M. Trevelyan in his classic *History of England* (1926) constantly used the epithet "Celtic race" or "Celto-Iberian race" about Irishmen, which generally referred to the inhabitants of the island. Celto-Iberian specifically referred to a popular theory of the origins of Irishmen. The use of racialist terms was, with good reason, condemned by some Irish scholars as English arrogance, but the "English race" and the "Irish race" was also used by many Irish writers.

races and their mental and physical impacts - which often but not necessarily contain elements of racism - whereas racism implies obsessive faith in the superiority of one's own "race".

The modern Northern Irish conflict was interpreted with racial symbols in Liam de Paor's (University College, Dublin) *Divided Ulster* (1973), one of the first accounts of the crisis. He saw that it was a colonial problem where the "racial distinction" was expressed in religious terms.²⁶ Patrick Buckland (University of Liverpool), in his *History of Northern Ireland* (1981), in turn criticized the colonial interpretation, as well as racial and ethnic explanations on the basis that they distorted the special role of religion in Northern Ireland.²⁷ Nevertheless, the "clash of creed and race" is still often presented as the cause of present discontents in Northern Ireland.²⁸

Since the 19th century the national struggle in Ireland was regularly interpreted on religious terms, and it has been a standard paradigm in the analysis of the Northern Irish conflict till the present day.²⁹ There has been much research on Irish Nationalism and the Catholic Church, but only recently has the complex relationship between the Unionist politics and the Protestant religion in Ulster been thoroughly explained, most notably by David Hempton.³⁰ Modern historians agree that in Ulster the religious aspect never meant a theological dispute about doctrines, but rather an issue of the right to preach one's own religion and to maintain its influence in education, culture and society. The issue was more

²⁶ Liam de Paor, *Divided Ulster* (Pelican Books, Middlesex 1973), intr. "White negroes" (Northern Catholics) was a political slogan that aspired to indicate that the position of North America's and South Africa's black ghettos and the working class in Northern Ireland was comparable.

²⁷ Patrick Buckland, *A History of Northern Ireland* (Gill and MacMillan, Dublin 1981), p. 99.

²⁸ Quoted from Art Byrne and Sean McMahon (eds.), *Great Northerners* (Poolbeg Press, Swords, Co. Dublin 1994), p. i.

²⁹ Anthony Stewart, for example, wrote in 1967 that "...religion was the dynamic in Ulster, and not merely a cloak for other motives: historians haven't sometimes underestimated it, but the politicians never". A.T.Q Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis. Resistance to Home Rule, 1912-1914* (Faber and Faber, London 1967), p. 44. M.W. Heslinga claimed (1971) that "the moving force of Ulsterism... is religion, *in casu* Protestantism. If for an Irish Roman Catholic his nationality is hardly separable from his religion, the same is broadly true of the Ulster Protestant" (Heslinga, p. 58). Maurice Irwin wrote later that national identity and religious habit in Ulster "have become so entwined that it is impossible to ascribe priority to either of them". M. Irwin, *Northern Ireland. Faith and Faction* (Routledge, London 1991), p. 173).

³⁰ David Hempton, *Religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland. From the Glorious Revolution to decline of empire* (Cambridge University Press 1996).

crucial to the Protestants who feared that Catholicism would swallow up their culture, if they were left alone to face the majority rule. The Protestants felt - or they were persuaded to believe - that their political guarantee was the British state, however unreliable her governments might be.

Northern Ireland has been a fruitful testing ground for various cultural classifications. In relation to general Britishness both the Protestants and Catholics in Ulster share common cultural elements which are different elsewhere in Britain, for example (English) dialect, general religiousness and regional history. It is usually claimed that the most significant cultural differences between the Unionists and Nationalists are in religion (less in general religiousness), historic experience and attitudes towards the Irish language. On the other hand, there is no distinctively Protestant or Catholic dialect, nor styles for cooking or agricultural methods.³¹ On a mental level, Patrick Buckland stated in 1981 that the Catholics and Protestants do share a common culture on certain topics, such as questions of emigration, the role of trade unions and big business, social class and attitudes towards authority.³²

Philip Robinson emphasized in his environmental study (1984) that present-day Ulster contains no "pure" Gaelic Irish or British cultural survivors, and that the concept of cultural purity has no more validity than that of ethnic purity. Cultural fusion, interdependent development and subsequent evolution have, in his view, given rise to cultural patterns in Ulster that are neither "Catholic" and "Protestant", nor "Irish" and "British" in type. However, Robinson recognised that many perceptions of cultural differences, although not based on reality, still rest on changing "cultural identifications" which are reality in people's minds.³³ The differences between the assumed "Protestant" and "Catholic" societies in Ulster usually overshadow the more concrete cultural differences between social classes. As usual, divisive elements are exaggerated and stereotyped by outsiders, as Edna Longley (Queens' University, Belfast) has recently remarked, concluding that "on all sides, a sense of superiority, a lack of curiosity have perpetuated our

³¹ Whyte 1991, p. 15.

³² Buckland 1981, p. 99.

³³ Philip S. Robinson, *The Plantation of Ulster* (Ulster Historical Foundation, Belfast 1994), pp. 193-4 (first ed. 1984).

problems".³⁴

In conclusion, it is justified to emphasize that there are divisive cultural differences in Ireland, especially in Northern Ireland, and more so, if we accept a non-material definition for culture as being "people's way of seeing, using and thinking about things".³⁵ However, the concepts of nation and nationality, in any other meaning but state citizenship, have little relevance in modern Irish problems concerning majority-minority relations.

2.2 Nationalism and history

A few introductory features about the historians' own relation to national history are sketched in the following, exploiting debates among Irish scholars again. In wider view, of course, the question is not only about national history, but history in general. Although objective interpretation is the virtue and aim for historians as well as for other scholars and scientists, those historians who took up the task of weaving the "national story" inevitably became part of the story themselves, which in turn exposed them to criticism from the next generation of historians. It is easy to see afterwards that objectivity was mostly threatened among those historians who devoted themselves to the nationalist ideas of their class and society, but also less committed writers were bound with given nationalist concepts. Few of the historians, since the mid-19th century, were able to isolate themselves totally from political nationalism which consciously aimed to subjugate history for its own use. Many of them believed, like Leopold Ranke, that the "true story" of the mankind (*Das Määr der Weltgeschichte* by Ranke) could be discovered, at least should be set as an objective.³⁶ But more realistically history

³⁴ Edna Longley (professor of English, Queen's University, Belfast), "Stereotypes of Northern Protestant block progress" in *Irish Times*, April 6, 1995. Of Irish Nationalist and Northern Irish stereotypes and mentalities, see Clare O'Halloran, *Partition and the Limits of Irish Nationalism* (Gill & MacMillan, Dublin 1987).

³⁵ Lauri Honko, "Traditions in the Construction of Cultural Identity". Paper presented at A. J. Sjögren conference, June 1994.

³⁶ For further reading about Ranke see, for example, Aira Kemiläinen, *Leopold Ranken historiankäsityksen ja historiankirjoituksen objektiivisuus* (Turun Historiallinen Arkisto XIX, Turku 1967), or Leonard Krieger, *Ranke. The Meaning of History* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London 1979).

is, as the English historian Anthony Upton has put it, "an artefact, a creation of human mind".³⁷

To what extent the idea of nation is a created illusion without socio-historical relevance, is a controversial issue. Modern historians are mostly in agreement that the "story of the Nation" can be viewed as a fabricated, mythical narrative. In the basic formula of the story, the nation was born as a small embryo, or had existed since the beginning of times, slowly growing through gradual awakening of conscience to youth, maturity and full sovereignty. Death, the end in human allegory, is seldom mentioned in the story, except as a warning if the sovereignty of the "nation" is threatened. Sometimes the nationalist mythology looks back only a few hundred years, as in the case of Ulster Unionism. However, as M. W. Heslinga has remarked, even a short span of history can be emotionally as satisfying as a mythology which, like that of Irish Nationalism, looked back to the whole Christian era, and even further.³⁸ James Loughlin has formulated a general description for the national myth (1990): "history or more exactly a national myth ... shapes perceptions of national identity and characteristics, gives meaning to 'national prestige' and generally contextualises the nation's place in the world".³⁹

The concept of myth opens a perspective for the understanding of the first attempts by historians to interpret nationalism. In all ancient cultures appeared tales about gods, first human beings, heroes and about everyday things like the birth of fire and water. The tales concerning the Creation and man's origin were often repeated in the founding tales of several "nations".⁴⁰ Sacred stories as such lived long in the collective memory of increasingly secular West-European societies, often mixing with the doctrines of the churches. Until the mid 19th century it was common in Biblical contexts to use myth as an argument for or against new and old theories. Gradually new ideas emerged both in theology and historical study that sought to explain the Bible and world history rationally, i.e.

³⁷ Anthony Upton, "History and National Identity: some Finnish Examples". Paper presented at A. J. Sjögren conference, June 1994.

³⁸ Heslinga, p. 60. For introduction to Irish mythological histories see, for example, Theodore W. Moody's and Roy F. Foster's articles (originally 1977 and 1983) in *Interpreting Irish History* (1994), and Maurice Irwine, *Northern Ireland, Faith and Faction* (Routledge, London 1991).

³⁹ James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity since 1885* (Pinter, London 1990), p. 9.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Lewis Spence, *Introduction to Mythology* (Senate, London 1994, first publ. 1921).

without myths. As a reaction to rationalism, however, romanticism gave myths new prestige by emphasizing that they represented the highest values of man and were proof of spiritual creativity.⁴¹

A pioneering attempt to analyse and classify different narrative elements of history was made in 1871 by Edward Freeman, the famous English historian (1823-1892). Freeman ended up with five main categories. The only true narratives, which he named as "historical", rested on several pieces of evidence from different sources, in contrast with "pseudohistorical" narratives that were presented in the form of history, being put forth in the hope that they will gradually be accepted as truth. "Romantic" stories, usually built on historical persons, were seldom completely true and sometimes positively untrue. "Traditional" history was slightly more trustworthy in Freeman's view, containing more true details, but being "imperfect" history as a whole. Freeman's last category, "mythical narrative", characteristically offered no direct means of testing such a story, nor were there any other contemporary evidence than the story itself.⁴²

Freeman did not live long enough to participate in the debate on the ancient Irish nation state, defended by the influential Irish historian Eoin MacNeill (1867-1945), whose ideas will be examined closer later. Undoubtedly Freeman would have placed the theory of a pre-Norman Irish state either to "pseudohistory" or "mythical narrative". MacNeill regarded the theory as a truth proved by historical observation, but he also accepted that most of the old legends concerning the origins of Irishmen belonged to mythical category. The crucial turning point to him was the coming of Christianity to Ireland, after which historical interpretation could rest on a firmer basis. Loyal to the tradition initiated by MacNeill, a younger Irish scholar Thomas O'Rahilly classified (1946) all pagan, pre-Christian beliefs as mythology, in contrast to "legendary history" which was slightly more trustworthy. By legendary history O'Rahilly meant written history based on stories that could be proved neither true or completely imaginary.⁴³ Modern

⁴¹ For a general background, see *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. Vol. III (Scribner's, New York 1973), pp. 301, 397, 317.

⁴² E. Freeman, "Mythical and Romantic Elements in early English History". In *Historical Essays* (MacMillan & Co., London 1886, 4th ed.), pp. 3-4.

⁴³ Thomas O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin 1946), p. vi.

scholars, however, do not see any significant theoretical division between myths of different historical periods.

Linguists have looked at the concept of myth from a different perspective, regarding it as a kind of "metalanguage", a system of symbols and signs which differ from ordinary linguistic concepts. In the field of history, however, the linguistic aspects of myths are seldom analysed, but rather their social and political functions and aims. The concrete manifestations of nationalist ideas - "national" language, institutions, literature etc - are observable facts and not imaginary or merely symbolic, but the story into which a historian integrates these facts is, of course, bound with the language of his/her audience. The first presentations of "The Story of the Nation" followed the tradition of ancient storytelling and legends, and the criticism against it grew with the advance of modern historical learning and research. The concept of the Catholic Irish Nation, as well as the Protestant Nation of the 18th century, also were myths in the sense that they were fabricated by historians; this, however, is not meant as personal criticism since the historians of those days worked within the constraints of their own time, place and audience. Besides, those concepts did imply a certain political warrant, the consequences of which could be observed.

The nationalist paradigm has been a central issue of dispute in Irish historiography since the partition years, although the theory of a thousand-year old nation state was abandoned already in Eoin MacNeill's lifetime. The change towards more professional and non-political historical research started in the 1930s. The two professors mainly responsible for this process, R. Dudley Edwards (1909-1988) and Theodore W. Moody (1907-1984) generally avoided topics and periods likely to arouse great political fervour, encouraging document-based research which, as they expected, would gradually revise mythical interpretations. Although they had different backgrounds and worked in different universities (Edwards in UCD, Moody in QUB ja TCD), they were able to cooperate and establish an all-Ireland research journal, *Irish Historical Studies*, in 1938.⁴⁴

The founding of *Irish Historical Studies*, together with cooperating historical

⁴⁴ For more details and other "revisionist" historians, see Ciaran Brady, "'Constructive and Instrumental': The Dilemma of Ireland's First 'New Historians'", in Brady (ed.) 1994, pp. 3-5, and Brendan Bradshaw, "Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland" in *IHS* vol. XXVI No. 104/1989 (reprinted in the former).

societies, was an outstanding achievement, compared to the political gulf between the Free State and Northern Ireland. However, in the 1960s when the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising was approaching, there still existed influential tendencies among Irish historians to interpret the revolutionary line of the Sinn Féin policy and the Rising as the only possible path to independence. In this view, the Rising and the Anglo-Irish war of 1919-1921 formed the “Irish war for independence”, comparable to other wars of independence between the colonies and the empire. Consequently Pádraig Pearse, the Easter martyr, was portrayed as a key figure and indispensable hero of this war. Such notions were present, for example, in the academic history textbook *The Irish Struggle 1916-1926* (1968)⁴⁵, and another text-book later regretted the failure of Eoin MacNeill, who in vain had tried to cancel the coup, to “comprehend the determination of men who were committed to the ideal of blood-sacrifice”.⁴⁶ The publishing year of the *Irish Struggle* marked the revival of inter-communal violence in the North, which gradually raised new scepticism against conventional national historiography, as well as against the performance of the existing state which, from its very beginning, had set the ending of partition as its main objective.

Theodore Moody very much initiated the “revisionist” debate in Ireland by specifying, in the late 1970s, the myth of the “predestinate nation”. This myth identified, according to Moody, the democratic progress of 19th-century Ireland with pre-conquest Ireland, incorporating the concept of eight centuries’ struggle with England as the central theme of Irish history. He remarked that this myth was not compatible with the history of social living in modern Ireland, nor had the Nationalist politics always been dominated by the idea of unending war with Britain until complete separation is achieved.⁴⁷ At first “revisionism” was understood as criticism against Moody and his generation of historians who were accused of presenting “Irish history without Nation”, i.e. of neglecting national heroes and overlooking traditions and continuity of nationalist ideas as progressive stimulation to the society. As John Hutchinson has remarked, this was

⁴⁵ D. Williams (ed.), *The Irish Struggle 1916-1926* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1968). See, for example, the preface by Francis MacManus and the articles by F. X. Martin and Desmond Ryan.

⁴⁶ Mark Tierney, p. 126.

⁴⁷ T. W. Moody, “Irish History and Irish mythology”. *Hermathena, A Dublin University Review*, n:os 124-127/1978-9 (University of Dublin 1980), p. 21.

an exaggerated claim, because Moody's generation rather attempted to avoid "the nightmare" of popular, non-scientific history.⁴⁸ But the questioning of conventional interpretations inevitably spread, and the concept of the Irish nation received new terminology as well as approaches. Interpretations of the medieval Anglo-Irish society as an autonomous actor, the concept of the "Protestant Nation" of the 17th and 18th century, as well as the nationalist concepts of autonomous Gaelic cultural continuity and anti-British tradition were all called into question.

The debate produced also an opposite effect, and the central historian opposing excessive "revisionism", Brendan Bradshaw (Queen's College, Cambridge), argued that national myths are still needed for the understanding of historical tradition and for the transmittance of this tradition for the public.⁴⁹ Understandably, no final consensus about the historian's role or his conceptual tools has been reached so far. Despite this, the "revisionist" debate has contributed a great deal for the analysis and understanding of the diversive elements in Irish historiography.

⁴⁸ Hutchinson 1996, p. 103.

⁴⁹ See Bradshaw's writing (orig. 1989), reprinted in Brady (ed.) 1994, and the article that inspired Bradshaw's criticism: Steven Ellis, "National historiography and the English and Gaelic worlds in the late middle ages" in *IHS* vol. XXV No. 97/1986.

3 IMPERIAL IRISH NATIONALITY AND ITS DEFECTS AS OBSERVED BY BRITISH HISTORIANS AND POLITICIANS

3.1 "Alien in blood, language and religion"

Throughout the 19th century the British problem of how to govern Ireland was primarily a question of integration and citizenship¹, not a theoretical question of nationalities, although gradually the "Irish question" had effects on the British nationality debate, too. As an introduction, the idea of the Anglo-Irish Union, the role of the Irish Protestant ruling class in its creation, and the Catholic counter-reaction has to be outlined.

The Irish Protestants had succeeded to gain restricted legislative rights for their own assembly (1782-1800), whereafter their leaders acted as representatives of a semi-independent Irish state. Henry Grattan (1767-1820), the hero of the short lived autonomy, declared that the Irish nation was forming, moulding the Catholics and the Protestants into one people. He had also demanded that the latter should take their part in the Irish nation and cease being merely a "Protestant settlement".² The Presbyterians in Ulster had been even more radical.

¹ In the late 18th century the term *citizen*, originally an inhabitant of a village or town, was already used in the meaning of all enfranchised inhabitants of the state. See, for example, *Oxford English Dictionary*.

² Speeches delivered in the Irish parliament, 19 April 1780, and 20 February 1782. *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Henry Grattan*, vol. I. Ed. by his son (R. Milliken, Dublin 1822), pp. 49, 102.

Fascinated by the French and North-American ideas of a republican constitution they had brought up many of the principal leaders of the United Irishmen movement. Not co-incidentally the storming of the Bastille in 1789 was celebrated enthusiastically in Belfast.³ During the revolutionary decade of the 1790s, however, a great change had taken place in the middle and upper-class Protestant mind in Ireland, due to rebellions and the threat of France. British fear of revolution, re-born sectarian violence and the issue of how much political power could be granted to the Catholics persuaded Protestant patriots to give up their newly acquired local autonomy. After lengthy political bargaining, the Protestant parliament consented to dissolve itself, but as a reward Ireland was given a substantial representation in the Imperial Parliament, hence creating the Anglo-Irish Union (1800-1921).

In the first place the function of the Union was strategic; to prevent the landing of French troops and revolutionary ideas in the British Isles, and to secure the ascendancy of the established Church, the Protestant landed gentry and the upper classes that were the traditional pillars of the British state in Ireland. The Younger Pitt, whose Government carried out the Union, intended to grant Irish Catholics the right to sit in Westminster, but at the same time assurances were given to the Protestant minority that the Union would guarantee their own dominant position in Ireland.

The United Irishmen, a movement (1791-1798) supported by major sections of the Irish Catholics, proved to have political strength and organising ability, which shattered the ruling Protestant classes. The British government expected that the Catholic majority would be appeased through economical reforms and moderate extensions of franchise, and would gradually grow up as loyal subjects of the Empire. Reforms, however, came too slowly, because after 1815 Britain had no serious external threat to compel them, and therefore anti-English sentiments inevitably grew in Ireland. The Irish Catholics started to re-organise themselves and take a leading political role as representatives of Ireland.⁴ Their first target

³ As Brendan Clifford has put it, Belfast not merely supported the French Revolution, but participated in it, being at one time the most radical town in the British Isles. B. Clifford, *Belfast in the French Revolution* (Belfast Historical and Educational Association 1989), p. 7.

⁴ In the first phase most of the Catholics accepted the Union, because the British government had promised measures of conciliation for the Catholics and abolition of discriminative legislation. When these did not materialise within reasonable time, the Catholics started to re-organise themselves under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell. During this peaceful movement Catholicism

was the Union and their general demand the re-establishment of Irish autonomy, but with majority control and leadership. More radical claims, based on expected and in most cases illusory French support, seemed to have died with the rebellions of 1798 and 1803.

Before 1782 Ireland had been ruled virtually like a colony. Colonies belonged to the British Empire, but the comparison of Ireland with overseas colonies - an idea not uncommon in Hannoverian, Georgian or Victorian Britain - was felt degrading by the Irish Protestants: colonies were not necessarily recognised as members of the British nation, nor were all of them counted as nations at all, especially if they inhabited a large coloured population. After 1800 the British rule in Ireland still resembled that of the colonies, with a viceroy, chief secretary and peculiar administrative structure. However, the old term *nation*⁵ was used of the Irishmen, as well as of the English and the Scots.

In the Imperial terminology *nation* had a two-fold political meaning. It referred to the whole of Britain, the heart of the Empire, sometimes called a *country*, but also to smaller nations within Britain, principally the English, Scots, Welsh and Irish. The Scots were called a nation despite the fact that they did not possess a parliament of their own anymore. The confusion of terms resulted from two divergent English traditions of interpreting the word nation itself. The older one derived its meaning from the Latin *populus*, also translated as people, which referred to a limited section of the society, or to primitive tribes, or "other" peoples surrounding the English. In the late 18th and early 19th century a new meaning which emphasized the analogy between nation and state began to emerge in dictionaries and political writings. Characteristically, soon "any society of men, united for the purposes of government" could be defined as nation.⁶ Thus

became associated with nationalism, because Catholic priests willingly acted as local organisers of the movement, and because the social grievances, especially the land question, were most obvious and painful among the Catholic poor classes. For further reading about this period see, for example: Oliver MacDonagh, *The Union and its aftermath* (Allen & Unwin, London 1977) and R.B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1979).

⁵ Of the various meanings of *nation* (older forms *nacion/e*, *naciun/e*, *natyon* etc) see *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁶ Kemiläinen 1964, pp. 32-37 (quoted from a British dictionary, 1841). *People* also had several meanings. According to Kemiläinen, it could refer to a body of persons in general, or the common people distinguished from the nobility, or the whole electorate in which the nobility was only a part of the people. The word *people* was frequently used synonymously with *nation*, less often with

nation and state inevitably become more or less synonymous. The new definition gradually took over and soon dominated public writings and speeches; even the 8th century kingdom of Kent, when she had shown independence in relation to other "English" kingdoms, could be described as a "comparatively small nation" by a historian.⁷

The Irish autonomy period (1782-1800) gave a new significance to old concepts. Symbolically it was important that Ireland was regarded as an ancient kingdom, formally attached to England since 1495. The Protestant self-government was interpreted as if Ireland had regained her status as an independent kingdom, united with England by the same monarch.⁸ The model of this arrangement was the Scottish-English union, created in 1603, and also the next phase was adopted from Scotland whose representatives since 1707 on had sat in the common British parliament. The metaphor of the three British kingdoms survived till the 20th century, although its practical functions had ceased a hundred years earlier.

One of the great propaganda themes of the Empire was that in the Union Ireland finally had, like Scotland before her, shaken off all emblems of a colony, and reached a higher status. Scotland, Ireland and Wales were introduced as vital partners in the great enterprise, the Empire, in which England, of course, was the chief executive. Old British stereotypes and prejudices about Irishmen did not make this political theory completely credible, because the majority of Irishmen were often described as "alien in blood, language and religion"⁹, being much more comparable to the inhabitants of the distant colonies. Indeed, the issue of nationality was much more complicated in Ireland, culminating to the question whether the Catholics belonged to the Imperial nation at all.

Theoretical definitions of nationality were scarce until the mid-19th century. From the point of the English politicians and the ruling class, the Irish "question"

the word *state*.

⁷ H. Munro Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation* (Cambridge University Press 1924), p. 12.

⁸ David Lindsay Keir, *The Constitutional History of Modern Britain since 1485* (Adam & Charles Black, London 1964), pp. 434, 437.

⁹ A famous phrase, probably first used by Daniel O'Connell's supporter Richard Lalor Sheil, MP (1791-1851), although a Tory MP Baron Lyndhurst (John S. Copley jr., 1783-1868) was accused of using it during the parliamentary session of 1836. *The Dictionary of British Biography*, vol. IV (Oxford University Press 1921-50), "Copley".

appeared in the first place as a question of loyalty, which was expected from all subjects under British rule. The famous Irish-born politician Edmund Burke (1729-1797), best remembered for his campaign against the French Revolution and its anti-religious themes, was not the only politician in the British House of Commons who described rallying Irish Catholics "wild and profligate", although he was willing to give a vote to their "rational, sober and valuable part". Burke had defended the rights of the North-American colonies which he had seen threatened by the policy of the British Government, but he condemned expressions of separatism in Ireland, to which even his old friend Henry Grattan did not seem to be immune.¹⁰

The great political arrangements of 19th-century Europe, such as the Anglo-Irish Union, or Finland's new position as Grand Duchy of the Russian empire, were designed to be permanent and not only expressions of current political opinion. One of the major principles of the British Union, supported by main political sects and especially by conservative philosophy, was the geopolitical unity of the British Isles. In conservative thinking gradual advance of the state was a vital historical element. The poet and politician Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), for example, like his contemporary Hegel, saw that the state as an idea was gradually realising itself in history, being more important than the idea of the individual.¹¹ Yet the conservatives did not dismiss the idea of national freedom in cases where the central power was regarded as despotic and decayed. Britain, of course, was not seen as such, but in Europe the Ottoman Empire - and sometimes Russia - were taken as examples of unnatural slavery and subjugation of nations.

The great question of Ireland, from the British point of view, was whether the majority of Irishmen would accept the Imperial nationality, even if they would hold to their "local" sympathies and loyalties as well. In the early 19th century there was hardly any other defined Irish nationality than that declared by the Protestants. The Repeal movement led by Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) demanded political rights for the Catholics, mixed with religious prophecies against the "heretics", i.e. the Protestants, but the slogans of nationality, based on romantic idea and assumed majority opinion, were not clearly presented until the 1840s

¹⁰ Quoted in Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke* (Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, New York 1977), pp. 117, 143, 150, 177.

¹¹ Of early 19th century British political philosophy see, for example, Anthony Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection* (Faber & Faber, London 1978). Of Coleridge, p. 70.

when the Young Irelanders, headed by Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy and John Blake Dillon, started to circulate their prose and verse in their famous publication *The Nation*.

Although Davis (1814-1845) was Protestant, the confrontation of religions in the national issue was inevitable for several reasons. The common British citizenship was founded and derived its definition from the Glorious Revolution, the victory of the Protestant parliament over Catholicism, and although religious tensions had greatly eased in Great Britain, the issue of political rights for the Catholics was different from that of the general principles of democracy and British liberties. There was the Union and there were Irish members in Westminster, but, as Dennis Boyce has put it (1996), the Irish Catholic majority was outside the normally accepted definition of British citizenship.¹² Not only was their religion a sign of potential treason, but also their behaviour in the parliament, the ultimate symbol of British supremacy in statecraft, broke limits of decency and rules of political game.

To a great extent the dissenter sects in Ulster were also "aliens" in the British empire, until historian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) ultimately integrated them into the British history. Since the early 19th century the contrasts between Ulster and the rest of Ireland became more apparent, which was recorded by British politicians and foreign observers and travellers.¹³ Ulster's exclusion from a theoretical Irish government was mentioned in the British Parliament as early as 1833, although rather as a local solution to British administrative problems than a full settlement of the Irish "question". The young politician Macaulay in his speech in the House of Commons opposed growing demands of the Irish Repealers, but in case Dublin should have its own legislation, northern Ireland would possess "in a tenfold degree" better arguments to have their own legislation, placed "in Derry, or some other large town in the north of Ireland". But Macaulay believed in the benefits of British administration, considering it totally impossible that the remedy for "domestic grievances" would be the creation of a

¹² Dennis G. Boyce, *The Irish Question in British Politics, 1868-1996* (2nd ed., MacMillan Press, London/Basingstoke 1996), p. 7.

¹³ See, for example, Stewart 1977, p. 165.

local legislation for Ireland.¹⁴ The "domestic grievances" that aroused the Parliament's attention during the spring session of 1833 ranged from serious offences, such as acts of violence against Anglican priests¹⁵, to lesser crimes such as Sunday working of some Irish tenants.

British statesmen and politicians in general wanted to develop economical conditions and the administrative system in Ireland, expecting that this would assimilate Ireland more closely to the British state. The economical dimensions of the British citizenship were, however, complicated, and the Irish political movements had difficulties in deciding whether a separate economical treatment should be demanded for Ireland, instead of consenting to the benefits of a unified Anglo-Irish market.¹⁶ The decades of the 1830s and 1840s created the first arguments about the blessings and damages of the Union, which, by the way, have been a constant theme in modern Irish historiography, too.

3.2. "Religious division" and the Imperial unity by Robert Martin and Thomas Wright

A typical pre-Victorian conservative and British view on the Union was expressed by the well-known colonial historian Robert M. Martin (1803?-1868) in his *Ireland before and after the Union* (first ed. 1843). The book was patronized by government circles with the purpose of reassuring the Irish that the Union had effected a clear rise of status and progress for Ireland. Martin indeed had been industrious,

¹⁴ Mr. (later Lord) Macaulay in the House of Commons February 6, 1833: "If a rooted difference of religion, and the existence of the worst consequences of that difference would justify the separation of the English and Irish legislatures, the same difference, and still more, would warrant the separation of Protestant Ulster from Catholic Munster". However, he warned the Parliament of such an experiment referring to the personal union between England and Hannover which had not prevented the latter to fight England's allies. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. XV (London 1833). After Macaulay's speech the possible Ulster government was virtually forgotten for 50 years, although it was anonymously mentioned in Northern Whig, the Unionist newspaper in Belfast, in 1843. See Frank Gallagher, *The Indivisible Island* (V. Collanz, London 1957), p. 57.

¹⁵ The violence was largely stimulated by the "tithe" system in which the Church of Ireland priests were compelled to collect their earnings from the Catholics. In 1838 the tithes were replaced with a general tax paid by the landlords.

¹⁶ Not surprisingly, the taxation of whiskey was one of the major issues in the fiscal harmonization of the Union. See Liam Kennedy & David S. Johnson, "The Union of Ireland and Britain, 1801-1921". In Boyce & O'Day (eds.) 1996, pp. 35-44.

aiming to prove with numerous statistics that Ireland benefitted economically from the Union. However, the Young Ireland movement had already adopted an anti-Union policy, and the book aroused furious criticism in Dublin. The timing of the book was poor, because the claimed benefits of the British Government in Ireland raised little applause in the midst of the growing Famine.

Basically Martin's view of Anglo-Irish relations was geopolitical and strategic. In his own words, "there can be no doubt that Great Britain could exist and flourish independent of Ireland, but unless it were possible to remove Ireland to some distant part of the Atlantic, it must be dependent on, if not united to, England."¹⁷ Although Spain no more threatened England, and Napoleon had been defeated in 1815, the old concept of Ireland as a strategic pawn between the British empire and its rivals was a standard argument by British observers. And indeed, Irish separatist movements later put much of their hope on England's military setbacks.

Decades before the Ulster Unionist movement Martin saw the Ulster Protestants in the major role against any form of Irish self-government. It could not be restored, Martin explained, because the Northerners would refuse to change their status, which in turn would infuriate the Catholics. In Martin's vision civil war would inevitably follow, forcing England to interfere and reconquer Ireland "to re-establish that perfect religious freedom and social equality that now so completely pervades Ireland". This was a practical argument against the Irish Repealers, but it was framed on moral, legalistic and constitutional terms. Martin's deduction was that Ireland never had been an independent kingdom, nor an independent nation, and therefore could not break the Union without the consent of the British parliament which in 1800 had granted Ireland her first "free constitution". In Martin's thinking freedom manifested itself in the virtues and equality of the English law, which made the Union "a moral and constitutional, as well as legal authority and power" for Ireland as well as for Scotland.¹⁸

¹⁷ Robert M. Martin (Esq.), *Ireland before and after the Union with Great Britain* (J.B. Nicholls & Son, London 1848), p. iv. Martin, born perhaps in Co. Tyrone, Ulster, is an example of the many British 19th century amateur historians with no formal education in history. He may not have any academic degree at all, but probably studied medicine. His major work was *History of the British Colonies* (1934).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. xxx, xxxii, 378.

By the 1850s Ireland had become an overwhelming "question" in the British politics, which could not be tackled with normal political manoeuvres or administrative skills. The critics of the English administration noted as facts that the Irish population was starving, education system was below all standards, too many landowners were absentees and the state church was felt alien by the majority. Most of all, the whole dilemma had spread abroad. Escapees of the rebellion of 1848, organized by the Young Irelanders, created in the United States a new secret organisation with the aim of total separation from England and a republican constitution. After having successfully recruited Irish soldiers of the U.S. Civil War, the movement grew to such dimensions that the plan to invade Canada as a starter in full-scale war against the British Empire was almost realistic. Members of the Irish branch of the movement were called *Fenians*, and this was the name attached to the Irish "conspirators" in the Anglo-American press during the following decades. Secrecy was part of the tactics of the Fenian cells because the plan included the infiltration of Irish administration for a coup d'etat. Although in Ireland the gradual enlargement of franchise soon offered new perspectives and possibilities for self-government, the British question of how to govern Ireland did not diminish.

The Famine and successive rebellions in Ireland gradually persuaded many of the English political philosophers to admit that the Union, despite its good intentions, had failed or was at least poorly administered. In the mid-19th century a new wave of interest in the English reading classes focused on Ireland. More information was demanded to explain why Irishmen endlessly rebelled although they were citizens of the "world's greatest Empire". Robert Martin's Irish histories were reprinted in 1844 and 1848. Thomas Wright (1810-1877), another British amateur historian, in his *History of Ireland* (1854) wanted to explain current events in Ireland and to calm down law-abiding citizens. Without going too deep in his analysis, Wright offered as an explanation for the unrest in Ireland that the emblem of Christianity was used to agitate people to "destruction and bloodshed". The book ended with a lengthy description of Queen Victoria's visit to Ireland in 1853 which, of course, was a significant state act, because English monarchs were seldom seen in Ireland. The Queen had a comforting message to her "Irish subjects" who indeed were infected with hunger and rebellious thinking. But, if "freed from pestilential principles of disorder and discontent", Ireland's "fruitful soil and her swarming fisheries" would guarantee a glorious future. In the

Queen's speech Ireland was addressed as a nation whose aim was "national prosperity".¹⁹ The glorious future provided, however, that Ireland remained an obedient member of the Empire.

Both Martin and Wright maintained that the basic reason for the Irish conflicts was religious division of classes. Religious arguments were indeed dominating the Irish debate before racialist and nationalist theories reached their zenith, and in Ulster even after that. As David Hempton has recently shown, in the general atmosphere of tension and unrest caused by the French Revolution a tradition of infusing national and international events with religious significance had developed in Ulster's Protestant subcultures. Had not France's Catholic church met its nemesis in the hands of the Jacobins?²⁰ In Ulster Presbyterians, Calvinists and Covenanters believed that God was hastening the downfall of popery and that the Millennium²¹ was close.

The use of religious emblems was puzzling to that part of the English educated classes who were less committed to any religious nomination. Many of the British observers presumed that religious propaganda in Ireland was proof old-fashioned fanaticism, and committed English Protestants saw Catholicism as a symbol of backwardness, superstition and an alien threat to the empire. Yet in England the alliance of state and church was not fiercely defended even by conservative thinkers²², nor did the Irish Fenians, who were disapproved by the Catholic bishops, favour it.

New critical approaches to the Union and the Irish question began to emerge after Wright's history. Thomas Macaulay, now first Baron and one of the chiefs of

¹⁹ Thomas Wright, *History of Ireland*, vol. I (John Tallis & Co., London/New York 1854), p. 468, 592.

²⁰ Hempton, p. 98-101. Like many of the modern historians, Hempton sees the last decade of the 18th century crucial to the continued resistance of the Ulster Protestants against their assimilation into the "wider" Irish culture. Evangelical religion had, in his words "imbued the Protestant community with a sense of divine approval" for this. Despite the radical liberalism of the United Irishmen movement, the main part of the community was aroused by sectarian violence, understanding quickly their vulnerable position in a predominantly Catholic country.

²¹ The millennium of Christ's reign on Earth.

²² Coleridge, for example, had written that the Christianity of the national English Church was a "blessed coincidence" and that no part of the Church had been sent by God. Catholic Cardinal and philosopher John Henry Newman (1801-1890) saw that state and church should be separate, even if Pope would have to give up his secular power. In Newman's view the state should never support any religion (Quinton, pp. 72, 77). The Catholic Irish bishops, who had invited Newman to start the new Catholic College in Dublin (1854), were not inspired by the idea.

the Liberal²³ Party, in his formidable *History of England* (5 vols. 1848-1861) denounced the failure of Irish administration as one of the "national crimes", of which the British government partly was responsible. Another one had been the separation of the North-American colonies. Unlike Martin, Macaulay did not emphasize the legal bonds of the Union, nor did he frighten Englishmen with the prospect of war in the case of its dissolution. In Macaulay's opinion the Union should have been built on a mutual understanding of common interests and on "affection", such as that between Scotland and England. The most regrettable thing to Macaulay was that Ireland, being "withered and distortured", could not add strength to "the body politic" of the Empire and its greatness.²⁴

3.3 Macaulay and the "superior" settlers in Ulster

In its own time Macaulay's *History of England* was perhaps the most important singular book that shaped the English image of Irish history and Irishmen. As James Loughlin (1995) has shown, the work had enormous influence among Ulster Unionists, because it gave them a major role in one of the biggest British national myths, the Glorious Revolution. Ulster Unionists were introduced as saviours of the Empire, and founders of the Protestant British nation. In the 1880s Macaulay's work was used by the Unionists as proof that Belfast's prosperity essentially resulted from Protestantism, for which reason the Unionists should not be infected by the "Catholic plot" of home rule.²⁵ It is worth looking therefore in detail what Macaulay actually wrote about Irish and British nationalities.

It was fatal for the future debates that Macaulay's concept of nation rested extravagantly on religion and arrogantly on the imaginary racial superiority of the British settlers. Macaulay presumed, rather ingeniously, that after the Reformation all Irishmen should have directed "their animosity" towards Rome, and not against England, because the Reformation had been "a national as well as a moral

²³ English Liberalism descended from the whig tradition which believed in progress, the superiority of parliamentary system and Great Britain as the cradle of liberty.

²⁴ Lord Macaulay, *History of England*, vol. I. (Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, London 1858), p. 6.

²⁵ Loughlin, pp. 24-26.

revolt".²⁶ He admitted, though, that it was national only to the British; because the native Irishmen rejected the Reformation, their national spirit, which had been "cowed" by the "memory of defeats, the habit of daily enduring insult and oppression", was not able to rise. The opposite happened among the defenders of Londonderry²⁷, who were "of two nations and of two religions", i.e. the Scots and the English, Presbyterians and Anglicans. So, in Macaulay's metaphorical view, the British nation was born here where "hatred of Irishry held together all Saxons; and hatred of Popery had held together all Protestants".²⁸

In principle Macaulay did not question the old nationhood of "aboriginal" Irishmen, but compared to the Ulster settlers they had little chance ever to achieve the same cultural level. The new settlers were not only militarily stronger, but in "civilization and intelligence, far superior to the native population", and had "all the noblest virtues of a sovereign caste". In a sudden transition of time, while describing the 17th and 18th century, Macaulay applied the vision of superior settlers to contemporary Belfast, which had "become one of the greatest and most flourishing seats of industry in the British Isles". People in other Irish towns lived, according to Macaulay, in "dwellings which, in happier countries, are provided for cattle", but Belfast was "so well cleaned, so well paved, so brilliantly lighted".²⁹ When the home rule struggle started, these lines were read in Belfast with a special interest, and later nationalist historians in Ireland had to pay much effort to clean Macaulay's picture of southern Ireland.

To Macaulay the difference between the Ulster settlers and the native population was basically racial in its 19th century biological sense, but it "was increased by the difference of religion".³⁰ The emphasis was turned upside down in religious propaganda. Edward Dill, a presbyterian missionary, wrote in 1852 that "Ulster is at least fifty years ahead of its sister provinces in all true elements of national progress". To the crucial question "what makes Ireland a desert and

²⁶ Macaulay, *H. of England*, vol. I, p. 68.

²⁷ In 1689 the Protestants of Derry had denied the authority of the (legal) Catholic King James II, resisting the siege of the king's troops until the relieve troops of Prince William of Orange arrived. The failure of the siege provided an important bridgehead for William to conquer the whole island and ultimately defeat King James.

²⁸ Macaulay, *H. of England*, vol. III, p. 504.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 193-4, 615.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 105.

Ulster its only oasis", he gave "poperism" as the utmost reason, and advised the Catholics either to turn to the right Church or at least disobey their priests.³¹ James Macaulay, a Scottish editor and author (1817-1902), wrote in 1873 that only Protestantism and "open Bible" could save Ireland from her troubles, referring to the story how Queen Victoria had explained the secret of England's greatness to an African chief.³² According to the story, the secret was, of course, the Bible. Catholic propaganda in turn claimed that the unionists in general were "heretics", and respectively "poperism" was the Protestant explanation for both the economic misery and political "disloyalty" of southern Ireland.

Although the political influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland usually was over-estimated both by its supporters and opponents, to some extent "religious conflicts" reflected, in Ireland as in other parts of Europe, the gradual process of disintegration between Rome and regional churches and states. The Roman Catholic Church by no means practised a unified policy towards national movements. The famous and influential Cardinal Paul Cullen, who returned from Rome to Ireland in 1849, was equally suspicious and resentful of the involvement of both the Catholic and Protestant priests in politics. By the 1880s, however, the Catholic hierarchy represented a vital element in the struggle for Home Rule, much in the same way as the Anglican and Dissent Churches opposed it.

All religious denominations also tried to extend missionary work to opponents' areas and classes. In the early Victorian period a strong evangelical revival spread throughout the English-speaking world in the Protestant churches, and the emphasis on enterprise, sobriety and thrift was, in David Hempton's words, "exported to the distant corners of the empire".³³ Migrating Irishmen in turn spread Catholicism, creating virtually a "spiritual empire" with a strong anti-British attitude. Especially in Ulster sectarian tensions were exacerbated by Protestant street preaching, circulation of pamphlets and open air meetings, and when these were attacked by Catholic mobs, religious gatherings soon

³¹ Edward Marcus Dill, *The Mystery solved, or, Ireland's miseries; The grand cause, and cure* (Johnstone & Hunter, Edinburgh 1852), pp. 32, 300-304.

³² James Macaulay, *Ireland in 1872. A Tour of Observation* (Henry S. King & Co., London 1873), p. 166.

³³ Hempton, pp. 84, 159.

degenerated into violent sectarian rioting.³⁴ On the other hand, most of the sectarian rioting took place during the election campaigns, which since 1868 became more and more focused around the land and the home rule issues. Due to the values - property and the political power - at stake, both the Catholic Church and the landlord class recognised the crucial importance of winning, throwing all their weight to pre-election canvassing.³⁵ The tension created by these forces, often emphasised by the army involvement, was easily interpreted as "religious" instead of political.

Religious propaganda intermixed seamlessly with racist beliefs and prejudices. Although the concept of man in the 18th century Enlightenment had been global and advocated equality, the tendency of scholars to classify everything unintentionally promoted racist thinking. It was thought that mankind could be divided to races according to physical outlook, like plants into different species, and that nations were formed by more cultivated races. The first human typologies did not emphasize value-biased rankings, but by the mid-19th century scientific observations were interpreted to prove that racial characteristics had determined the evolution of different human populations.

The most well-known synthesis of contemporary racial beliefs and evolutionary philosophy based on racialism was presented the Frenchman Robert A. Gobineau (1816-1862) in 1853. In addition to his conviction that races were unequal, he presented racial intermingling as a cause of corrupt and decay in human societies. Other European scientists, such as the Austrian sociologist L. Gumplowicz, claimed that most states were born through the subjugation of a weaker race by a stronger, thus creating the upper and lower classes of the society. There was, for example, an old theory in France that in ancient times the Germanic Franks had subjugated the Gauls - who were counted as Celts - as their serfs, remaining themselves in the role of the ruling upper class.³⁶ Theories like that strengthened the myth that only Teutonic (Germanic) races were industrious and

³⁴ Irwine, p. 58.

³⁵ The pattern is well presented by David N. Haire, "In aid of the Civil power, 1868-90". In F.S.L. Lyons & R.A.J. Hawkins (eds.), *Ireland under the Union. Varieties of tension* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1980), pp. 115-147.

³⁶ Tapani Huovila, "Frankkien ja gallien eriarvoisuus säätyvastakohtana Ranskassa". In Aira Kemiläinen (ed.), *Mongoleja vai germaaneja - rotuteorioiden suomalaiset* (SHS, Helsinki 1985), pp. 37. Of Gobineau, see Anna-Maija Virtanen, "Gobineau'n rotuoppi ja germaanien ihannointi". Ibid.

disciplined, being capable of building states.³⁷ The myth of the supremacy of Anglo-Saxon race and culture was based on these theories, because the Saxon settlers in Britain were counted, as well as the Normans by some historians, among Teutonic conqueror races.

In Macaulay's view the main explanation for the tragic history of Ireland was "dominion of race over race".³⁸ Although he could not credit the idea of "master races" for himself, his British application of this European intellectual tradition had a direct influence on the British image of Irishmen.

3.4 Mill and the Irish "fellow-citizens"

Long after Macaulay it was conventional both among scholars and other popular leaders of opinion to present the assumed races of mankind as building blocks of the nations. Yet Macaulay's contemporary John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), a liberal politician and philosopher, had already introduced a theory of nationality that was not exclusively based on the concept of race. Nicholas Mansergh in his classic study *The Irish Question* (first publ. 1940) has presented how another Macaulay's contemporary, the Italian philosopher Joseph Mazzini, was a keen observer of Irish affairs and had earlier come to similar conclusions as that of Mill's. Mazzini had also disposed of the argument that race would be the true basis of nationality, claiming that there was no single spot in Europe where an unmixed race can be found.³⁹ Mazzini's and Mill's philosophies about nationality were almost identical, representing the spearhead of liberal philosophy in the 1860s. Mill was widely cited and esteemed as authority by later British and Irish historians up till the 20th century, and therefore his famous article *Of Nationality, as Connected with Representative Government* (1860) is worth introducing here from the Irish point of view.

The emphasis of political events in national historiography received a significant thrust from Mill, because he regarded "political antecedents", i.e. the

³⁷ See, for example, Olli Kaikkonen, "Eriarvoisuusajattelu, rotukäsitykset ja sosiaalidarwinismi". *Ibid.*, s. 26.

³⁸ Macaulay, *H. of England*, vol. I, pp. 6, 105.

³⁹ Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish Question 1840-1921* (Unwin University Books, London 1968), p. 78.

"possession of national history" as the most remarkable creator of national feeling.⁴⁰ Mill's definition of a nation was based on the free will of the people. Representative (democratic) government and "free institutions" provided in his view that the state should mainly consist of one nationality, in other words the borders of national state and the people should preferably coincide. His analysis of nationalism started, however, from the concepts of *nationality* and *feeling/sentiment of nationality*, without particular attempt to define nation. Race and common ancestors to Mill were but one circumstance among many that contributed to national feeling. Others were language, common religion, geographical borders and, as already said, common national history in its political sense, which gave people either collective pride or feeling of humiliation. However, according to Mill, none of these circumstances alone was a sufficient or indispensable provision to the birth of national feeling, as the different national examples demonstrated.

Mill's conclusion of the appearance of national feeling grew highly important in the liberal attitude towards national movements. Where the sentiment of nationality existed in any force, there was "a *prima facie* case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government, and a government to themselves apart". But when people were becoming ripe for their own administration and free institutions, there was one more vital consideration; the borders of the nationality. Free institutions, in Mill's opinion, could not develop and act in a country made up of many nationalities. If the people lacked fellow-feeling and, for example, spoke and read different languages, a "united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government" could not exist. In different regions of the country, therefore, people might trust quite different politicians and read different books, papers and pamphlets, and one section might not even know what opinions or instigations were circulating in another.⁴¹ Mill's insight referred to states like Turkey, Austrian-Hungary and Russia, but obviously he also thought of different parts of Britain.

⁴⁰ John Stuart Mill, "Of Nationality, as Connected with Representative Government". In J. M. Robson (ed.), *Essays on Politics and Society. Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto/Buffalo 1977), p. 546.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 547.

Mill was notably realistic about the possibilities of military pacification in regions with rising national feeling. In case of a multinational state, a despotic central government could do nothing but try to keep the differently thinking parts of the country together through the use of military force, which would succeed temporarily if the army troops would consist of other nationalities than the population to be controlled. This was the strategy of the Austrian government when it kept Hungarian troops in Italy and Italian troops in Hungary. But in such cases, in Mill's view, the army could never be a uniting element nationally, because multi-national armies with "no other patriotism than devotion to the flag" have been "executioners of liberty" through the whole modern history. According to Mill's example, foreigners - even if they belonged to the same state - were always potential enemies to the soldier who could be called "at a week's notice, to fight for life or death" against them.⁴²

Although Mill clearly sympathized with national minorities, he saw no reason for the independence of the "British" nations. His argument and conviction was that an originally inferior and more backward nationality could gradually merge and be absorbed in a greater and more civilised nationality, if the first was governed with "any tolerable justice", and if the latter did not create hostility by giving its members exclusive privileges. Why then the Irishmen rebelled, although they had been given the chance, in Mill's opinion, to assimilate into the common state side by side with the "most improved" nationality? Why, by comparison, the French Bretons or Alsations seemed to have no wish to be separated from France. Mill assumed that the Irish simply were a bigger and more energetic population, comparable with other European nationalities, and being therefore capable of maintaining struggle with Britain. He was astonished to record, obviously thinking of Ireland, that some nationalities within a larger state had started to cultivate their distinctive peculiarities; "obsolete customs, and even declining languages".⁴³

Mill admitted that numerically Irishmen were sufficient enough to constitute a "respectable nationality" by themselves, but like Joseph Mazzini, he did not believe that the Irish nationalist movement was likely to be permanent. Mazzini had denied the Irish nationality on the basis that the Irishmen seemed to be

⁴² Ibid., p. 547-548.

⁴³ Ibid., s. 550-1.

deserting their country in masses and that the Fenian movement had no other mission than to resist bad English government.⁴⁴ Similarly Mill saw the greatest reason for the Irish dissatisfaction in the previous government, which had been a "disgrace to England, and calamity to the whole empire". The errors had been, however, corrected, except that of the Anglican state church, but that was a common grievance with nearly half of the population of the larger island, Mill remarked.⁴⁵ Liberal opinion, much influenced by Mill, soon effected the disestablishment of the Anglican state church of Ireland (1871).

Mill's faith in the superiority of British civilization and its imperial mission was carefully mixed with principles of equal citizenship and progress which would remove all items of dissatisfaction from the Irish. He believed or wanted to reassure his readers that Irishmen already were treated not only with equal justice, but with "equal consideration" compared to the English, making the Irish gradually feel "fellow-citizens instead of foreigners" with their nearest neighbour who was the "wealthiest, and one of the freest, as well as most civilized and powerful, nations of the world"⁴⁶. Formally the Union had, indeed, given all Irishmen equal citizen rights, but especially those who had moved to rapidly growing Victorian cities perceived their own position to be, if not that of a subject minority, a minority of some kind anyway, and this feeling was shared by their host society.⁴⁷

3.5 Growth of British Nationalism and varieties of Unionism

After Macaulay the static foundations of British historical philosophy were shaken by the theories of Darwin and Karl Marx, and more evolutionary views inevitably emerged. Free will and determinism were the main issues in debates about

⁴⁴ Mansergh, pp. 76-77. Some Irish Repealers had complained to the People's International League, founded by Mazzini in 1847, that it had omitted Ireland from the list of future nationalities, which inspired Mazzini to several writings about the subject.

⁴⁵ Mill, "Of Nationality...", p. 551.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 550-1.

⁴⁷ See M. A. G. Ó Tuathaig, "The Irish in Nineteenth Century Britain: Problems of Integration" in Roger Smith & Sheridan Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (Groom Helm, London etc. 1985), p. 13.

historical theory, but they had to make room for new approaches, such as positivism and probability theories.⁴⁸ History as a field of study gained more academic status on a wave of opposition to theological dogmatism, although prominent historians seldom had any formal commitment to the universities, or acquired one very late in life. Yet it was unclear whether history was an academic subject at all, or just something "every gentlemen should know".⁴⁹ Despite a few pioneers of modern critical approach, such as John Lingard (1771-1851), it was not yet common among historians to use original sources, instead of printed materials by rulers and authorities, or sources outside Britain.⁵⁰

History seemed to prove, anyway, that empires might suddenly collapse, and therefore historical forces that created and maintained empires were of great importance to English historians and philosophers. Of great empires only Turkey showed signs of disintegration in Darwin's century, but not a few English political philosophers warned that similar fate could be in store for Britain if her political virtues and racial hygiene were not cherished. Darwin's theory of evolutionary progress was applied to the "Whig" idea of the English past, namely that it manifested the natural and evolutionary progress by a superior people.⁵¹

Political thinking could not avoid new influences, either, although traditional conservatism remained strong. After the Fenian rebellion of 1867 the Irish "question" again revealed its painfulness, and the British public and politicians increasingly demanded some sort of solution, for which either military pacification or total reform of the administration were usually suggested. The Liberal Party won the elections of 1868, setting William Gladstone in power with the aim to "pacify" Ireland. Irish self-government, however - to say nothing of independence - was an issue that, from the British point of view, was not comparable with the future of Russia's or Turkey's border nations.

On the other hand, in the British parliamentary atmosphere it was inconceivable that Ireland and the voice of its majority could be neglected forever.

⁴⁸ Christopher Parker, *The English Historical Tradition since 1850* (John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh 1990), pp. 20-21.

⁴⁹ A phrase by historian John R. Green. Quoted in John Kenyon, *The History Men* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London 1983), pp. 145, 164-5.

⁵⁰ See Edwin Jones, *The English Nation, The Great Myth* (Sutton publishing, Phoenix Mill etc. 1998), pp. 182.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

The problem still was how to satisfy the Irish without making violence to their Protestant minority and the Protestant sentiment of the majority population in Great Britain. It was admitted that some kind of anti-imperial nationalism seemed to flourish in Ireland, and that not all those who demanded Home Rule for Ireland were fanatic "conspirators" who attacked against property, government and law. Those who believed that the common British nationality would ultimately win, hoped that Irishness would one day point to the place of birth only and not to a person whose "aims and interests were not imperial but local"⁵². Gladstone's government produced reforms for Ireland, but the growth of Irish nationalist representation in Westminster soon appeared to be an uncontrollable force in British party politics.

Victorian England itself was by no means immune to the forces and impulses that fed nationalist movements elsewhere. Although the classic pattern of growing dissatisfaction against foreign rulers did not exist, and the idea of "Englishness" was not very clear to contemporaries, there were cultural activities in historiography, literature and philology which were comparable to those of the smaller nations. The formation of the "English nation", for example, was dated between the 8th and late 13th century in John R. Green's (1837-1883) *The Making of England* (1882). In the 9th century the English peoples were "really gathered into a single realm", and in the next century "a real national life" was developing in a "single England".⁵³ Such arguments were needed to guarantee England's place among the oldest nations in Europe and to match similar claims by nationalist historians in other countries, especially in Ireland.

The whole picture of English cultural nationalism is open to many interpretations, and can not be discussed in detail here. However, Stefan Collini's remark of how the "nationalization" of English culture during the latter half of the 19th century meant softening the political and religious divisions that had marked earlier decades, is significant for the understanding of the reactions of the English

⁵² Quoted from John Rutherford, *The Fenian Conspiracy* (C. Kegan Paul & Co., London 1877), p. 315.

⁵³ J. R. Green, *The Making of England* (MacMillan & Co, London 1882), p. 262. 1885 ed., p. vi: "The centuries of administrative organisation which stretch from Egbert to Edward the First, the age of full national development which extends from Edward's day to our own, only become intelligible when we have fully grasped this age of national formation."

educated classes towards Irish Nationalism.⁵⁴ Nationalist ideas itself could be tolerated, but the passions and divisions it raised were unpleasant and a source of curious astonishment for Englishmen. Prime Minister Gladstone tried to tackle rising nationalism through the extension of political liberties so that Ireland, Scotland and England could be "one nation to the face of the world", although people should be educated locally and would keep to their nationality. Gladstone believed that Ireland possessed elements of true nationality; collective individuality "confirmed by history". If this could not be met with recognition of local autonomy, the alternative would be social chaos in Ireland and instability of the British political system.⁵⁵

British political nationalism was further encouraged by the sense of foreign competition and imperial rivalry, which made the public and politicians less capable and less willing to understand the cultural development in Ireland during the three decades before the First World War. This was one reason for the fact that the outlines of the Irish "question" were always tied with Imperial issues in British politics. *Conservative Unionists* rejected Irish Home Rule, because in their opinion it would endanger the unity and strategic safety of the Empire. *Liberal Unionists* slowly grew to accept Home Rule on the condition that it would not tear apart the Empire and that the nations of the British Isles remained in the same state and under the same general legislation.

The division of votes in the Home Rule issue caused disintegration in both the Liberal and the Conservative Party. Home Rule was clearly an Imperial issue, and the Conservatives succeeded in identifying their party with the defence of the Empire, finding much support from Whig and moderate Liberal opinion from time and time again.⁵⁶ Consequently, the Conservative Party was generally called the Unionist Party. Some of the Liberals were as eager as the Conservatives to expand the Empire, but many of them emphasized the Empire's first duty of spreading "free institutions" in the colonies as well as in Ireland. Both main parties

⁵⁴ Stefan Collini, "Genealogies of Englishness: Literary History and Cultural Criticism in Modern Britain". In Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Ideology and the Historians* (TheLilliput Press, Dublin 1991), pp. 134-135.

⁵⁵ Quoted from Boyce 1996, pp. 29, 33.

⁵⁶ For further reading of the Conservative policy on Ireland, see E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism. The politics, economics and ideology of the British Conservative party, 1880-1914* (Routledge, London/New York 1996), esp. pp. 62-71, 297-305.

believed that they were acting in order to prevent the destruction of the Empire, and after the first Home Rule proposal was defeated in the House of Lords, between 1904 and 1907 both parties also tried to develop less radical schemes for constitutional adjustments for the same purpose.

Many British Liberals, such as historians James Froude and Edward Freeman, believed that the progress of history was leading towards great multi-national units where singular nations were like individuals of a human community. In the wildest visions the whole of Europe was seen as a federal state in which greater nationalities would enjoy autonomy while the empire would take care of foreign policy and defence.

In debates concerning colonies and the future of Britain, the idea of a federal state occurred regularly after the 1860s, and the constitution of the United States, admired by many, was often projected as the great model. In a federation each state possessed its own representative body, also taking part in the interaction of common legislation through the federal parliament. Joseph Chamberlain, a radical Liberal and Gladstone's challenger who strongly spoke for the Ulster Unionists, at one stage was ready to accept separate legislatures for England, Scotland, Wales and Ulster, as well as for the three other Irish provinces. Charles Parnell, leader of the Irish parliamentarians, rejected the idea, arguing that Ireland's case was a distinctive national issue, not comparable with that of the United States.⁵⁷

In British Conservative opinion federalism was usually seen either respectable or dangerous. Albert V. Dicey (1835-1922), professor of English Law at Oxford and an ardent Unionist, admitted that Ireland had become "a nation" and that the Irish Nationalists therefore were right in principle in their demands. However, using the same arguments as historian Robert Martin 40 years earlier, Dicey condemned Home Rule and federalism on the basis that it would "mean the weakness of Great Britain", and mainly because Scotland would follow. Full independence for Ireland was, of course, also impossible "for Imperial reasons".⁵⁸ Francis Hackett, an Irish-American Nationalist, later congratulated Dicey for his "admirable summary" of the English objections against Home Rule, because it

⁵⁷ Mansergh, pp. 161-2. See also A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Narrow Ground. Aspects of Ulster 1609-1969* (Faber & Faber, London 1977), p. 165.

⁵⁸ A. V. Dicey, *England's Case against Home Rule* (John Murray, London 1886), pp. 3, 178. In 1914 Dicey was among the first signatories of the British Covenant, a Unionist declaration objecting the execution of the third Home Rule Bill without referendum.

demonstrated to everybody the English ignorance and non-respect towards the Irish claims.⁵⁹

3.6 Froude, Freeman and Birrell on Ireland and Finland

English historians James A. Froude (1818-1894) and Edward Freeman (1823-1892) are, although classified as Liberal Unionists, well known of their racist attitudes towards the Irish in general and especially the Fenians. In their time "Fenianism" became a general label for all nationalist challengers of the British control in colonies; the Boers and Arab supporters as well as the Irish bombers. Froude's aggressive and arrogant vocabulary exceeded that of Freeman's and so did his methods for the "pacification" of Ireland. Significantly they gave Ulstermen no special role - unlike Macaulay - in the Imperial history which was seen in relation to the idea of "subordinate" nations and the possibility of a federal state.

Froude admired the energy of 17th-century Protestantism, believing that the expansion of the Empire might bring back lost national virtues which had been degenerated by modern town life.⁶⁰ Despite his nostalgia Froude was willing, reluctantly though, to accept Irish Home Rule in order to prevent more severe complications. He criticized Gladstone who gave the first Home Rule Bill to the Parliament, complaining that England had neglected the duties of a "ruling power" in Ireland. The English seemed to be unwilling to govern Ireland as successfully as they had governed India, although they certainly would be capable of it through the use of force, Froude assured. He detested rebellious Fenians, believing it impossible that the Queen could take responsibility for an autonomy in which "terrorists" would eventually be in power. But there seemed to be no other practical option to Froude than "let Ireland be free", because it was "inconvenient to us to keep order" among the Irish.⁶¹ Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, however, offered too much liberty for Ireland, in his opinion.

⁵⁹ Francis Hackett, *Ireland. A Study in Nationalism* (B. W. Huensch, New York 1920), p. 352.

⁶⁰ Burrow, pp. 248, 284.

⁶¹ James A. Froude, *The English in Ireland*, vol. III (Longman's, Green & Co., London 1885), pp. 582, 584-5.

In his *History of England* (1886) Froude expressed open regret that in the 16th century "the Irish savages" had not been destroyed by Tudor sovereigns and conquerors, as their followers did to natives "in every colony" in the next centuries.⁶² Mostly he was worried about the influence of the Irish Nationalists on the English parliamentary system, which in the opinion of many could have been perfect in its slow reformism - without the Irish. According to Froude the Englishmen had so much experience about the "Irish race" which had always caused "danger and torment" to all states they had emigrated to.⁶³ When a notable historian and scholar presented the Irishmen in such a light, it was no wonder that the great public believed in some kind of correlation between the "racial" characteristics of Irishmen and their "strange" political behaviour. Those who shared Froude's opinion could still argue in favour of Home Rule on the basis that it was necessary to pacify Irishmen and to prevent the spreading of disorder in Ireland, in the Parliament and in North America. That a great portion of Irishmen might wish Home Rule had little value in this opinion.

Edward Freeman, like many of his fellow historians, was a keen observer of rising nationalism. In his early textbook for schools he had defended the right of men "to get rid of the dominion of foreigners", on the condition that they "thoroughly feel themselves to be a nation". But in Ireland the discontent was, in his view, fed only by the memory of old wrongs, whereas the recent benefits, most of all the disestablishment of the dominant Protestant Church, were not appreciated enough.⁶⁴ For Freeman, "the happily united" England and Scotland were, like Norway and Sweden, the only countries in Europe who had been spared from recent revolutions and "great disturbances".⁶⁵

In debates concerning Irish Home Rule after 1886, Finland cannot be passed by, because the position of Finland and Ireland was compared and exploited both by the British Liberal and Conservative Unionists. The analogy and arguments are

⁶² J. A. Froude, *History of England*, vol. IV (Longman's, Green, and Co., London 1886), p. 561.

⁶³ Froude, *The English...*, p. 585.

⁶⁴ Edward Freeman, *General Sketch of European History* (MacMillan & Co., London 1872), p. 349, 362.

⁶⁵ Id., and Freeman, "The Relations between the Crowns of England and Scotland", in *Historical Essays* (4th ed., MacMillan & Co., London 1886), p. 79. In his article "Continuity of English History" Freeman saw that there was no universal law behind the formation of national characters, which in the case of England and France were product of historical events, geographical position and also individuals (*Historical Essays*, p. 50).

well presented by Anssi Halmesvirta in his works dealing with the British conception of the Finnish "race" (1990, 1993). In the Liberal opinion continental nations deserved freedom and political sovereignty, if they had proved signs of independent culture in their arts (especially in literature), science and political organisation. In the 1880s and 1890s, Finland was presented by Home Rule supporters as a positive example of how autonomy did not necessarily cause disloyalty towards the empire, Russia in this case. During the years that in Finland were later named the first period of "oppression"⁶⁶ (1890-1905), the British liberals were puzzled by Finnish passive resistance, because it broke the illusion of harmonic relations between Russia and Finland. Ultimately the Liberals accepted Finnish resistance, on the basis that the Finns were "more civilized" than the Russians. The Conservatives turned this argument against Irish self-government, claiming that the Irish - being "less civilized" than the English - were not mature enough for autonomy.⁶⁷ In the Conservative mind the analogy between Finland and Sweden was the same as between Ireland and England. The less developed parts of the Empire, such as Ireland, or Finland as part of the Swedish Realm before 1809, could by no means have a real need for self-government, because the nucleus of the empire radiated "high civilization" and economical benefits.

Freeman belonged to the Liberal Party group supporting the Irish Home Bill (1886) which eventually overthrew Gladstone's Cabinet and split the Liberal Party. In order to hasten the Bill both Gladstone and Freeman had referred to Russian-Finnish relations as a model example of successful restricted autonomy within the empire.⁶⁸ In principle Freeman was not against the possibility of a British federal state, but he saw that it required a further-reaching plan in which Scotland's position would be crucial.⁶⁹ In his article "Parallels to Irish Home Rule"

⁶⁶ "Oppression Years" was the conventional epithet in Finnish history for the periods 1890-1905 and 1909-1917 when the Russian government and its Governor-Generals took actions against Finnish autonomy in order to unify postal services, army, education and administration.

⁶⁷ Anssi Halmesvirta, *The British conception of the Finnish 'race', nation and culture, 1760-1918* (SHS, Helsinki 1990), pp. 218-222. The British Conservatives also maintained that the Finns misused their autonomy, by acting against the Swedish language which represented "higher civilization". If part of the Swedish state, the Finns would have no necessity for autonomy. See also Halmesvirta, *Turanilaisia ja herrasneekereitä. Aatehistoriallisia tutkimuksia brittiläisestä rotuajattelusta* (SHS, Helsinki 1993).

⁶⁸ Halmesvirta 1993, s. 107-108.

⁶⁹ For Freeman, England and Scotland were in a higher category than Ireland: "The two kingdoms of this island are something too great and illustrious to be made the *corpus vile* of experiments." E.

(1889) Freeman stressed that Gladstone's Home Rule plan, instead of federalism, in fact meant "relations of a dependency to a superior power". The dependent community would have its local legislature and administration, managing as a rule all internal affairs for itself, but it would have no vote in foreign policy or in the general affairs of the colonies. The parliament of the United Kingdom could, whenever it might choose, legislate for the dependent province. Freeman claimed that exactly the same relationship prevailed between the Russian empire and the Finnish Grand Duchy.⁷⁰

Freeman's article raised unpleasant attention in Finland where the Russian legislative acts for the "dependent province" were shocking the citizens. Freeman's remark on Finland was, however, designed for domestic use only, as an answer to the prospect of the crumbling of the Empire predicted by Prime Minister Salisbury and some prominent Liberals if Ireland would be granted autonomy. Later Freeman was persuaded by his Finnish friend, sociologist Edward Westermarck, to write a favourable article on Finland's constitutional position, in which he aimed to prove the British public that a restricted autonomy of "subject races" was a most effective way of carrying forward freedom and civilization.⁷¹

Another Liberal politician, Augustine Birrell (1850-1933), who later became the Chief Secretary for Ireland, was well informed about the Finnish struggle against Russification through his Finnish friends in London, and he also defended the Finnish constitution. Birrell had been a loyal supporter of Gladstone's Government, but after the defeat of the first Home Rule Bills he had temporarily returned to academic life (1896-99) as professor of Law at the London University College.

Birrell's article "Finland and Russia" (1900) was sympathetic to the Finnish cause, but at the same time it expressed more concern about Irish affairs. Although Birrell never travelled in Finland, he was confident that "No Englishman, at all events, could visit Finland without casting a sorrowful thought upon Ireland". In Finland, unlike in Ireland, rebellion was unknown, police costs

Freeman, "Parallels to Irish Home Rule". *The Fortnightly Review*, vol. XLVI (new series, 1 Sept. 1889), p. 298.

⁷⁰ Freeman, "Parallels...", pp. 294-5.

⁷¹ Halmesvirta 1993, pp. 105, 113.

were next to nothing, education questions both in the primary and secondary level had been settled long ago, and "the prevailing types of character are not revolutionary". The merit of this condition was, in Birrell's opinion, due to the policy of the wise Czars who, although they were despots, had kept their word. But now Nicholas II was surrounded by statesmen who were dominated by the imperial idea of *Pan-Slavism*, and who knew little about Finnish history or Finnish constitution which used to be "as safe as the Bank of England". Birrell equalized Pan-Slavism, German expansion and the British Anglo-Saxon idea, which all endeavoured to transform dependent populations into one imperial nationality, the Finns to Russians, the people of Schleswig-Holstein to Germans and the Dutch in South Africa to British. To Birrell these ideas were tyrannous, and with a shade of melancholy he noted how easy it was for politicians to remain in complete ignorance of local traditions and history of outlying provinces, as recently shown in the Home Rule debate: "The things English statesmen do not know about Ireland would still fill volumes".⁷²

The Home Rule dispute in the Parliament had increased general interest towards Irish affairs, and MPs were motivated to learn more about Irish history. Froude's *The English in Ireland* was reprinted several times, but its militant and arrogant attitude also provoked criticism.⁷³ In the 1880s the traditional British image of one, half-British Irish nation was still dominant, although some members of this strange nation disturbed the order of the Parliament, murdered British officials and threw bombs. In 1886 Joseph Chamberlain, whom Parnell titled as the "man who killed Home Rule" and who agitated for Ulster Unionists to resist Home Rule with arms, came to a conclusion in the House of Commons - slightly confused by interjections - that Ireland was one nation consisting of two races and two religions.⁷⁴

⁷² A. Birrell, "Finland and Russia". *Contemporary Review*, vol. 78 (July 1900), pp. 16-18. Some of Birrell's remarks on the Russians, who were "as much Finns as Slavs" and whose language was "Finno-Russian", might have been appalling to contemporary Finns, but in general he correctly observed the traditional Finnish monarchism and loyalism towards any respected sovereign.

⁷³ W. A. O'Connor, for example, appealed in his *History of the Irish People* (John Heywood, London 1986, 2nd ed., preface) to the "English party of progress" to solve the Irish question demanding that the "tone of haughty superiority... should have no more right to exist England towards Ireland than in Lancashire towards Yorkshire".

⁷⁴ Quoted in Mansergh, p. 194.

Chamberlain was in favour of a "separate assembly" for Ulster, but Gladstone ignored such proposals, infuriating the Ulster Liberals who had previously admired him.⁷⁵ Gladstone was perfectly aware of the various schemes for Ulster, ranging from the direct British rule of the whole province, or "perhaps more appearance of reason, a portion of Ulster", to separate autonomy. He did not refuse to consider such schemes in principle, promising in fact a "most favourable" treatment to such proposals, but he refused to allow any Irish minority to rule the question at large for Ireland. Being influenced by Freeman's illusion of ever-harmonic relations between Norway and Sweden, Gladstone also wanted the Irish Home Rule to be compared with the Norwegian separate administration and legislation, despite which Sweden and Norway were "more and more feeling themselves to be the children of a common country, united by a tie which is never to be broken".⁷⁶

3.7 Transformations in the "Religious Question"

The Irish partition of 1920-21 came hardly as a surprise to anybody who had observed Home Rule debates since the 1880s. The emergence of "Catholic" nationalism seemed to reinforce old Irish divisions and their significance. During the decades before the First World War the religious explanation of the Irish divisions was, however, weakened by "modern" racialist and nationality theories. For example, in 1912 John (Viscount) Morley (1838-1923), a Liberal politician and Home ruler, analysed the feeling of nationality, defining it as an "identity of descent, common language, common religion, common pride in past incidents". Morley remarked, however, that no single element in the list made a decisive test, because countries were different, and in the United States, for example, a strong feeling of political nationality was dominating.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Stewart 1977, p. 165.

⁷⁶ *Speeches on the Irish Question in 1886 by the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.* (Andrew Elliot, Edinburgh 1886), pp. 12, 19-20.

⁷⁷ John Morley, *Politics and History. The Works of Lord Morley*, vol. IV (MacMillan & Co., London 1921), pp. 51-2 (revised from an address of 1912). Morley was Gladstone's radical supporter and worked in Dublin as Irish Secretary in 1886 and 1892-5.

Religious passions indeed seemed to be echoes from past history, and missionary work within the British Isles had also moderated. As early as 1888 a Scottish writer John Harrison, of Edinburgh, who saw the Ulster problem essentially as a conflict between two races, remarked how the names Protestant and Roman Catholic "indeed have little to say in the matter".⁷⁸ Religious slogans still appeared in the Irish Nationalist and Unionist propaganda, but more as marginal themes and among the many arguments in favour of the main political issue; freedom to form or choose the state.

Religious arguments had, in fact, little effect in the minds of the British Liberals. Those who believed that Home Rule was needed and would work in Ireland, were unwilling to stress the differences of the Irish society too far. In the flow of books on Ireland that appeared after the first Home Rule Bills, British writers in general wanted to extract some rational - instead of religious or "sentimentally" nationalist - explanation for the conflict between Irish Unionists and Nationalists. Consequently many of them turned to emphasize the industrialist nature of the Ulster population, compared to rural southern Ireland. Before 1912, when both of the main British parties tried to develop alternative reforms for Ireland in order to pass Home Rule to history, a new kind of state ideology seemed to offer a solution to sectarian divisions of the society. Instead of loyally and humbly serving the state as subjects, common people were encouraged to expect some benefits from the state, too. The idea that the state's first duty was the equal - at least "rightful" - distribution of economic and other benefits to the individuals, as well as to nations that formed the state, advanced the treating of people as citizens rather than subjects. Consequently, if the citizens were supposed to be equal, then the concept of "loyal" or "disloyal" nationalities would be less useful in party politics and propaganda.

Augustine Birrell, who in 1907 had succeeded James Bryce as the Government representative - Chief Secretary - in Ireland, had a very practical approach to theological arguments in the Irish context. In his famous speech in 1911 Birrell did not deny the existence of a "religious difficulty", but he doubted its right to be called religious. His argument was that even if Ireland were to be wholly Protestant tomorrow, the same people who at the moment opposed Home

⁷⁸ J. Harrison, *The Scot in Ulster. Sketch of the History of Scottish Population of Ulster* (W. Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh/London 1888), p. 100.

Rule would then be the first to demand it. The Protestants were afraid of losing their supremacy, not of Home Rule itself. In Birrell's earthly metaphor the Protestant one fifth of the population had for centuries "sat on the four fifths, enjoying it". The only "religious difficulty", Birrell explained, was that the Protestants were now placed on an equal footing with the majority.⁷⁹ This view was in accordance with the Irish Nationalist explanation for the Ulster problem: that an antiquated medieval tradition of "religious ascendancy" projected itself into political, social and economic life in that Irish area.⁸⁰

During the first two decades of the new century theological issues were still used in street and ecclesiastical propaganda on both Irish sides of the Home Rule dispute, but in formulated Unionist and Nationalist programmes the regular European pattern of nationalist movements was clear to any observer. Religion was subjugated to the national cause and Divinity was introduced as a loyal supporter of "our" movement - not the other way round.

In the Unionist declarations against home rule the "material well-being" of Ulster or the whole of Ireland was the first argument, and religious "freedom and liberty" was usually mentioned in the second place. Like most of the early 20th century nationalist movements, Ulster Unionists also recruited religious beliefs and symbols - even God himself - to support the political cause. The *Solemn League and Covenant* (1911) declared: "In sure confidence that God will defend the right we hereto subscribe our names".⁸¹ The closest counterpart of the Unionist Solemn League and Covenant was the Easter declaration of the Irish Republic by the nationalist rebels, including its modified repetition by the first Irish Dáil (constituent assembly) in 1919. In the former the cause of the Republic was placed "under the protection of the Most High God", in the latter "His Divine blessing" was asked for the last stage of the national struggle. Besides, "Almighty God" had

⁷⁹ A. Birrell, *Home Rule for Ireland*. A Speech at Ilfracombe, 19 Oct. 1911. The Liberal Publication Dpt, London 1911, p. 9. Birrell had reluctantly taken the nomination to Chief Secretary's ungratifying task, telling later the story how he had offered P.M. Campbell-Bannerman another candidate: "Good Heavens, but he is a friend of mine", P.M. answered. The Easter Rebellion forced Birrell to resign. For further reading see Leon O'Broin, *The Chief Secretary. A. Birrell in Ireland* (Chatto & Windus, London 1969), p. 1.

⁸⁰ Quoted from Sean Milroy (T.D.), *The Case of Ulster* (The Talbot Press, Dublin 1922), p. 13.

⁸¹ Curtis, E & McDowell, R.B. (eds), *Irish Historical Documents 1172 - 1922* (New York 1968), p. 304.

in fact given the courage and determination of the Irish to resist for centuries the "ruthless tyranny" (i. e. England), the Dáil declared.⁸²

Many Englishmen interpreted the events of 1914 - the Unionist rebellion in Ulster - as a sign of approaching civil war between the Irish Protestants and Catholics. This is how it was later recalled, for example, by the English Crown Prince, later Duke of Windsor: "... the rejection of the Irish Home Rule Bill in the House of Lords had made Civil War between the Catholic South and the Protestants of Ulster more than a possibility".⁸³ The fact that the Ulster mutiny was directed against the British army and the Government, and not against southern Irish Nationalists, remained unclear for the English reading public.

The traditional image of Ireland in the midst of sectarian conflicts - as presented by many 19th century British historians - in part prepared the British public for the Irish partition. In 1917 Lord Ernest W. Hamilton, a popular unionist historian, stated that the connection between Sinn Fein and the Catholic Church was the main obstacle between a peaceful solution of the Irish question, although he admitted that the "religious habit" was probably too deeply rooted in Ulster on both sides. Yet in his opinion the religious distinctions at present "advertise the racial origin of every Ulsterman".⁸⁴ In other words Hamilton, like many of the contemporary observers, found religious titles more convenient than those connected with the assumed origins of the conflict, like race in Hamilton's view.

To British and Irish Liberals, however, religious persecution in the dawn of the 20th century was inconceivable. Lord Dunraven (Quinn), an Anglo-Irish Unionist but an advocate of moderate self-government, wrote in 1907 that he did not believe the Protestants being "exposed to any danger of ill-treatment under any extension of local self-government". The vast majority of Roman Catholics, Dunraven reassured, were tolerant, and although there was a strong sense of nationality, there was also a sense of the advantages of co-operation, which was "gathering strength".⁸⁵ Many external observers totally agreed with this view.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 317-8.

⁸³ *A King's Story. The Memoirs of H.R.H. the Duke of Windsor* (Cassell and Co., London 1951), p. 104.

⁸⁴ E. W. Hamilton, *The Soul of Ulster* (Hurst & Blackett, London 1917), pp. 176, 200. Hamilton optimistically hoped that Sinn Fein itself might remove that barrier, whereafter "hatred of England" would "die a natural death".

⁸⁵ Earl of Dunraven, K.P., *The Outlook in Ireland. The Case for Devolution and Conciliation* (Hodges, Figgis & Co., Dublin 1907), p. 256.

Hugh Sutherland, associate editor of *The North American*, Philadelphia, published in 1909 a pamphlet *Ireland Yesterday and Today* in co-operation with John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party. The book naturally demanded rapid execution of Home Rule, and to the criticism that he had not fairly presented the Ulster's side of the dispute, Sutherland answered that Ulster was "justly entitled to twenty-five per cent. of representation in the government; it has controlled one hundred per cent. too long".⁸⁶

Sutherland's misleading promotion of Ulster to the leadership of Ireland demonstrates how the Ulster Unionists at that time had succeeded in dominating the Irish "question". In E. H. H. Green's words "Unionism in Ireland tended to speak with an Ulster accent", leaving their British Conservative supporters little room to manoeuvre the whole Irish question to any deliberate course.⁸⁷ But the use of religious emblems was intentionally misleading, too. Sutherland dealt with the Ulster case in his postscript chapter which, despite its title "The Religious Question", did not contain a word of religion. Religious terminology was so regular in all contexts dealing with Irish political disputes that some writers, like Sutherland, added them to make sure that his readers could associate the text with familiar concepts - whether it made any sense at all.

Religious vocabulary was used to avoid tautology of political concepts and because the issues of civil and religious rights, particularly emphasized in Unionist propaganda, usually intermixed. In most cases Unionism was equated with Protestants and Nationalism with Catholics, as they still are. In 1914 Vladimir I. Lenin, who keenly observed Home Rule debates for his own tactical reasons, wrote that there cannot be "any talk about the Irish parliament... 'oppressing the Protestants'", because the power of the Home Rule parliament would be determined by the English law.⁸⁸ Edward R. Turner, Professor of European History in the University of Michigan, shared the same view at the eve of partition when he believed that the Nationalists would ultimately submit to Home Rule, instead of full independence, and that Home Rule legislation would then guarantee that no religious discrimination or interference by the Pope would take

⁸⁶ Hugh Sutherland, *Ireland Yesterday and Today* (The North American, Philadelphia 1909), p. 260.

⁸⁷ E.H.H. Green, pp. 300, 303-4.

⁸⁸ V.I. Lenin, *British Labour and British Imperialism*. A compilation of writings by Lenin on Britain (Lawrence & Wishart, London 1969), p. 56.

place in Ireland.⁸⁹ The latter remark referred to the fear of ordinary Irish Protestants, which, of course, was a wild exaggeration of Pope's influence and will to interfere in Irish affairs.

Many British and other foreign observers, while trying to analyse the Irish "question", easily resorted to using religious terms for the sake of convenience, although in fact they referred to divisions made on political, not religious grounds. Still there is no reason to doubt A. T. Q. Stuart's classic remark that in Ireland, especially in Ulster, the issues of the Reformation were still alive in the 1900s and 1910s, at least in the minds of the common people.⁹⁰ There were causes for real sectarian bitterness, for example the Catholic decree of 1908 which demanded Catholic rites for mixed marriages if they were to be recognized at all. However, the fears of religious persecution were mostly focused on the post-homerule situation in the future, not on the present state of things. Therefore it is justified to conclude that the religious issue was primarily subjected to the main political question, i.e. the position of Ireland in the Empire - or outside it.

3.8 Last attempts to save the Imperial Irish citizenship

Although Home Rule legislation was postponed, and Ireland seemed to be relatively peaceful after 1893, both the English Liberals and Conservatives found it necessary to develop alternative schemes in order to save their own Parties - and the Empire, they believed - from dissections. In 1904 the Unionists developed an ambitious scheme based on Joseph Chamberlain's fundamental idea in which England, Wales and Scotland, as well as Ireland, would have regional assemblies, while Westminster would retain control over foreign policy, military matters, central taxation and trade policy. This "Home Rule All Round" plan would save the Union, because the Irish "question" would lose its special case status, and the Irish, equipped with sufficient autonomy, would not wish to leave the Union.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Edward Raymond Turner, *Ireland and England* (The Century Co., New York 1920), p. viii, 283. The preface was signed on Sept. 1, 1919.

⁹⁰ Stewart, p. 42.

⁹¹ E. H. H. Green, p. 299.

This latest federal plan coincided with the activities of Sir Anthony Mac-Donnell, a British high official in Dublin, and Lord Dunraven, who had been one of the main architects of the important land reform of 1903. Their scheme in 1904-5 provided for the establishment of a central Irish council which would exercise a specified measure of local autonomy. Dunraven's Unionism recognised the growth of nationalist sentiment in Ireland, which in his view required to be fed and given something sensible to do. If the Nationalists were given control over their own affairs, "the more self-control will they acquire, and the sooner will the last flickering flames of class and sectarian animosity die out".⁹² In 1912 Dunraven attempted to call a large general assembly representing all Irishmen, in order to settle the Ulster problem, but this came too late.

Dunraven's "devolution" plans, however, aroused accusations of betrayal by other prominent Unionists, because the scheme seemed to be a concession to the Nationalists. The same reaction from the opposite direction came from the Irish nationalists when the Liberal Government introduced the Irish Councils Bill in 1906-7. John Redmond and his Parliamentary Party condemned it out of hand, because the Bill was too moderate compared with the original Home Rule plan.⁹³ The general election of 1910 then resulted a narrow victory for the Government which felt to be free, with the support of the Irish vote, to carry out the Home Rule for Ireland alone.

During the 1893-1914 period the more radical sections of Irish nationalists had developed new ideas for their movement and new national symbols, which ultimately made the Home Rule issue appear in a new light. They provided an exclusively Irish culture, based on Gaelic tradition and language, which would gradually lead to the de-Anglicization of Ireland. The new concept of the British Empire, which eventually led to the establishment of the Commonwealth, as an organic unity and as comprising of "sister states" instead of appendages of the parent country, did not appease the new generation of Irish Nationalists any more than a moderate self-government.

The progress of separation was not left unrecorded by English observers, although some Conservative politicians still believed that Home Rule could be "killed with kindness", i.e. by offering Ireland new economic benefits and more

⁹² Dunraven, *The Outlook...*, pp. 250-1.

⁹³ Boyce 1996, pp. 43, 46.

freedom in trade. After a two month's tour in Ireland Sydney Brooks, a correspondent of Daily Mail, wrote in 1907 that there was a movement on foot, "more revolutionary than any even she has ever known". Brooks did not hesitate to name it a national resurrection, self-realisation and self-dependence: in short "Ireland is becoming Irish". Reminding his readers that England had applauded similar movements in Hungary, Bohemia, Poland and Finland, Brooks demanded at least understanding towards the Irish movement. His description of the present state in Ireland was full of enthusiasm and obviously he had adopted some poetry of the Nationalist prophets: "There is no more fascinating than the rebirth of an ancient nation... They are recovering their collective soul; they are reviving their racial consciousness; they are being swept and invigorated by the returning spirit of essential nationhood." Most of all, Brooks was surprised by the deliberate work of the Nationalists to revive the Irish language which, Brooks admitted, the English had destroyed in the 19th century.⁹⁴

When the British politicians and other observers of daily political events realised the change of mood in Ireland, including the growing Unionist counter-attack in Ulster, the image of one Irish nation lost its political credibility. The main reason was that, by 1914, the Home Rule issue had turned to be primarily a question of Ulster. Indeed, the unity of Ireland in a cultural sense, as declared by Irish Nationalists, was regarded as sentimentality and not politics from a British point of view.⁹⁵ Although the British Liberals were still committed - in order to prevent more severe complications - to all-Ireland Home Rule, the Ulster mutiny, the World War and the Easter rebellion of 1916 outdated the possibility of a unified Irish policy. The Conservatives in turn could be nothing but surprised how the Ulster case, their main argument against Liberal politics, had indeed - torpedoed the establishment of one autonomous Irish administration. As E. H. H. Green has recently shown, not all the British Conservatives enjoyed their victory, because Irish disintegration meant forsaking their allies in southern Ireland, and internal borders - such as the coming Irish land boundary - would not promote Imperial unity, either.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Sydney Brooks, *The New Ireland* (Maunsell & Co., Dublin 1907), pp. 1, 20.

⁹⁵ A contemporary perception by C J. C. Street in his anonymous book *The Administration of Ireland* (Philip Allan & Co., London 1921), p. 396.

⁹⁶ E. H. H. Green, pp. 301-4.

Despite the repeated negotiations between 1912-18 the British Governments were unable to carry out the Home Rule in its original form. The main obstacle was the Unionist resistance in Ulster, supported by notable British politicians, Government officials and sections of the Army. After 1916 old alliances between British Liberals and Irish Nationalists, and similarly between British Conservatives and Ulster Unionists, were broken, which distanced British party politics from the traditional Irish issues. Consequently British parties lost their influence and control over the development in Ireland, which left partition as the only conceivable solution to end the Irish "question", from the British point of view. Finally the settlement of 1921, which gave southern Ireland dominion status, virtually broke the idea of common British citizenship within the British Isles. Its consequences - most of all the permanence of partition - were not immediately visible, but the nationality dispute was well preserved and nourished by the existence of the artificial state formation in the six counties of Ulster.

4 PERSISTENCE OF RACIAL INTERPRETATIONS - CELTIC AND ANGLO-SAXON NATIONS?

4.1 Anglo-Saxon masters and the "subject races"

The basically racist view of England's Irish problems by Thomas Macaulay and his followers has already been discussed, but in order to clarify the relation between the concepts of race and nation in the Irish context it is necessary to examine the question deeper. In the wake of the 20th century racist philosophy and beliefs were still dominating the arguments about existing or potential nations. Not only the great public but many of the famous scholars believed that race, in a biological sense, was the utmost creator of nations. It seemed to be a vital argument for the execution of the Irish partition, too. In his famous defence of the Government of Ireland Act - which virtually created Northern Ireland - the English Prime Minister David Lloyd George, in December 1919, declared that the North-Eastern population of Ireland was, among other divisions, "alien in race" from the rest of the Irish population. And Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Unionists in the Parliament, echoed: "The people of North-East part of Ulster are as different from the South in their race, their religion, their ideals and their views of you as it is possible to imagine".¹ The question now is whether such rhetoric

¹ Lloyd George in the House of Commons, 22 December 1919: "In the North-East of Ireland we have a population - a fairly solid population - alien in race, alien in sympathy, alien in religion, alien in tradition, alien in outlook from the rest of the population of Ireland". As already noted, the "alien race" was a worn-out phrase, used in the 1830s about all Irishmen in the form "alien in blood". Carson spoke in the same meeting. *The (House of Commons) Parliamentary Debates*, vol.

had any support from contemporary scholars, and if it had, what was this North-Eastern Irish "race" in relation to the rest of Ireland, to other British populations and to general racialist theories.

During the latter half of the 19th century British scientists and philosophers, especially Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917), John S. Mill and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) had tried to discover the laws that governed the evolution of species, human culture, society and thinking, believing that progress in general had a positive direction. Regardless of their original thinking, their work was publicly understood to implicate that races had developed from primitive and barbaric stages to higher levels of civilisation, ultimately ending to nationalities. But the progress was not equal, some parts of mankind were more advanced than others, and the obvious reason seemed to be that the mental and physical qualities of races had caused different national potentials for war, industry, commerce and culture. If the race had such immense consequences, it was small wonder that scholars were encouraged to trace all the human races and classify them exhaustively, if possible.

Racial classifications were easily mixed with value-biased hierarchies, and the white race was "naturally" seen as the leader of evolution. Imperialist philosophy, awakened and agitated since the 1880s, emphasized racial rankings based on cultural level, which, of course, were seen through western eyes and parameters. At the top of such rankings were the "master races", at the bottom "subject" or "inferior races". Because the nations were seen as an output of racial breeding or mixing, similar categories were applied also to them. It was not uncommon that populations, and especially "nations" seeking the extension of their political rights, were classified according to their assumed physical characteristics, such as the type of hair or width of nose, or the shape and size of the skull, the object of the craniology school. In politics, racial observations were exploited as arguments in debates concerning the aims of the national movements and the relations between the ruling state and its subordinate territory or colony.

The British racial image of Irishmen carried permanent elements long before Victorian science had to tackle evolutionary theories. Since the late 18th century the epithet "wild Irish" was primarily attached to the Catholic peasantry, the

12/1919 (H.M. Stationary Office, London 1919). In his later memoirs (*Is it Peace and War Memoirs*) Lloyd George seemed to express genuine regret about the permanence of partition.

"servant class", which in the first half of the 19th century had started to migrate in numbers to England in search for permanent or temporary work, like haymaking and harvesting. Not a few of them appeared in city streets as beggars. After 1801 many of the Anglo-Irish landowners had also moved to England, enjoying their Irish rents as "absentee landlords". Being only third or fourth generation Irishmen, they were observed by the English to be easier people to mix with than, for example, the Presbyterian Scots who had their own historical tradition which made them a more isolated society.²

The Fenian campaign and the Irish agitation in the British parliament after the mid-19th century did not improve the English image of Irishmen. The Victorian cartoonists in London and New York draw the Fenians as Frankensteins, vampires or apes, and the photographs of old Irish families and village meetings were thought to reveal more than a usual percentage of longish faces, with a notable chin prognathism.³ The racist stereotype picture of Irishmen made little difference between the southern Catholics or the Protestants, the Anglo-Irish or the Old English, although British historians had shown long ago that many well-known Irish families in fact descended from the same Anglo-Normans who had invaded England.⁴ Both the loyal and disloyal Irishmen were presented equally "wild and prognathous".⁵

The racist rhetoric of notable historians and politicians, such as Macaulay, Froude, Freeman, Charles Dilke and Joseph Chamberlain (the Unionist leader), strengthened beliefs of the British public that the Irish were racially inferior compared with the English. The argument that Home Rule could not be granted to Irishmen because they were a "primitive subject race", was common in British newspapers. The racist doctrines and rhetoric were exploited both by the British Conservatives and the Liberals. If there was any difference of opinion, it merely concerned the question of how the subject races should be governed.

² Michael Duffy, *The Englishmen and the Foreigners. The English satirical prints 1600-1832* (Chadwyck-Healey, Cambridge 1986), pp. 21-2.

³ L. Perry Curtis jr., *Apes and Angels. The Irishmen in Victorian Caricature* (Smithsonian Institute, City of Washington 1971), pp. 48-52, 59, 89, and Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge University Press 1990), p. 15.

⁴ Robert Martin, for example, had listed the Desmond, Geraldine and Butler families as Anglo-Norman in origin. During the re-conquest of Ireland in the 16th century these families were regarded as full Irish. Martin, *Ireland before ..*, p. 376.

⁵ L.P. Curtis, p. 46-47.

The fight for power between the races seemed to explain the history of English-Irish relations. The Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon race was the conqueror and colonizer of Ireland, and the Celts were seen as a less organised subject race. Houston S. Chamberlain (1855-1928), a German-English cultural historian, was a well-known preacher of the Teutonic theory before the First World War. His *Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhundert* was translated into English in 1911. In Chamberlain's view the "Teutonic blood" only could explain "the genius and development of our North-European culture" where a definite species of mankind had constituted its "physical and moral basis".⁶ The myth of the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race and culture originated from the same theory, containing that the Saxons were Germanic tribes and that also the Normans had been Germanic conquerors who had established a purely Germanic culture over the Britons and the Celts, remaining then as the dominating cultural element in the British Isles. In questions of racial character many English scholars adopted German influence, such as Ernst Haeckel's (1834-1919) value-biased classifications of races. Many notable English historical writers of the mid-19th century, for example John M. Kemble (1807-1857) and Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) and also later professional historians, such as William Stubbs, Edward Freeman and J. R. Green, favoured the Germanic theory, believing that the continual progress in English history was derived from the ancient forests of Germany.⁷ Yet this distinctive line of the Teutonic inheritance did not become, as Edwin Jones has noted, a central part of the older and more popular "official version" of the English national myth: that everything of value had been born and bred within England itself, independently of Germanic or any other influences.⁸

Generally it seemed, however, that the scholars were not able to offer other than racialist explanations to the question why the Irish, a virile and numerous population, had not developed an empire like the English had done. On the other hand, British historians, other scholars and politicians seldom reached the level of some of their continental colleagues in racial obsessions, which were manifested

⁶ Houston S. Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. II. Transl. by John Lees (John Lane, London/New York 1911), pp. 187-188. The step from Chamberlain's thoughts to the racial doctrines of Nazi-Germany was short. He regarded the Jews as an "alien element" in Europe (Vol. I, p. 326).

⁷ Barnes, pp. 218-9, and Jones, pp. 223-4.

⁸ Jones, pp. 224-5.

in eugenics, plain racism and anti-Semitism. Quasi-scientific advances in perception of racial differences did not dominate British scholarly debates, and many of the scientists and amateur historians worked hard to correct popular misunderstandings. A more critical approach was fostered by the process of modernization in English historical research and anthropology. Research was gradually attached more firmly to universities, historical societies and new archives were founded, more academic chairs established and the recruitment of professors was adjusted to meet higher standards.

Yet racist stereotypes, even if they were partly linguistic rhetoric only, lived long in political debates and declarations, such as Lloyd George's and Edward Carson's partition speeches in 1919. The British politician felt, like Paul M. Kennedy has put it, that his race was a superior one, not because it could demonstrate its correct breeding, but because it seemed to have offered Britain good government, stability and domestic cohesion.⁹ Therefore it was not wise, for the sake of imperial unity, to put too much stress on racial confrontations within the British Isles, but rather to advertise the British statesmanship which seemed to be of superior quality, if a mixture of races, languages and cultures had to be ruled.

Tolerance in racial thinking - as long as European nations were concerned - was helped by the fact that during the last decades of the 19th century the racial leadership of Britain seemed to be challenged by new continental powers, especially by united Germany which was entering world politics with force and energy. The myth of the Teutonic race had been a harmless dream of the German romantics, but within the imperialist competition it became a political weapon. Not only was the British world empire threatened, but it was also feared that British science might be losing the competition to France or Germany where research seemed to be perfectly recruited for the national cause. History seemed to offer a useful political weapon for counter-attacking, and the politicians did not miss the opportunity.

⁹ Paul M. Kennedy, "The pre-war Right in Britain and Germany". In Kennedy & Anthony Nicholls (eds.), *Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914* (The MacMillan Press, London/Basingstoke 1981), p. 5.

4.2 The legendary Celts in Ireland

At the turn of the century the British had some ground to be proud of the fact that their foremost scholars, such as the anthropologists Thomas H. Huxley (1825-1895) and William H. Flower (1831-1899), had been among the first scientists to demonstrate that invading races in world history had, in fact, seldom annihilated weaker races in wars or subjected all of them to slaves, but usually intermingled with them. Indeed, it had been found, after hard work, impossible to divide the whole mankind into races, like the animals and plants into species, on the basis of physical characteristics. What could be done at the most was to measure the physical features of populations in proportional ratio, which was constantly changing due to mixed marriages, wars and "racial" expansions. These conclusions made by leading British scholars gradually changed the concept of the "Celtic" and "Anglo-Saxon" nations, although there existed deep-rooted myths about "original" settler races.

The controversy about the Celts had raged among European historians, anthropologists, philologists and archaeologists since the 1860s. Prominent craniologists, such as Pierre Broca (1824-1880) in France, Joseph Davis (1801-1881) and John Thurnam (1810-1873) in Britain, had observed that the Celtic speaking peoples in France and in Britain were, instead of the tall and blond Gauls described by the classical writers, in fact mainly short and of dark complexion. They placed the Celtic racial type in the Middle and West European regions, but the fact that not all the Celtic speakers matched the stature or colour caused a great confusion in terminology. The different looking or differently speaking "Celts" were called either Celts, Gauls, Kymri, Goidels¹⁰ or Gaels, depending of the country and the scholar's opinion, but usually Celtic referred to the "original" West-European race and Gaelic¹¹ to its British and Irish branch.

¹⁰ *Goidels* was an invented name by the Welsh scholar Sir John Rhys for the first Celtic invaders of Ireland. Accordingly the ordinary Irish form of Celtic language, undoubtedly influenced by unknown pre-Celtic languages, was named *Goidelic*. The earliest written form of Irish, based on Latin alphabet, was named *Ogham*.

¹¹ During the 19th century the term Gael usually referred to the native language of the Scots only, but its adoption by the Irish nationalists widened the general meaning to include the native languages and culture of Scotland and some western parts of Great Britain, Ireland and Man Island.

In Ireland, the confusion and controversy about the Celts did not shatter legendary views of the Irish past. Racial theories intermingled with stories of the first Irishmen, and the energetic Celtic race was seen as the basis of the ancient as well as the modern Irish nation. One of the legends told that Noah's granddaughter and her party¹² had sailed northwards from Iberian peninsula to Ireland, others that the Milesians (sons of Miled or Milesius¹³) had come from the region now known as Hungary, via "Spain", invading Ireland from the half-human Danaans.¹⁴

The Iberian peninsula had a special status in the legends, because it was believed to be the first region inhabited after the Deluge by Iber, who came from Caucasia. Similar legends, based on Biblical and classical writings, had been popular entertainment in 18th-century Britain, but in Ireland they survived longer. According to the standard doctrine of Irish history, the pre-Viking kings who had ruled the whole island from Tara formed a continuous line of descent as far as to 1600 BC. In *The Story of Ireland*, first written by Alex M. Sullivan (1867) and re-edited several times by others, the invasion of Ireland by the sons of Milesius was presented as containing "tolerably precise and satisfactory information". There was "abundant evidence that at least two or three 'waves' of colonization had long previously reached the island; but it is not very clear whence they came".¹⁵

Professor Alexander G. Richey (1830-1883), at Trinity College, explained in the early 1880s that the two distinctive types of characters in Irish legends reflected a tradition of contest between the intruding Aryan Celts and the previous Iberian inhabitants; the first were fair-haired, musical and experts of Druidical magic and arts, the latter were black-haired, noisy and described often as thieves or slaves. The original race was gradually subjugated, but its physical

¹² According to the Irish annals, their arrival took place 40 days before the Deluge, 1656 years after the Creation. The story went that they were not allowed to enter Noah's Arch, being therefore obliged to build their own boat. The party consisted of 50 girls but only three men. Kenneth Nicholls (ed.), *The Four Masters. Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*. Vol. I (De Búrca Rare Books, Dublin 1990), p. 2-3.

¹³ Milesius was the Latin form of "Mil Espaine", hero from Spain in Irish.

¹⁴ T. W. Rolleston, a TCD scholar, assumed later that the Danaans were the last pagan people in Ireland and that the Milesian legend was a product of Christian influence. Rolleston, *Celtic. Myths and Legends* (reprinted by Senate, London 1994), p. 130.

¹⁵ Alex(ander) M. Sullivan, *The Story of Ireland*. First published in 1867, re-edited "by a well-known author" (M.H. Gill & Son., Dublin 1909), p. 11.

features remained dominant in western parts of Ireland. The Milesian saga was firmly attached to the Celts, Richey confirmed, except that the brown- or red-haired Milesians were of Scottish origin, probably "derived from a mixture of Celtic and Iberian blood like the Celtiberians in Spain".¹⁶

As the possibility of "Scottish Milesians" indicated, there were different and conflicting elements in the Milesian saga. According to one of them, Milead's grandfather had looked westwards from his tower, seeing the Irish coast in the distance.¹⁷ Since it was impossible to see Ireland looking west of Spain, the tower obviously should have been in some part of the Great Britain. *The Story of Ireland* by Sullivan explained that the Milesians had in fact sailed from land to land seeking an island promised to the posterity of their ancestor, Gadelius.¹⁸ Because the Milesians were restless sailors, it was easy to believe that they could have arrived from any direction.

The origin of the Celts was, if possible, even more imaginary in the Irish legends. According to John O'Hart's Irish genealogy (1892) the Celts, descendants of the Scythians, included all ancient and modern Europeans - except the Lapps and the Finns. The religious interpretation of the legends warned, however, against making the race a barrier between people, because "God has made of one blood all nations of men".¹⁹ The Scythians in turn represented a similar, old legendary element in European history. Eighteenth-century English historians, such as John Pinkerton and John Whitaker, had regarded them as the parent race of all great peoples in history, and only through the infusions of Scythian blood had some Celtic races managed to rise to some level of civilization. The Scythians and the Goths were thought to be the same. Bound with their time, such conclusions of the Scythian theory have been interpreted as a British political attack against assumed French dream of a universal monarchy, and the dangerous connections between revolutionary France and United Irishmen thus received the

¹⁶ A.G. Richey (professor of feudal and English law) , *A Short History of the Irish People* (ed. postmortem by Dr. Robert Kane, Hodges & Figgis, Dublin 1887), pp. 23, 28

¹⁷ Rolleston, *Celtic...*, p. 130.

¹⁸ Sullivan, *The Story ...*, p. 12.

¹⁹ John O'Hart, *Irish Pedigrees or The Origin and Stem of the Irish Nation*, vol. I (1st publ. 1892, reprinted by Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore 1976), pp. 9-10, 12.

possibility of a racial alliance.²⁰

In popular usage the Celtic languages, culture and physical race were mixed, even by well-known historians, and only a few exceptional individuals had the courage and intellect to question such stereotypes before the 20th century. One of the amateur historians who rose against the professional authorities, especially Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903), Macaulay, Froude and Freeman, criticizing their idea of a fixed national type of character, was William Dalton Babington (1825?-1893). In his posthumously published *Fallacies of Race Theories* (1895) Babington hit the nail on the head when he wrote that "the Celtic race theory is acceptable alike to the Irish patriot and to the English apologist for English rule". The former pointed at the virtues and the glory of the ancient Celts, but it was "almost as easy for the hostile critic to show that they were irreclaimable barbarians, treacherous and silly". Therefore the fact of mixed races in Britain and Ireland was not popularly accepted, Babington assumed. Leaning on Thomas Huxley, Babington was convinced that the same migrations and invasions that had produced a "mixed race of Celtic, Scandinavian, Saxon, and French elements", had also effected in Ireland. The proportions of these elements varied in different districts of Great Britain and Ireland, starting from strong Scandinavian influence in eastern England and ending to the "Celtic population" in the west of Ireland. The people of the western parts of England and the Irishmen had a similar warrant to call themselves Celts, but "historic causes" had long ago disrupted the racial identity and produced the unity of England instead.²¹

Babington did not accept the theory that national characteristics were inherited, through generations, from ancient races or populations. The manners, customs and habits of a nation were in fact changing "like the rest of the world". Steadiness of mind, dislike of levity, simple dressing or personal cleanliness, on which the Englishmen "now justly pride themselves", had not always been

²⁰ Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism. A Cultural History 1740-1830* (St. Martins's Press, New York 1987), p. 115.

²¹ William Dalton Babington, *Fallacies of Race Theories as applied to National Characteristics* (Longman's, Green & Co, London 1895), pp. 233-5, 239. Babington's person and background remain somewhat unclear. According to his friend who collected his essays to be published, Babington had been collecting material for a larger history of the principal European nations. The death registrations in the Family Records Centre, London, suggest that William Babington (68 years), died 15 June 1893 in Brighton, was a retired Captain with "merchant service". Relation to William Babington (1756-1833), an Ulster-born London mineralogist, and his son Guy Benjamin B. (1794-1866), physician and linguist, is not out of the question.

attributed to the English character, Babington noted. Consequently the "Celtic blood" was only an idle pretext and not an explanation for the assumed difference of the Irish and English character. Like many of his temporaries, Babington regarded the Irish less intelligent, less law-respecting and less sober than the English, but he accounted the reasons of difference mainly environmental, caused not by race but by factors like climate and soil, social influences, administration of the law, political history and "religion or its absence". Babington's book aroused little attention among contemporaries and later scholars, although it was much above the understanding of the age in which he lived. His conclusion is still valid: "The instability of national characteristics ought to warn us that a fixed national portrait is a vain thing, and that all theories which derive these changing phenomena from an unchanging cause are utterly baseless".²²

Before discussing the views of Eoin MacNeill, one of the foremost scholars in Ireland at that time, a few more racial theories, outside Ireland, have to be introduced. Professor William Z. Ripley (1867-1941), member of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, lectured on races at - Columbia University, New York, during the fall of 1896, attempting to clarify the concepts and reduce the number of assumed European racial types. Ripley ended up with three main types: Teutonic, Alpine (Celtic) and Mediterranean. The Teutons were the most characteristic, being restricted to north-western Europe, with a centre of dispersion in Scandinavia. They were the real *Homo Europeaus* to Ripley, because the other two types had spread beyond the confines of the continent, the Alpine type to Asia and the Mediterranean type to Africa.²³ Ripley preferred the term Alpine, first proposed by Linnaeus, for the second type, because linguists "were best entitled to the name Celt", but he warned that they "should be utterly denied the use of word *race*"²⁴. Confusion was increased by the archaeologists who, "with less reason" than the linguists, assigned the name Celt to all populations whose culture seemed Celtic. Ripley's Alpine or Celtic broad-headed racial type followed the mountainous regions of Europe, whether in

²² Ibid., pp. 12, 236-7, 246.

²³ William Z. Ripley, *The Races of Europe. A sosiogical study*. D. Appleton and Co., New York 1899 (Johnson Reprint Corporation, New York 1965), p. 121. Ripley either omitted (forgot?) the North-American colonisation as a racial expansion of the "Teutons", or he thought of pre-modern racial distribution only.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 128.

France, Spain, Germany or Albany, and was therefore hardly recognizable in Ireland.

A widely-read contribution to the racial debate was given by the French-Russian writer and librarian Joseph Deniker (1852-1918), whose English edition of *Les races et les peuples de la terre* was published in 1900. His idea of the "Nordic race" had become known among anthropologists during the 1890s, but his ideas of nationalities were also significant. Deniker made a distinction between races and nations. The latter could be classified according to "ethnic" elements which were mainly linguistic, sociological and geographical, produced by the environment, but they had nothing to do with race. In Deniker's classification Europe was divided into the *Aryan* and *Anaryan* linguistic group and into one geographical group, that of the Caucasians. The Aryans were sub-divided into six ethno-linguistic groups, the Germans and the English belonging to the same (Teutonic) group, and the Bretons and Gaels to the Celts who also were linguistically "Aryans".²⁵

Despite his pioneering ethnic classification of nations, Deniker repeated some of the conventional groupings of Europeans according to their "somatological" features, such as the colour of skin, hair and eyes, and the shape of nose and body.²⁶ Deniker's fair (white, reddish or brown) haired "xantochroids", i.e. the Nordic race which inhabited eastern and northern Europe including northern Germany, Great Britain and Ireland, were understood by many as a synonym for the Teutonic race, because he had used that term earlier, but in *The Races of Man* Deniker classified the Teutons as a linguistic subdivision of the Aryans. These linguistic Teutons included all the English-speakers.²⁷ Deniker's observations were more accurate than those made by many of the professional anthropologists, but they left room to doubts about the existence of races in a "zoological" sense, which he recognised himself.

It seems that these theories raised little attention among Irish scholars. The

²⁵ Joseph Deniker, *The Races of Man* (Walter Scott, London 1900), pp. 295-6.

²⁶ In Deniker's groupings the "western Finns", i.e. those living in Finland, were promoted to the eastern "white European race", i.e. the xantochroids, whereas earlier theories had listed them as Mongols or "Turanians". To Deniker the Lapps were a separate race group, and the language of both the Finns and the Lapps belonged to the great "Anaryan" group. Joseph Deniker, *The Races of Man* (Walter Scott, London 1900), pp. 295-6.

²⁷ Deniker, *The Races..*, p. 294, and Ripley, *The Races..*, p. 128: "In many respects Deniker's name of Nordic would be better than Teuton " (for Ripley's first racial type of Europeans).

less educated classes, at least, were content with being Celts, either in the physical or linguistic sense. The conclusion that all the Irish should be promoted to the Teutonic or Nordic race, due to the lack of a Celtic physical type, certainly was unconvincing before the 20th century, because it made no distinction between the English and Irish. Nevertheless, Deniker's "Nordic race" was soon mixed with the Teutons and Anglo-Saxons, giving a Scandinavian flavour to the Teutonic theory.

In the second decade of the new century the concept of racial blending in the British Isles raised no opposition. Ripley's and Deniker's opinion that the name Celt should be used of a linguistic and not a racial group, was perfectly shared by Eoin MacNeill, the leading nationalist historian of the time in Ireland. In his public lectures between 1917-18, published in 1919 with the title *Phases of Irish History*, MacNeill stated that if the word race had any value "in clear thinking", it should mean a collection of people whose bodily character, "inherited from their ancestors and perhaps modified by climate and occupation", would distinguish them notably from the rest of mankind. However, no such distinction was ever made by those who had seriously investigated the so called Latin, Teutonic, Anglo-Saxon or Celtic race. All these popular names were in fact a mixture of races, and for the most part a mixture of the same races, though not in every case in the same proportions, MacNeill concluded.²⁸

MacNeill also remarked that the first inhabitants in Ireland in fact were not the so called Celts. The popular misunderstanding was caused, MacNeill explained, by classical Greek writers who did not know any other populations in the western and eastern parts of Europe but the Celts and the Scythians. The Celtic invasion in the Danube, Rhine and Elbe valleys (around 500-200 BC) covered the people behind them from the observance of Greek geographers, and although Herodotos had a name for the people west of the Celts (Kunésioi or Kunétai), nothing was known about these in the classic world. According to MacNeill, the Celts had moved southwards and westwards, invading Spain and arriving in Ireland by about 250 BC, but unlike the popular legends told about the migrations, the Celts had not exterminated the older population.²⁹

The controversy about the Celts had shown that languages were not necessarily related to the racial origin of populations. Clearly, it seemed, the Celtic

²⁸ Eoin MacNeill, *Phases of Irish History*. First published in 1919 (reprint by Gill & Son, Dublin/Sydney 1968), p. 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11, 14-15.

languages had been adopted by different races, although the reasons for this remained mysterious. These conclusions made by MacNeill and leading British scholars were not easily digested by the Irish or British popular opinion, because they seemed to be in conflict with the ancient legends concerning the origin of the Irish, and the British, too.

The popular classification of the Irish as a "Celto-Iberian race"³⁰ referred to the theory that the Neolithic populations of Ireland, Western Gallia and the Iberian peninsula were of the same racial stock, with which the Celts later blended. Eoin MacNeill, however, rejected the Iberian theory, as well as the Celtic theory of the first Irishmen, suggesting that the first inhabitants in Ireland had been the *Pretani*, according to the Pretanic Islands known by the Gauls. These people, who were most numerous in Ulster, were later called the *Picts*. Later he claimed that the arts, crafts and monuments of the Irish Bronze Age must chiefly be merited to the Pretani/Picts, and not to the Celts. In this statement MacNeill joined the opinion of the Welsh historian Sir John Rhys (1840-1915).³¹

The Iberian theory, MacNeill remarked in *Phases of Irish History*, seemed to rest on a few lines by Tacitus, the Roman historian. Tacitus had described the Silures, a Welsh tribe that had fiercely opposed the Romans, as being swarthy and curly haired, proposing that they might originally have crossed the sea from Spain.³² Therefore it was logical for the Romans to believe in the Irish invasion by the Silures on their way to England. The Iberian nature of the first Irish settlement had also been adopted by a medieval British geographer, Geoffrey (of Monmouth) whose *Historia Regum Britanniae* (ca. 1138) was regarded as an authority till the 18th century.³³ Geoffrey had, on the other hand, given birth to the legend of an ancient "English" possession of Ireland, by claiming that King Arthur had expanded his empire to Ireland even before the Anglo-Saxons and Normans.³⁴

In any case, historical evidence was "silent about any expansion (of the Celts)

³⁰ Used, for example, by G.M. Trevelyan in his *History of England* (first ed. 1926).

³¹ See Eoin MacNeill, *Celtic Ireland* (Martin Lester, Dublin 1921), p. xiii, and MacNeill, "History", in *Saorstát Éireann: Irish Free State official handbook* (The Talbot Press, Dublin 1932), p. 42.

³² MacNeill, *Phases...*, pp. 62-63.

³³ J.S.P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain* (Univ. of California Press, Berkeley 1950), p. 50.

³⁴ Andrew Hadfield, "Briton and Scythian: Tudor representations of Irish Origin". *IHS* vol. XXVIII, No. 112 (1993), p. 390.

northward", i.e. from Spain to Ireland, MacNeill argued.³⁵ The Milesian saga to him was even more imaginary, being contradicted by the oldest Irish epic literature and the elements in the story itself. MacNeill's analysis showed that authentic tradition in the folk poems did not go much further back than the fifth century AD, and later research has not added much to this dating.³⁶

MacNeill's remarkable career as a historian and nationalist politician will be examined more closely later, but his realistic approach to Irish legends and racial theories is worth emphasizing even here. On the other hand, the reading public probably could not make a distinction between the Irish legendary history and MacNeill's theory of an ancient Irish national state in which his objectivity could not be defended. The voyages of the legendary Milesians did not disappear from popular Irish histories during MacNeill's active career. Stephen Gwynn, for example, in his *History of Ireland* (1923), and an anonymous "professor of History" in the *School History of Ireland* (1929), were doubtful about the first biblical figures in Irish history, but regarded the Milesian colonisation at least partially a historical fact.³⁷ Gwynn admitted that these first invaders of Ireland, who were "simply Gaels", probably never called themselves Milesians. The name was invented, he explained, only after the Roman "Miles" (Miletus?) had become known in the western world.³⁸ In professional historiography the legends were, however, gradually being relegated to the folklore section, and when there was need to interpret them as historical sources, a new tentative and critical approach had been established by Eoin MacNeill.

³⁵ MacNeill, *Phases...*, p. 15.

³⁶ Michael Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill. Scholar and Man of Action 1867-1945*. Ed. by F.X. Martin (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1980), p. 91.

³⁷ *School History of Ireland*, "by a professor of History" (M. H. Gill & Son, Dublin 1929), part I, p. 2: "The last colonists... were the Milesians from Scythia, who spent long years in coming through Arabia, Egypt, North Africa and Spain... From these Milesians most of the Irish have their descent and... the Milesian strain predominates in the gaelic portions of this country".

³⁸ Stephen Gwynn, *The History of Ireland* (MacMillan & Co., London 1923), p. 3. Whether Gwynn based his theory of the Roman influence in the Milesian legend to any research or authority, is irrelevant here, but it shows the confusing interpretations of the legends.

4.3 Anglo-Saxon race consciousness and the Ulster colony

A cultural race consciousness was a more delicate form of racist thinking than plain faith in existing racial types. One of the most prominent advocates of the Anglo-Saxon race and its cultural mission was Charles Dilke (1843-1911), a famous Liberal politician. In overseas colonies Dilke's Anglo-Saxons, "the leading race of the world", attracted races willing to integrate, and spread culture which was originally Germanic. In Dilke's thinking, as analysed by Anssi Halmesvirta, it was possible for these races to separate from the Empire, but not before an integrated colony based on Britishness, race consciousness and English language had developed. After separation the only tie between the colony and the mother country would be the feeling of togetherness, based on instinctive racial consciousness. Without this process, the institutions of the colony could not grow towards democracy, like they had developed during the centuries in the homeland of all Anglo-Saxons, England.³⁹ Liberal politicians and writers, such as Dilke, criticized the British administration in Ireland on the same ground as the colonial administration in cases where it proved to be corrupted and used unnecessary violence, and most of all, had not managed to make the people of the colonies "race conscious Anglo-Saxons". Race consciousness was seen essential to the national spirit of Great Britain and the whole Empire. When established, peaceful federal relationship between the centre and the territories could be possible. The present friendship of England and the USA, the creation of dominions, and later the birth of Northern Ireland seemed to prove the case.

Although racist theories were not received in Britain with overwhelming enthusiasm, other explanations for the supremacy of the "Anglo-Saxon nations" were scarce. The expansion history of the USA and Canada seemed to prove that the Anglo-Saxon, Nordic, Teutonic - or whatever it was called - race was more virile than the "Iberian" or south-western European race which had not succeeded in building similar empires in South-America. The concept of an "Iberian race" had, therefore, a degrading connotation, not only because ancient legends portrayed the Iberians less charming than the Celts, but also because they were regarded less race conscious than the Anglo-Saxons.

³⁹ Halmesvirta 1993, pp. 52-53, 58-59.

During the First World War the myth of the Anglo-Saxon race connection was presented as the vital factor behind the common war efforts and support of the Mother country by the former colonies Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA. It was all the more surprising to the British public that English migration and settlements in southern Ireland had not produced a hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon race - the Easter rebellion demonstrated the contrary. What general theory could explain the Irish desire for separatism, when in Scotland and Wales nothing of that kind seemed to exist?

Right after the war, on the eve of the Irish partition and virtual independence of the southern part, Arthur Keith (1866-1955), MP of London and a prominent English anthropologist, gave his answer at Oxford (1919). His Robert Boyle memorial lecture is worth examining in detail, because this was an opinion of an authority who claimed that the Unionist Ulstermen formed a separate nationality, in the same way as the people of the United States were separate from the British.

At first Keith confirmed the concept of mixed British and Irish races, claiming that even the most expert anthropologist could not tell a Celt from a Saxon or an Irishman from a Scotsman, if the speech and local mannerisms are forgotten. There were, according to Keith, certain physical types which prevailed in one country more than in another, but in stature and colouring, in form of skull and of face, research had revealed only the most minor kind of differences between nationalities: "I do not think a practised craniologist could distinguish the skulls and bones found in an ancient Saxon cemetery in Surrey from the remains of a Celtic grave in Connemara". The origin of the graves was recognisable from the implements, ornaments and utensils buried with the people, not from the bones and skulls.⁴⁰

Keith's message was, however, further-reaching than a plain acceptance of mixed racial types. The immensity of man's whole unwritten history should be taken into account. The reason for modern national conflicts was, in Keith's view, the breaking of "Nature's ancient tribal machinery", which had developed during a million years, and its replacement only recently with designs evolved in the minds of modern statesmen and politicians. There was a connection; national

⁴⁰ Arthur Keith, *Nationality and Race*. Robert Boyle lecture delivered at the Oxford University Junior Scientific Club on Nov. 17, 1919 (Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press 1919), pp. 22-23.

spirit grew from inherited tribal instincts, but the latter were spontaneous and isolating in effect, descending from the cradles of races, i.e. from family groups with physical and blood frontiers. In modern civilisation the tribal communities had been smashed "to atoms", but the tribal instincts, which the nature had intended for the propagation of new human breeds, had come down to modern man in undiminished force. This, Keith argued, was the clue to all national and racial troubles. Although the tribes had united to form nations, it was a mistake to believe that the subconscious instincts had wholly been converted into a sense of common nationality.⁴¹

Keith saw two kinds of national movements taking place in Europe. If tribal feelings are fed "from below" and made to dominate in the minds of the people, the result would be disintegrative for the state, even if the populations were of the same racial composition, like in the case of Norway and Sweden (separated in 1905). Such a development was contrary to Keith's idea of nationalization; in other words Norway, like Ireland, had not yet found its true nationality. Conversely all great nationalities of Europe - Italy, Spain, France, Great Britain and Germany - had been built up by fusion. How had it been possible in these countries to resist all the natural inherited forces tending to disruption? In Keith's explanation reason overcame natural forces; the process of fusion could be effected by protectionist economic policy, by building a transport and communication system within the country, and by propaganda which converts the tribal spirit to national feeling. In Britain, for example, the sense of nationality, which usually was dormant, made sixty millions of people to act "as if they were members of a Highland clan" in case of an external threat. Keith was not hopelessly pessimistic about Ireland joining the clan, although it might cost Britain "a century of patent courtship".⁴²

National fusion was the mainstream of progress to Keith. The United States was seen as a great testing place for the future mankind which would not be obsessed with nationality. In Keith's words there was in the USA "a machinery at work which maintains racial frontiers but breaks down all national barriers".⁴³ Why, then, had the British statesmanship not succeeded in converting the Irish

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8, 32-33, 35.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 39.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

"tribal instincts" to British national feeling? And why it had succeeded in Ulster - or had it?

Keith explained that there had in fact existed two types of colonisation in recent history; "forced" or "artificial" and "spontaneous". Echoing the Teutonic theory he declared that the peoples of Canada and the USA were "as effective... as concerned their chances of survival, as the original Nordic stock". The South African experiment, in contrast, had produced nothing equal, "either in body or mind" compared to the pioneering Iberian conqueror race. Keith's explanation was that the Iberians, being closer to African races, had carried "a lesser degree of race-caste" to the new colonies, thus mixing more easily with the native Indians and hence losing their original energy. The Nordic race in northern America had not notably mixed with the aboriginals, but pushed instead the Indians before them and finally isolated them onto reservations. The Nordic race had, in Keith's view, organised their migration more effectively than the "Iberians", bringing to North-America large groups of race conscious Anglo-Saxons with their homeland values and customs - instead of private adventures. This was a show of force from the Nordic races, Keith declared. In contrast, the conquistadors and their followers in South America were never able to establish "real colonies".⁴⁴

Keith applied his theory also to Ireland, maintaining that a "plantation" had taken place in southern Ireland and a "colonization" in the North. Although more English blood had been planted to Munster and Leinster than to Ulster, the spontaneity of the Northern colonial exodus had produced a Unionist spirit, despite the lesser number of settlers. Because not forced, but "allowed" to move, the Scottish and North-English farmers had carried their national spirit to the new land, Ulster. In contrast, Queen Elizabeth I, King James I and Cromwell had sent their colonists to "Irish tribal lands", thus exposing them to the tribal spirit then animating the natives. The Southern colonists absorbed the tribal spirit, Keith believed, because it was more primitive and easier to understand than a sense of nationality, and therefore they remained a mere "plantation". In Ulster, however, a small scale repetition of the Saxon colonization of England took place. Although the Ulster settlers had preserved their Anglo-Saxism, they also manifested "all the qualities of a new nationality", in the same way as the former North American colony, the present USA. Keith saw, on the other hand, that there existed a wider

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 11-14.

British nationality, raised by the British statesmanship which included all the inhabitants of the British Isles - all save the greater part of Ireland.⁴⁵

The timing of Keith's lecture is important, because in 1919 the postponing of the Irish partition was no more practicable to the British Government. The revolutionary Sinn Féin parliament (Dáil) had assembled in Dublin, establishing an "Irish Government" which, to no one's surprise, did not prove any more attractive to the Ulster Unionists than the Home Rule plans. The probability of the exclusion of the six Northern counties from the general Irish administration had, since Easter 1916, grown significantly and the prospect was publicly discussed. Keith's declaration of a "new nationality" in Ulster was, therefore, not unexpected, but so far it had not been wrapped with scientific theory. It was soon accompanied with less racist theories of Ulster nationality, and copied by lesser authorities.

Later, while visiting the British Association at Edinburgh in 1921, Keith suggested that all Scotsmen, Irishmen, Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons actually came from the same racial stock. Scotland was inhabited from Ireland, although at the same time a large "Mediterranean" population came from the south, probably as "a disturbing element". The "disturbing Mediterraneans" were the same people as Iberians in Keith's earlier lecture, and he now seemed to have adopted the myth of the Nordic race to include the first Irishmen, too. The conclusion drawn by Keith was that if there was to be independence in Ireland on an anthropological basis, it was the North and not the South that had the real claim to the country.⁴⁶ This was, of course, a retrospective justification for the creation of Northern Ireland which in 1921 was being set up.

The Irish Nationalists naturally attempted to defy such arguments, as later will be seen more closely. In the year of Keith's speech at Edinburgh, a nationalist propaganda book *Ireland and the Ulster Legend* was published in which the writers, including Sophie Bryant, daughter of a TCD fellow, fought the conception of the Unionist ideology that Ulster was superior in prosperity, civilization and race and should therefore be treated separately from the rest of Ireland. Bryant pointed out that at least the rural people in Ulster were no more prosperous "in the worldly sense" than those in southern Ireland, and that Ulster had suffered from

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 22, 29-30.

⁴⁶ According to a contemporary report by author James Logan, in his *Ulster in X-Rays* (Arthur H. Stockwell, London 1923), p. 21.

emigration as much as the other provinces.⁴⁷ In 1921, however, all propaganda for the unification was too late.

4.4 The Scotch-Irish "race" in Ulster

The tradition of emphasizing the Scottish element in the Ulster population understandably originated from the 17th-century settlements, but the Anglo-Irish Union gave this tradition new political importance. A Scotsman John Harrison, of Edinburgh, wrote in 1888 that the Union had brought back the English and Scottish settlers "into full communion with the great national life which they had a right to share, and opened up to them a part in the great future of what we lovingly call the English nation".

Harrison's racial view of the Ulster settlement was typical, but he was ahead of his time by refuting religious terminology. He saw only two races in Ulster - of which he consciously avoided religious titles because they "indeed have little to say in the matter" - the Scots with their comfortable houses and regular conduct in business, and the Irish who were more negligent in their habitations and less regular in their conduct, and who had "a total disposition to manufacture". Both were industrious, although in a different way, Harrison admitted. In certain parishes, he claimed, the division was so clear as if the people "belonged to different countries and regions". Harrison was, of course, against the newly proposed Irish Home Rule, because the cleavage could be closed only "in the full communion of that great empire in which both may well glory". It was their racial origin that gave Ulstermen their "inalienable right" to protest against the policy of separation from Great Britain, Harrison declared.⁴⁸

Before the more professional Ulster histories by Ramsay Colles (1919/20) and David Chart (1927), a flow of popular half-historical books orderly repeated racialist theories and opinions about Ulstermen. A Presbyterian Rev. James B. Woodburn probably had Harrison's title *The Scot in Ulster* in mind when he published his *Ulster Scot* in 1914. By then the rejection of recognizable Celtic,

⁴⁷ Sophie Bryant, "The Ulster Legend" in W. A. McKnight (ed.), *Ireland and the Ulster Legend or the Truth about Ulster* (P.S. King & Son, London 1921), pp. 11-13.

⁴⁸ Harrison, *The Scot..*, preface and p. 100. The text was originally published in the Scotsman (Edinburgh) in columns.

Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon populations by scientists encouraged popular racial theorists to suggest that perhaps the blending of races might be more valuable than previously thought. Woodburn wanted to refute the theory of two races in Ireland, namely that the northern part of Ireland would be of Saxon (Teutonic) extraction and the southern part of Celtic extraction. Such a theory was "like many of the opinions about Ireland, entirely erroneous", Woodburn noted, declaring that "the whole population is a mixture of Celtic and Teutonic, and the Ulsterman has probably as much Celtic blood as the Southerner".⁴⁹

To Harrison the English portion in the "steady and patient" Ulster race had been so small that he scarcely mentioned it at all. When it became clear that this "race" would maintain their British connection, even by force if needed, other than Scottish racial characteristics were more easily attached to it. Francis F. Moore, a Belfast author and playwright, wrote in 1914 that Ulstermen seemed to him "a roughly-forged link" between the Scottish Lowlanders and English Highlanders.⁵⁰ In 1920, when Ireland was formally divided into two self-governing parts, two more books that praised the Scottish virtues in Ulster population were published. An English college teacher L. B. Cundall in his text book *A Human Geography of the British Isles* explained the industrial energy of Ulster with the "mixed population - Scots, Germans, Dutch, French and native Irish", significantly in this order.⁵¹ Doctor H. S. Morrison, of Coleraine, in turn gave publicity to the slogan that an Ulster Scot in fact was "a Scotchman improved by the three hundred years' residence in Ulster".⁵²

In England the new theories of racial blending echoed in national propaganda. Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) wrote fierce poems defending the Ulster Unionists and helped to finance the arming of their movement.⁵³ Kipling declared in his speech at the Royal Society of St. George (1920) that the essence of Englishness was the "continuity of immensely varied race-experience and race

⁴⁹ James B. Woodburn, *The Ulster Scot. His History and Religion* (H.R. Allenson, London 1914), p. 17.

⁵⁰ Francis Frankfort Moore, *The Truth of Ulster* (Eveleigh Nash, London 1914), p. 70.

⁵¹ L.B. Cundall, *A Human Geography of the British Isles* (T. Nelson, London 1920), p. 295.

⁵² H.S. Morrison, *Modern Ulster. Its character, customs, politics and industries* (H.R. Allenson, London 1920), p. 17.

⁵³ Stewart, pp. 55-56, 135-136. Kipling, like professor Albert Dicey, was among the first signatories of the British Covenant of 1914.

memory" and that they were, in Daniel Defoe's words "akin to all the Universe".⁵⁴ Notions like this helped to foster popular ideas of common British nationhood, although they came too late to prevent the Irish partition.

Because Eoin MacNeill rejected the popular theories of existing racial types, it was logical that he condemned all theories of an Ulster race. In 1915 he wrote that an "Ulster Unionist was taught to regard himself as full-blooded Teuton and his Catholic neighbour as a full-blooded Celt", although the Ulster planters were in fact more Celtic in origin than many Leinster Catholics. But the consciousness of belonging to a higher race was so alluring that the "illusion of race... makes Ulster Unionist pro-British and anti-Irish", MacNeill concluded.⁵⁵ In Unionist arguments the assumed racial division was, indeed, more emphasized than in Irish Nationalist propaganda. Following the tradition of Anthony Froude, Edward Carson, the leader of Ulster Unionists, was told to have convinced his friend that "the Celts have done nothing in Ireland but create trouble".⁵⁶

MacNeill's opinion was adopted by leading Nationalist politicians. Éamon de Valéra, as president of the first Irish Dáil (Parliament), while objecting the British propaganda claim of one homogenous Ulster population, paid special attention to the racial aspect during his American tour 1919-20. In his statement de Valéra saw a separate Ulster mixture of races utterly uncomprehensible: "There is no such racial block. This Ulster is a thing in the mind only, non-existent in the world of realities".⁵⁷

The administrative entity of Northern Ireland was, however, soon a reality, and attempts to fit its whole population to old racial typologies produced strange versions of the Celtic theory. Author James Logan, in his *Ulster in the X-rays* (1923), held that Ulstermen were a race of their own, not English, although British in aims and views, nor Scottish or native Irish. To make sure that the racial division went far enough, he claimed that there had been two races in Ireland since 200 BC. Unfortunately, he did not explain how one of them had mixed with the 17th-

⁵⁴ R. Kipling, *England and the Englishmen* (The Royal Society of St. George, London 1920), p. 1. The society had been founded in 1894 "to encourage and strengthen the spirit of patriotism amongst all the classes of the English people".

⁵⁵ Eoin MacNeill, *Shall Ireland be Divided*. Tracts for the Times no. 2 (Irish Volunteer Headquarters, Dublin 1915), p. 7.

⁵⁶ Byrne & McMahon (eds.), p. 34.

⁵⁷ Quoted in John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question 1917-1973* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1983), p. 8.

century Ulster settlers, which conclusion was unavoidable if the existing racial division in Ulster was that old.⁵⁸

James Carty in his *Class-Book of Irish History* (1929) developed Logan's theory by claiming that "Ulster Protestants and Ulster Catholics belong to the same racial stock", namely Scottish-Irish.⁵⁹ The rather desperate attempts by Logan and Carty to define a new multi-religious Ulster race followed the theory of one Celtic or Nordic race dominating Scotland, Ireland and Wales, although scientists had abandoned it long ago. Still it was persistently used also by some Nationalist writers, because it seemed to weaken the claim of a separate Ulster nationality. If the colonising Scots were Celts, and not Anglo-Saxons, the racial argument of an Ulster nationality, in regard to the rest of Ireland, would be dropped. Benedict Fitzpatrick appealed (1922) to the Scottish lexicographer H.C. MacNeagall who had written (1918) that the difference between the Irish and the Scots was only geographical, and not racial. Fitzpatrick had arrived at the same conclusion earlier, stating as a fact that "the Scots were Celts and not English or Teutons".⁶⁰

If the Northern Protestants, instead of being Celts, were Anglo-Saxons, the racial argument of a homogenous Ulster population would similarly be unconvincing, because the Catholics were usually counted as descendants of the "native", predominantly Celtic population. Therefore it was not surprising that defenders of Northern separatism preferred to define all Ulstermen as a race of their own which was not predominantly Anglo-Saxon or Celtic.

The Ulster population was curiously at the cross-roads of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon racial theories. To an enlightened observer none of these theories was able to give clear evidence about the "mysterious" nationality of the Northern Protestants. To declare them as a separate race, compared with all their neighbours, both with the Scots and other Irishmen, was the easiest solution, although contemporary science gave no justification to such a fantasy.

Between the World Wars racialist theories temporarily revived in popular literature, as they did in European politics. Cyril Falls, son of a prominent Unionist from Fermanagh, in his *Birth of Ulster* (1936) admitted that he was not a

⁵⁸ Logan, p. 18.

⁵⁹ James Carty, *A Class-Book of Irish History* (Macmillan, London/Dublin 1929), p. 102.

⁶⁰ Benedict Fitzpatrick, *Ireland and the Making of Britain* (Funk & Wagnallis, New York 1922), p. 333. MacNeagall had written his article in *Scottish Review*. The quotation picked by Fitzpatrick suggests that MacNeagall did not necessarily emphasize either racial unity or difference.

historian and therefore, perhaps, did not perceive any Ulster history beyond the 17th century. That was, however, long enough for Ulster to develop a distinct race. From the English and Scottish settlers "has sprung a clearly-defined race, differing markedly from its parent stocks and to a far extent from its neighbours", Falls concluded.⁶¹

4.5 The first European Nation?

The myth of the Celtic nations was an important political weapon, available for anybody who wanted to counter the political impact of the Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon myth. Indeed, since the establishment of the Gaelic League (1893) the Irish Nationalist movement had launched a defence of Celtic culture, although many still thought that the Celts were also a physical, existing race. The Irish Nationalists, understandably, were not worried if the "Celts-Iberian" race lacked loyalty towards the British empire. The ideology of the Nationalist movement amalgamated general racialist theories with the new concepts of Irish culture, but the word Celt or Gaelic was often used in obscure meaning, without making distinction between language, race and culture. There were dreams of a "Gaelic Commonwealth" which would unite the Catholics and Protestants under an improved "Gaelic Constitution", based not on majority rule but on a rather deceptive "unanimous" selection of rulers.⁶² The extremity of Celtic racialism was perhaps reached in 1929 when Charles O'Donnell, Nationalist ex-MP from Donegal, demanded that the Celtic supremacy should be recognized within the British Isles. His argument was that many of the British Prime ministers had been Celts, and that the scientists had "proved" the Anglo-Saxon racial element to be smaller than previously thought.⁶³

To Eoin MacNeill the invading Celts in ancient Ireland had been "a highly

⁶¹ Cyril Falls, *The Birth of Ulster* (Methuen & Co., London 1936), p. vii.

⁶² William Ferris, *The Gaelic Commonwealth. Being the political and economical program for the Irish progressive party* (Talbot Press, Dublin 1923), pp. 2, 19. The writer was Licentiate of Theology and a priest in Kerry. The program was first published in 1919. Ferris claimed that the ancient Irishmen, whose "genius" was political, had developed a constitution, comparable to the achievements of the Phoenicians in commerce, Greece in art and Israel in religion.

⁶³ Charles O'Donnell, *The Irish Future and the Lordship of the World* (Cecil Palmer, London 1929), p. 13.

progressive people with a strong civilising tendency".⁶⁴ It was primarily because of MacNeill's influence that Celticism was interpreted as a cultural instead of a racial element in the Nationalist ideology. To many other less competent Nationalist historians the assumed racial purity of the Irish, compared to the English who had admitted of being more mixed, offered an irresistible argument for an individual and ancient nationality. Hugh Law, an ex-MP of the Irish Parliamentary Party, wrote in the British series *Nations of To-Day* (1924), that Ireland was "among the oldest of nations in Europe, if age be measured by racial standards". Law admitted, however, that in the veins of the English and the Irish run the same mingled strains of Celtic, Norman and Saxon blood, and "Heaven alone knows what admixture of yet older races".⁶⁵ Stephen Gwynn, Law's parliamentary colleague, who wrote several popular Irish histories in the 1920s, claimed that the Irish had retained their "racial consciousness with a tenacity like that of the Jews". On the other hand, he condemned the tradition of two separate races if one of them had to be the master.⁶⁶

The racial terminology survived long in popular Irish histories, although the physical connotation gradually lost its impetus. Amateur historian Sir James O'Connor, the Irish Attorney General and Lord Justice of Appeal between 1916-24, noted (1925) the existence of different races in Britain and Ireland⁶⁷, and TCD professor Walter A. Phillips listed the "bitter racial and religious antagonisms" as the worst cleavages in Irish life. Phillips divided the elements of which Irish life and character were formed into physical and human sections, the latter containing "race, religion and history".⁶⁸ Edmund Curtis, later professor of Modern History at TCD, started his own *History of Ireland* by ascertaining that "the story has to include at once the native race, Anglo-Ireland, and English government in Ireland".⁶⁹ Most visibly the Irish "race" was present in the titles and slogans of the

⁶⁴ MacNeill, *Phases...*, p. 29.

⁶⁵ R.H. Murray & Hugh Law, *Nations of To-Day. Ireland* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1924), p. 255-256.

⁶⁶ Stephen Gwynn, *Ireland* (Modern World Series, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1925), pp. 11, 124.

⁶⁷ James O'Connor, *History of Ireland 1798-1924. Vol. II* (Edward Arnold & Co., London 1925), p. 254: "the two islands, Britain and Ireland... are inhabited by different races".

⁶⁸ Walter Alison Phillips, *The Revolution in Ireland 1906-1923* (Longmans, Green & Co., London 1923), p. vii, and 2nd edition (1926), p. 2.

⁶⁹ Curtis, *A History...*, p. vi.

"Irish Race Conventions", held in Paris and the United States in the early 1920s.

The importance of the Celtic myth in the late 19th and early 20th century interpretation was that the Celts were seen as the first "Europeans", although they had left from the "shores of Asia".⁷⁰ Popular histories and genealogies presented the Celts as the first inhabitants of Europe after the Deluge⁷¹, and this energetic race was thought to have possessed the best capacities - including shipping skills - of the future European nations. Consequently it was assumed that their language had to be the first European language. If the Irish were one of the purest descendants of this conqueror race, it naturally was an additional "proof" that the Irish were an old European nation, if not the oldest after the Spaniards.

This conviction was not only an extreme Nationalist slogan. Professor A.G. Richey at Trinity College, for example, while rejecting (1887) the legends as historical evidence, had no doubts that Ireland had been a "nation" during the first millennium AD, although by the time of the Norman conquest it "was in the condition of political and social dissolution".⁷² At the time of Richey's book Ireland's autonomy seemed to be approaching peacefully, and the idea of an ancient nation, therefore, was not politically dangerous from the Government's point of view. Richey, of course, could not foresee that during the coming decades nation as a political manifestation would adopt more radical contents: growing demands for independence and the de-Anglicization of the Irish culture.

Arthur Keith, the English anthropologist, concluded in his Robert Boyle lecture (1919) by asserting that from the physical point of view the Celts and the Saxons were one, but he admitted that there was antagonism and conflict between them. Being born in the so-called Celtic fringe (West-Britain), Keith had come to know and recognise the "real and live force" of the Celtic spirit.⁷³ Racial interpretation of Anglo-Irish relations did not, however, substitute conventional religious perceptions and slogans. Racial terminology was rather added to the older political glossary. The Celtic myth helped the Irish Nationalist movement to extend the struggle for self-determination to international dimensions, instead of it remaining a minor quarrel in the British backyard. In addition, the Celtic myth

⁷⁰ Sullivan, *The Story...*, p. 12.

⁷¹ O'Hart, *Irish Pedigrees...*, p. 12.

⁷² Richey, *A Short History...*, p. 126.

⁷³ Keith, *Nationality...*, p. 22.

was needed to support the idea of cultural and racial continuity in the Irish population, which in turn was necessary for the argument that the coming state had its foundation and justification in the ancient society. In the following discussion, in which the development of Irish historiography is more closely examined, the persistence of racialist theories should be remembered, although William Lecky and Eoin MacNeill, the two leading scholar-politicians in the close-up, took a modern, critical view of them.

5 WILLIAM LECKY AND THE "LOYAL" NATION

5.1 Gaelic research and the Trinity College

The change in Protestant Irish sentiment and opinion, and its reflections in religious and political propaganda during the first half of the 19th century have already been outlined. To understand how this process encouraged the idea of two different nationalities in Ireland, traditions of historical learning and research has to be summarized before closer examination of the Unionist concept of a "loyal" Irish nation. The idea culminated in the works and political activity of William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838-1903), the famous Trinity College scholar, before its adoption by Ulster Unionists.

In Ireland, historical research and historical arguments were systematically recruited for political use during the first decades of the 19th century. Debates and propaganda focused on the defence and opposition of the Union, leading ultimately to the creation of two opposing historical traditions: the Protestant, or Anglo-Irish, and the Catholic, or Gaelic-Irish image of Ireland's past. The beginning of the process is well covered by Donal McCartney's, R.F. Foster's and Alvin Jackson's research on which the next passages mainly rest.¹

Native Irish history or "Gaelic research", i.e. research that dealt with and was motivated by local Irish sources, started modestly from the antiquarian explorations of the late 18th century. It was inspired by the Irish bardic tradition

¹ Donal McCartney; "The writing of history in Ireland 1800-1830", *IHS* vol. X (September 1957); Roy Foster, "History and the Irish Question" and A. Jackson, "Unionist History", in Brady (ed.) 1994.

and the glorious age told of in the annals, and also by earlier historical writings. Instead of copying authorities, documentary evidence was now for the first time used in historic reconstruction. The Gaelic language and folklore itself became objects of study as well as the archaeological materials that were scattered throughout the island. Those who were most inspired by the finding of the "folk" tradition belonged mainly to Anglo-Irish middle classes. The local culture of the "natives" was not yet seen as politically dangerous. Quite the contrary, the Protestants supported pursuits and research of Gaelic culture by establishing academic societies.

Antiquarianism had no political or sectarian dimensions, although it absorbed romanticism and sceptic enlightened ideas from the Continent. The importance of antiquarianism lay in the fact that, using R. F. Foster's words, it presented "a history of the land and its various peoples, rather than a rationalisation of administrative or religious policy in the disguise of history".² As a system of research, antiquarianism remained fragmented, but its romantic element survived through the 19th century and was reborn in the Gaelic movement of the 1890s. Antiquarianism also gave birth, or ultimately influenced, the founding of several academic and research societies, the most important of which was the Royal Irish Academy (1786). It was soon followed by the Gaelic Society, the Ibero-Celtic Society and the Irish Record Commission, which specialised in the collection and translation of Gaelic sources. Later came the Archaeological Society (1840), the Ossianic Society (1853) and the Irish Historical Manuscripts Commission (1869).

The creation of the Union swept away the political innocence of Gaelic research. History was now expected to give political lessons, either in favour of the Union or against it, and about the legitimation of the Catholic demands. Many of those who wrote about ancient Ireland had these purposes in mind, to say nothing of writers who dealt with latest history. Anyone who praised the ancient greatness of Ireland was easily labelled an advocator of Catholic emancipation and repealer of the Union, even if he had insisted on the loyalty of the Catholic subjects. Conversely, anyone who had doubts about the ancient glory of Ireland was labelled a unionist.

As a reaction to Catholic demands for political rights, aggressive Protestant

² Foster 1994, p. 171.

interpretations of Irish history emerged. Protestant writers stressed the part played by “popery” in all Irish rebellions since the Reformation, and Protestant priests tried to demonstrate that their church in fact was direct continuation of early Irish Christianity, and not a state organ created by the Tudor kings. On the Catholic side this was, of course, refuted, but the main propaganda arsenal was directed to prove that the Union was an act of national degradation, and this aim soon exhibited all English influence in Ireland as malign interference and disastrous to national life. The fiercest historical debates were fought on judicial issues, such as the interpretation of the treaty of Limerick³ (1691), due to the fact that many of the writers were professional lawyers, if not clergymen.

Yet plenty of sound historical work was done without political fervour, and most notably under the auspices of the historical department of the Irish Ordnance Survey, which offered John O'Donovan (1809-1861), George Petrie (1789-1866) and Eugene O'Curry (1796-1862) a chance to collect and arrange material for the future dispassionate analysis. O'Donovan first edited (1851) the most famous of the annals, the *Four Masters*, collected by 18th-century antiquarians. O'Curry was appointed the first professor of Irish History and Archaeology in the new Catholic University (1854), although he had no university education. This was a compromise between formal academic requirements and the needs of the rising interest in Irish history. There was no similar chair in Trinity College until 1909, which did not prevent TCD professors of Law, Classic History or philology participating in the unionist campaign through historical arguments.

Trinity College had been established in 1592 by Queen Elizabeth, in order to help the gradual conversion of Irish Catholics to Anglicanism, and also to prevent young Irishmen seeking higher education abroad where they might be “infected with popery”. After the horrors of the 1640s the Catholics were, however, virtually excluded from Trinity until the beginning of reforms in the late 18th century. During the first half of the 19th century many Catholic families sent their sons to Trinity; for example Daniel O'Connell, and many famous nationalist politicians, such as Thomas Davis, John O'Leary and John Mitchel, received their degrees there.

In the 1850s the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland began to advocate a principle

³ The treaty of Limerick, which established colonial type of administration and the dominance of Protestant class in Ireland, followed from the last battle between the troops of King James II and the victorious William III (of Orange).

that faithful Catholics should enter only Catholic universities, either in Ireland or abroad, to avoid secularism which lurked in Trinity and in the new Queen's Colleges. The influential Catholic Archbishop Paul Cullen wanted to educate the Protestants and Catholics separately in order to keep Catholicism pure. The Catholic University, however, could not be extended, but along with the short-lived Royal University (1879-1909) it merged into the University College, as part of the National University (1908). The wave of anti-liberalism and anti-Protestantism in turn created hostility in Trinity against Catholic students. By the end of the 19th century Trinity College bore the imprint of political Protestantism and Unionism in the eyes of the new nationalist leaders, although paradoxically Trinity also sheltered IRB circles.⁴

Many of the TCD scholars, however, had a genuine interest in Irish history, including the Celtic period. Professor Alexander G. Richey, for example, refuted the myth of unbreakable succession of Irish kings from the Deluge to the 5th century, but asked his readers to feel warm sympathy towards the "noble Celtic nation" whose tradition had preserved the names of ancient persons who obviously had lived at some stage of history.⁵ It was no wonder that Richey's posthumously published *Short History of the Irish People* (1887) was appreciated by contemporary Englishmen as a "most dispassionate and impartial work on the subject that has yet appeared".⁶ His larger compilation for an Irish history was unfortunately never completed.

Trinity College itself was hardly a place for a student to learn Irish history or the Irish language, as was testified by a Protestant TCD scholar himself, Thomas W. Rolleston (1857-1920), in front of The Fry Commission on Irish University Education (1907).⁷ Some of the TCD professors were openly hostile to Irish history, because of its assumed political consequences. Professor and later Provost, Sir John

⁴ James Lydon, "The silent sister, Trinity College and Catholic Ireland". In C.H. Holland (ed.), *Trinity College Dublin & The Idea of a University* (Trinity College Dublin Press 1991), pp. 30-40.

⁵ Richey also asked the readers to appreciate the "gallant Norman gentlemen" with their enormous burden in the Irish conquest, and the "difficulties and high aims of Tudor statesmen". The early period of Irish annals he regarded "absolutely and undeniably false", remarking cynically that the invasion attempt of Italy by king Dathi (428 A.D.), told by the chronicles, had escaped the notice of contemporary Roman writers. Richey, pp. 2, 18.

⁶ *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XVI (From the earliest Times to 1900), "Richey".

⁷ Tierney, p. 31. The Commission's report (1907) anticipated the founding of the National University.

Mahaffy (1839-1919), a prominent figure in Irish social life at his time, argued that "Irish history is not a fit subject for young people at all".⁸ Mahaffy's historical interests lay mainly in philosophy, Egyptian and Greek history, but he held an important position as member in the Board of Commissioners of National Education. Mahaffy's influence on Irish history education was significant, but he was not an ideological leader of popular opinion in the same meaning as his contemporary William Lecky.

5.2 Lecky and the "soundest elements" of Irish nationality

In the lifetime of William Lecky (1838-1903) Irish nationalist historiography was still in its infancy, due to political disputes and the academic dominance of Anglo-Irish historians centered at Trinity College. Lecky himself is traditionally regarded as a prominent Unionist historian, although in his youth he expressed ideas of constitutional nationalism. As a historian, Lecky represented modern and critical professionalism that was not altogether common even in Britain, although his general approach to history carried on the traditions of British learning and research. His final view of Irish history did not fit into the emerging Nationalist concept of a nation, nor did he ever adopt the racialist illusions that were so popular in Ireland and England. As early as 1896 he recognized that "in most European countries race elements are inextricably mixed", and generally avoided racialist terms in his works.⁹

Lecky's biographer Donal McCartney has characterized him as an "eminent Irish Victorian"¹⁰, and indeed he was very influential in his times, being perhaps the only Irish historian whose authority and reputation in the Victorian age matched those of the English scholars. He had no serious rival in the field of Irish history at the time, but his ideas provoked opposition from Nationalist historians

⁸ In this case Mahaffy pointed mainly to primary and secondary education, but his attitude hardly patronized Irish studies at TCD. Quoted in David Fitzpatrick, "The Futility of History: Failed Experiment in History Education". In Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Ideology and the Historians* (The Lilliput Press, Dublin 1991), p. 173.

⁹ W. Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, vol. I (Longmans, Green & Co., London 1896), p. 395.

¹⁰ D. McCartney, *W.E.H. Lecky. Historian and Politician 1838-1903* (The Lilliput Press, Dublin 1994), p. 1.

years after his death. Most remarkably he influenced the arguments and philosophy of Irish Unionism, and especially in Ulster his concept of "loyalism" became a doctrine for the Unionist movement.

Lecky had first acquired fame by his *History of Rationalism in Europe* (1865) and *History of European Morals* (1869)¹¹, which were appreciated as splendid manifestations of British liberal philosophy. His massive *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (8 vols, 1878-90) was a standard university textbook for decades, worth examining even today as a revealing analysis of the early 19th century British politics. The reason for his fame and influence was, however, not only in his professional skills as a historian, but as much in his political comments to the contemporaries. Lecky studied the trends of his time, trying to give interpretations of them to the political as well as to the cultural establishment of Ireland and England, and giving blunt political advice to his contemporaries within the text which, for example, dealt with the 18th century. Characteristically, he warned the "novices" not to judge the past by the moral standards of one's own times¹², but he did not always follow the rule himself.

Born into the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy¹³, Lecky had inherited enough property which enabled him to write without a formal attachment either to Trinity College where he was educated, or to the English universities where he also became famous.¹⁴ Young Lecky was a radical writer and speaker in academic societies, shattering both Protestant and Catholic authorities with his unorthodox and rational views about religion.¹⁵ In his early writings, most notably in the *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland* (1861), he was optimistic about the development of "a healthy national feeling in Ireland" which would unite various classes. At that

¹¹ The full names of the books are *History and the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, and *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*.

¹² W.E.H. Lecky, *Historical and Political Essays*, ed. by Elisabeth Lecky (Longmans, Green & Co., London/New York 1908), p. 14 ("Thoughts on History").

¹³ His ancestors, who were of Scottish origin, had come from Derry.

¹⁴ In 1892 he could have had the chair of modern history at Oxford, in place of Anthony Froude. Parker, p. 34.

¹⁵ In the 1860s Lecky blamed the Protestant clergy for being anti-national, and the Catholic clergy for making the political strength of Ireland "a weapon in the service of Vatican" which, in his view, represented despotism in Italy. Yet he admired John Newman and the intellectuals of the French Church. Lecky's general position demanded tolerance, moral and humanist attitude from all churches. See McCartney 1994, pp. 15-16. See also the introduction (by W.E.G. Lloyd and F. Cruise O'Brien) in Lecky's *Clerical Influences* (Reprinted by Maunsel & Co., Dublin 1911).

time he was loyal to Grattan's parliamentary ideals, demanding "national institutions" for Ireland as well as for Hungary, Poland and Belgium, and portraying the Union as a "great crime and blunder".¹⁶

By the 1880s Lecky had, however, turned to defend the Union and the landowning and educated classes, both Protestant and Catholic, who in his view were the "soundest elements in Irish life" and therefore supported the Union.¹⁷ Although half a century earlier few in Britain or in Ireland would have doubted that the landed gentry were the natural leaders of any civilised society, by now it was clearly a conservative opinion. Nor was the Union anymore a "great crime" to Lecky but a benefit from British statesmanship, with the aim to unite Ireland and make her loyal.¹⁸ Why, then, were the Irishmen not united nor loyal? Lecky believed that the reason for the rebellious spirit in Ireland was not in the Union itself but in the way it was carried out. "The measures of conciliation which ought to have accompanied it" - admission of Catholics into the Parliament, abolition of tithes and improvement of the status of the Catholic priests - had all come too slowly to satisfy the politically conscious part of the Catholics. Without hesitation Lecky put the blame for this on the "signal failure" of the British government, and on the extension of the franchise to "irresponsible" classes.¹⁹

Lecky was one of the first historians who realised the full influence and character of modern "public opinion". As Donal McCartney has put it, public opinion meant to Lecky the creation and expression by leaders of the "nationality with loyalty". Lecky maintained that the political leaders - who should not be lawyers or lay-preachers - had to be broad-minded enough to unite the whole country in a non-sectarian nationalist movement.²⁰ Yet his political nation hardly

¹⁶ McCartney 1994, p. 20, and also McCartney, "Lecky's Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland", *IHS* vol. XIV no. 54/1964, p. 132. As McCartney has shown, the later editions of *Leaders* are not identical with the 1861 and 1871 editions. After turning to advocate unionism Lecky revised his opinions in introductions, using the same facts, but in different combinations. In the last edition (1903) only the constitutional leaders Henry Flood, Grattan and O'Connell were left to represent the "public opinion". McCartney 1994, pp. 132, 184.

¹⁷ W. Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. VIII (Longmans, Green & Co., London 1890), p. 542. Despite the title, the last volume contained plenty of political instruction for his contemporaries.

¹⁸ Lecky, *H. of England...*, vol. VIII, p. 550: "The Union has not made Ireland either a loyal or a united country."

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 532-3, 551.

²⁰ McCartney 1964, pp. 120, 122-3.

contained more than the middle and upper classes. The majority of votes, when extended to "lower" (Catholic) classes, did not represent to him any "deliberate opinion", and he appealed to Tolstoy in order to convince his readers that a working class man or a peasant would in fact never be interested in the crucial questions of nationalism, such as the unity of his country or its frontiers. In 1896 Lecky wrote with recognisable relief that the (British) "Nation" had condemned the Home Rule plans which included the transfer of power to the "lowest orders" in Ireland "where it is certain to be misused". His advice to political leaders was that they should never follow the opinion of the masses, because, for example, a plebiscite would be easily manipulated by the government, being rarely an unforced, spontaneous expression of the people's will. Therefore Lecky would not have trusted the choice to the masses, although paradoxically the best value of the doctrine of nationalities to him was the "free consent of masses to the form of government".²¹

Lecky's turn to unionism caused him scandalous fame. It is not unreasonable to assume, as Donal McCartney has done, that one of the reasons for the dramatic change in Lecky's thinking was his fear of losing property and markets for his well-selling books, if the prospect of full political and economical separation between England and Ireland would materialise. Therefore it was logical that he would not have objected to the Home Rule, if the Irish opinion followed "property and responsibility", i.e. leaders who recognised the need for free trade, privileges of the land owners and constitutional unity of the British Empire. In Lecky's view the separation would mean that the loyal one third of the population would be brushed aside, their property looted, and the power shifted to the disproportionably large Irish parliamentary party which supposedly represented only lower classes, and was subsidised by the "criminal" Fenians who "had paid agrarian conspiracy and dynamite outrages".²² Lecky expressed his opinion about home rule in 1886 in a letter to *The Times*, arousing world-wide attention in Unionist circles, because he "seemed to speak for the great body of the best English people".²³

²¹ W. Lecky, *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. IV (Longmans, Green & Co., London 1892), p. 2, 494, and *Democracy and Liberty*, vol. I, pp. 398-9, 419.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 546.

²³ Quoted in McCartney 1994, p. 117.

Despite his Unionism Lecky never ceased to defend Irishmen against attacks from the British press or historians, such as Froude's recommendation of strict military rule. Lecky's *History of England* (1890) and its partial reprint *History of Ireland in the 18th Century* (1892) were reactions against Froude who, according to Lecky, "detested everything Irish".²⁴

After the second Home Rule Bill (1893) Lecky started an open political career and was elected to Parliament from the Dublin University in 1895, only to see his ideas of constitutional nationalism and selective democracy definitely losing ground in Ireland. The election campaign was so heated that Ramsay Colles, a civil servant and historian, recalled how this "simple, kindly-hearted gentleman" was branded by his opponents as "an out and out atheist" and "the very devil incarnate". Everything was done, according to Colles, to intensify Lecky's "supposed hostile attitude towards Christianity in general, and the Church in particular."²⁵ Such epithets were, of course, political propaganda, but Lecky was criticized both by the Nationalists and Unionists.

Thomas Dunbar Ingram (1826-1901), a Newry-born lawyer from Dublin who had gained some fame with his historical writings²⁶, blamed Lecky in his *Irish History* (1900) for giving a selfish picture of England which had given the Irish "whatever civilisation exists among them". According to Ingram, Ireland should have been grateful of the English "gifts", such as language, literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, science, laws, institutions, machinery, manufactures, municipal government and manner of life. "Even the glory of Ireland, the purity of its woman, was learned from the British settlers", Ingram claimed.²⁷ Naive though the list may look now, it certainly represented the astonishment of many Unionists caused by the seeming adoption of English culture in Ireland, which, however, had not silenced the demand for separation. But Ingram's exaggerated criticism failed in the main purpose, because it was hard to deny Lecky's cool arguments of how the chance to make the Irishmen British was lost in the first decades of the Union.

²⁴ Quoted in Anne Wyatt, "Froude, Lecky and 'the humblest Irishman'". *IHS* vol. XIX 1975, p. 283.

²⁵ R. Colles, *In Castle and Court House* (T. Werner Laurie, London 1911), p. 30

²⁶ Mainly by his *A History of the Legislative Union of Great Britain and Ireland* (1887) and *Two Chapters of Irish History* (1888).

²⁷ T. Dunbar Ingram, (*A Critical Examination of Irish History*, vol. I (Longmans, Green & Co., London 1900), pp. 12-13.

5.3 Nationality versus "public order"

Despite the seeming opportunism of Lecky's political career, his thoughts of nationality did not change in principle. He introduced thoughts of continental philosophers to his British and Irish readers, and contributed plenty of pioneering observation on philosophy himself. The seeds of Unionism can be read from his first publications, but even in his last works he was loyal to the "pure nationalism" of Grattan and Thomas Davis.²⁸ This seems contradictory, and it is hard to believe that Lecky was an admirer of Davis in the same way as Pádraig Pearse 20 years later. On the other hand, the non-violent ideology of Grattan and Davis was politically harmless in the 1890s, and their demand of a modest autonomy was originally acceptable to Lecky also.

In his essays *Democracy and Liberty* (1896) Lecky summarized his thoughts of nationalism. The essays should be read in the context of the Conservative victory in the 1895 elections and the temporary defeat of the Home Rulers. "With certain limits", Lecky wrote, "the doctrine of nationalities undoubtedly represents a real and considerable progress in human affairs". He was influenced by the Italian philosophers, accepting that there were several elements at work in the creation of "self-conscious" nationalities such as race, geography, history, language, religion etc., but observing also that in existing nationalities these elements had worked in different combinations, and not necessarily all of them in each case. Like most of the intellectuals of his time, Lecky believed that nationalities were at different stages of development, perfection being reached when "a great homogenous body of men" becomes conscious of its separate nationality, thus becoming "a moral unity with common thought".²⁹ This ultimate end of the national development, formulated by Italian writers, gave Lecky, as it had given Mill, a reason of principle to deny that mere opposition to central government could be an expression of nationality.

In Lecky's mind it was not illogical that, while granting fully developed

²⁸ Quoted from Lecky's *Democracy and Liberty*, vol. I (1896), p. 419. Thomas Davis (1814-45), the most notable figure of the Young Ireland movement of the 1840s, was a Dublin barrister who preached Wolfe Tone's idea of equal nationality as embracing everybody who lived in Ireland.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 394-5, 398.

nations "the right to freedom like individuals", he denied it to Ireland. He obviously thought of his countrymen while writing that nations were different in their strength of the national types, in their power of self-government and in their power of "assimilating or reconciling alien types". Although Lecky was not personally interested in the Gaelic past of Ireland, he seemed to accept the possibility of an ancient Irish nationality while describing the hatred caused by the destruction of old nationalities or the premature suppression of their growth.³⁰ Indirectly he also shared the view of the rising Nationalist historians that the reason for the hindered growth of the Irish nationality was not in the Irishmen themselves.

Although Lecky admitted the great impact of nationalism during the 19th century, in the 1890s he saw its power diminishing and stronger forces at work behind it. England had learned from her traumatic experience with North America, France had reached territorial unity and was "well assimilated", and most of all, new ideas such as international socialism and federalism, worked against nationalism. In *History of England* Lecky wrote: "The whole course and tendency of European policy is towards the unification, and not the division of states".³¹ In this light the separatism in Ireland seemed to be a strange exception to the general progress which, in Lecky's view, was and should be directed by the Great Powers. Since the Peace of Westphalia (1648) the maintenance of European stability had been the supreme end of international politics, and therefore every great empire "is obliged, in the interest of its imperial unity and in the interest of the public order of the world, to impose an inflexible veto on popular movements in the direction of disintegration..." This was the voice of an ageing liberal who saw that nationalism, the ideal of his youth, had become "the readiest weapon in the hands both of a conqueror and a revolutionist", thus causing anarchy and threatening "the most valuable elements of our civilisation".³²

Lecky's great vision was that the idea of nationalism in Ireland was in the wrong hands. His scepticism about the value of public opinion was another reason for his denouncing of the contemporary Nationalist opinion in Ireland. As McCartney has noted, nationalism and democracy in Lecky's eyes had turned into

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 417-8.

³¹ Lecky, *H. of England*, p. 549.

³² Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, p. 417-8, 398.

Fenianism and socialism.³³ Lecky opposed and detested the Fenians because of the violence they agitated, and as a liberal landowner he especially condemned the Fenian alliance with the agrarian movement³⁴ which to him seemed to be socialism at work. In *History of England* Lecky claimed that only after the "Fenian conspiracy" had the agrarian "crime" become part of the politics. Both were now being organised in order to "isolate the landowning classes and... cut the ties of traditional influence and attachment by which they were once bound to their people".³⁵ Undoubtedly Lecky himself felt bound to "his people", but from his deep prejudices and inability to perceive social issues from other angle than that of his own class grew his final abandonment of nationalist ideas. These ideas were not, unlike he thought, in decline at the turn of the new century.

5.4 Lecky's loyal nation and the "others"

In *History of England* Lecky had written that in the country of Ireland, "the two nations that inhabit it still remain distinct", mainly because of the badly administered Union.³⁶ Yet at the 300th anniversary celebrations of the Trinity College (1892), he referred to only one nation, whose university TCD was, "whatever its enemies may say".³⁷ The seeming contradiction is not only rhetoric, because Lecky seems to have given the concept of nation basically two meanings: either he viewed it as an abstract entity of the population and society with "natural" sea frontiers, or as an idea advocated in different forms and by different groups. Lecky's concept of "two nations", therefore, was not only a metaphor with a social connotation, but a recognition of conflicting national ideas.

The antagonism between Lecky and the "enemies" of Trinity College culminated in the question of university education. Lecky saw the position of the

³³ McCartney 1994, p. 2.

³⁴ The Irish Land League had been established in 1879, as a result of tenant evictions caused by agricultural recession. The League established a national network and a program which sought to secure tenure. During Lecky's last years the land reform had progressed much further, culminating in the Wyndham Land Act (1903) which enabled most of the tenants to purchase their lands.

³⁵ Lecky, *H. of England*, p. 543-4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 550.

³⁷ Lydon, p. 29.

lower Catholic clergy as an explanation for the failure of the right kind of national education. The priests, "drawn from the superstitious and disloyal peasantry", had no interest in being on the "side of the law", because they were educated without contacts with the higher national education and were economically and socially dependent on their "ignorant and lawless" congregations. The founding of St. Patrick's Catholic seminar (Carlow 1793 and Maynooth 1795) had been a mistake in Lecky's view, because it had cut the priests from the "conservative spirit of continental Catholicism". The worst political error was their willingness to join radical separatist movements as local organizers, Lecky emphasized.³⁸

Fenianism and unauthorised participation of the priests in politics had been condemned, not only by Lecky but also by the Catholic Archbishop Paul Cullen (1803-1878) who, like young Lecky, favoured constitutional nationalism.³⁹ Despite the similarities in their thinking Cullen and Lecky had little chance of being political allies. Cullen had portrayed Lecky as a dangerous example of secularism, mainly because of Lecky's *History of Rationalism* which, in Cullen's words, "cannot fail to convince Catholics that it is most dangerous for them to send their children to Protestant universities".⁴⁰

Already in the *Leaders of Public Opinion* (1861) the "nationality with loyalty", Lecky's own political idea, was introduced as a principle that had been first manifested by the 18th century Protestant upper class.⁴¹ In Lecky's later works "disloyalty" towards the state, which to him was not a genuine sentiment of nationality, was his general explanation for the Irish rebellions. Subsequently the epithet "loyalist" became firmly established in the Irish politics to describe the mainly Protestant opponents of Home Rule.⁴² However, Lecky's idea of loyalism was not geographically located but rather a form of British state nationalism which had been cultivated for Imperial use by the early 19th-century statesmen, philosophers and poets. The essence of it was the right of the "more developed" states, in order to preserve social order and the individual rights, to rule the "less developed" populations and countries. To defend the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy

³⁸ Lecky, *H. of England*, p. 533.

³⁹ See E.D. Steele, "Cardinal Cullen and Irish nationality". *IHS* vol. XIX 1974-5, p. 246.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Lydon, p. 37.

⁴¹ McCartney 1964, p. 120.

⁴² The term "loyalist" had been first used during the North American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) about those Americans who were unwilling to cut the constitutional and economic ties to Britain.

class, which Lecky felt to be under siege in his times, he presented loyalism as the best element of Irish Nationalism. Those who were not loyal were at best at a lower stage of national progress, or at worst enemies of the abstract nation for which he gave different attributes, denouncing qualities other than his own political preferences.

The leading idea in the Irish part of Lecky's *History of England* was that during the 19th century loyalty had spread from the upper classes to the Protestant working class and to the small Catholic middle class, at least to the tradesmen and civil servants. The most astonishing progress had taken place in Ulster where the Presbyterians, who once had been "the most dangerous element of discontent in Ireland", were now "fully conciliated".⁴³ Although the largest concentration of loyalism seemed to be in Ulster, Protestant Ulstermen in general had no special role in Lecky's loyal nation. The reason may be that he treated Orangeism as well as Protestant evangelicalism in general "with faint distaste", according to R. F. Foster.⁴⁴

As shown earlier, Lecky had hoped for the development of one independent Irish nationality which now, in Lecky's eyes, had failed. The alternative to him had been a total assimilation to the British nationality and culture, which in the 1890s seemed to be near completion.⁴⁵ The post-Famine generations throughout most of the country were solely English-speaking, and the literature and theatre also looked quite English. Belfast City and the Unionist counties in Ulster had, in Lecky's words, risen "in all the elements of industry, wealth, progress, intelligence and order... to the full level of Great Britain". Yet that part of Ulster was also a "portion of Ireland"⁴⁶, even if the Protestants had achieved the standard of British nationality.

Lecky's statement indicates that he regarded Ireland as one abstract entity, which in the early 19th century had been an "intensely Catholic nation" but had then become more fragmented. Unlike Cardinal Cullen, who earlier had regarded the Ulster Presbyterians as foreign invaders⁴⁷, Lecky saw that a great unification

⁴³ Lecky, *H. of England*, p. 549.

⁴⁴ Foster 1994, p. 180.

⁴⁵ McCartney has shown that in 1861, when the *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland* was first published, Lecky was not yet in favour of a total fusion. McCartney 1964, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Quoted from Lecky's *History of England*, p. 533, 549.

⁴⁷ Steele, p. 256.

had taken place: the Ulster Unionists were now one homogenous population with the same nationality. If the rest of Ireland had accepted Lecky's idea of nationality, all Ulstermen would have belonged to that one Irish nationality. Of course, Lecky could not foresee the consequences of the opposite case: that the northern Unionists would consider their nationality essentially British and not the highest form of Irish nationality.

Lecky's view of a first and second class Irish nationality was perfectly adopted by a prominent Englishman in Belfast, Thomas MacKnight (1829-1899), who published his influential book *Ulster as it is* (1896) only a few years after Lecky's *History of England*. As editor of the Liberal-Unionist *Northern Whig* since 1866, MacKnight had, according to his own words, come to know the Protestant Ulstermen so well that he could express their cause perhaps better than they themselves - the Ulstermen were not famous of their oral or literary skills.⁴⁸ Yet he spoke for all the Unionists when he praised, with strong rhetoric, the virtues of both Catholic and Protestant loyalists. They amounted to, according to MacKnight, at least one third of Irishmen which was "by far the best third in all the elements which, except that of mere numbers, can be said to constitute a people". These were no isolated garrison people, but most progressive ordinary citizens who lived in towns and in the country among the "recently emancipated classes" (Catholic Nationalists). In MacKnight's view, the latter were "bitterly prejudiced, ignorant and disaffected".⁴⁹

MacKnight's conclusion, "the undeniable truth", was that "there are two antagonistic populations, two different nations on Irish soil. To speak of one them only, as is so often done, is a mischievous fallacy, a political and social untruth".⁵⁰ The antagonism between the North and South of Ireland, which Lecky had stated

⁴⁸ The Scotchman John Harrison wrote in 1888 that "though these men of Ulster are not much given to the arts of poetry or oratory, still they they are a strong, practical race...". Harrison, *The Scot in Ulster*, p. 114.

⁴⁹ MacKnight's intention was, of course, to prove that the granting of legislative powers to "ignorant" people would be disastrous, not only for Ireland, but for the whole Empire. He did not hesitate to launch rumours of Ulster Nationalists planning to take over Unionist land and houses, or a story of witch-burning in Tipperary "only a short time ago", of which the Nationalist press had said "very little". Thomas MacKnight, *Ulster as it is*, vol. II (MacMillan & Co, London/New York 1896), pp. 384-6, 393-4. MacKnight, Edmund Burke's well-known biographer, was born in Gainsford, Durham. He proposed that a tunnel should be built between Ireland and England in order to increase feeling of unity (p. 399)!

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 380, 384-5.

in a general form, was now characterized as "national" in outline by MacKnight. Definitions of the Northern "nationality", however, were still vague, before the emergence of racialist fantasies by fiction writers and anthropologists, as already noted.

5.5 Interpretations of loyalism after Lecky

After the Unionist rebellion (1914) it was easy for the Ulster Unionists to agree that their loyalty meant allegiance to the sovereign, and not to the government or parliament which they opposed. This was well stated by a prominent Ulsterman, Ronald McNeill (Lord Cushendun, 1861-1934) in his *Ulster's stand for the Union* (1922). His vision was that loyalism was something deeper than an ordinary difference of political opinion; it was a definite reminder that its advocates were a threatened minority in Ireland. Most of all, it was "sharply differentiated from passive obedience to an Act of Parliament" (reference to the Home Rule Bill 1912), McNeill argued with eloquent euphemism, in order to explain "the methods embarked upon in 1912 by the Ulster people".⁵¹

It was not surprising that the bearer of Lecky's academic heritage in TCD, professor Walter A. Phillips (1864-1950), supported the Union in Lecky's spirit. Phillips had moved to Dublin in 1914, after a versatile career in England and Germany, to hold the Lecky professorship of Modern History. In 1923 he published *The Revolution in Ireland 1906-1923*, which he revised significantly in 1926 after seeing that the Free State was able to stabilise its sovereignty in the 26 county area. According to Phillips, the ideal of the Union had been "diversity in unity", and its function to raise the Irish to the same rank as the Scots and the Welsh, "as coequal members of a common body politic". He was astonished to hear his Nationalist friends talking of the Union as domination, and of themselves as a subject people, because that had never entered his mind, nor to the minds of Englishmen, Phillips claimed. But "other revelations" - which Phillips did not reveal to the readers - had made him understand that the Union alone "stood between Ireland and the sea of troubles". Ironically, in contrast to Lecky's loyalism to the British state, Phillips declared that he was "prepared to live under, and work

⁵¹ Ronald McNeill, *Ulster's Stand for Union* (John Murray, London 1922), pp. 3-4.

for, whatever Government the Irish people chose to set up".⁵²

This was an attitude that helped not only Phillips but many of the old Ascendancy class to accommodate themselves to the new state, where speculations of the future were not all optimistic. It is easy to say now that William Lecky's worst fears of the consequences of a revolution did not materialise, but in the 1920s it may have been difficult to imagine anything worse: the Civil War threatened everybody's life and property, and the ideology and practical setting of the Irish state bore suspicious elements of clericalism, militarism and intolerance. In the Nationalist propaganda the Anglo-Irish class was occasionally presented as a potential "fifth column" and warnings were given: "If they will not choose to be Irishmen, there will be no place for them".⁵³

It was easier for Phillips, as an English newcomer in the Irish society, to adopt a realistic attitude towards the Irish state and wait for passions to calm down. Phillips also found comfort in the idea that the Irish revolution was not a local or isolated phenomena, but "part of the revolution which has been in progress to a greater or less degree everywhere".⁵⁴ Much in the same way as Lecky had drawn political advice to his contemporaries from the 18th century, Phillips also found universally applicable lessons in the dramatic revolutionary period in the Ireland of his times.

⁵² Phillips 1923 (1st ed.), p. vi-vii.

⁵³ *The Star (An Reult)* 22 June 1929, editorial. This was a shortlived (1921-1929) Nationalist weekly, "devoted to politics, economics and social affairs".

⁵⁴ Phillips (1923), pp. vii-viii.

6 "NATION WITHOUT A FLAG" BY EOIN MACNEILL AND ALICE STOPFORD GREEN

6.1 How to teach Irish history?

The most outstanding characters in the creation of Gaelic Irish historiography in the early 20th century were Eoin MacNeill (1867-1945) and his popular interpreter Alice Stopford Green (1847-1929). MacNeill first laid the foundations for the serious study of early Irish history, but he was also a leading figure in the debate on Irish nationality and a striking example of a historian and nationalist politician in the same person. In the beginning of his history studies in 1890 MacNeill remarked that he was surprised at "how little history was to be learned from books of Irish history that people read".¹ What Irish history was, then, available to the common people before MacNeill and Green? The character of Unionist history has already been outlined, but the picture of Irish history and its teaching in the latter half of the 19th century has to be clarified before a closer look at MacNeill's and Green's careers.

In general, professional Irish historiography had little effect on the popular Irish image of history before the 20th century. Educated people, including politicians and journalists, learned their history from writers such as Macaulay, Froude, Freeman or Lecky, but common Catholic people absorbed their historical consciousness, not from publications by academics, but primarily from priests,

¹ Quoted in Tierney 1980, p. 15.

political pamphlets and newspapers, and last but not least, from folklore. The most impressive part of folklore was the oral tradition of the families: stories, poems and songs. Tom Garvin has concluded that Irish history "was experienced rather than learned", i.e. derived from the collective memories of communities or extended families rooted in particular areas. Family memories often spanned a century or more, and they were probably lengthened by the abnormally late age of marriage in the post-Famine era. This meant that the rebels of 1916 had, for example, heard from their parents or grandparents folk-memories of the Famine years, even about the rising of 1798. These "pseudo-memories", according to Garvin, were composed in the spirit of confirming the family identity as part of the Irish nationality.²

By the end of the 19th century both the Protestant and Catholic propaganda histories sharpened their visions, pointing mostly to the opponent's vices and misdoings. In the Protestant myth, as analysed, for example by Maurice Irwine, the Irish form of Christianity had infiltrated and degenerated the original Roman Catholic faith, justifying the cleansing process of the Reformation. The events at the time of William III's victory in Ireland (1690) had sealed the Protestant victory and civil rights in Ireland, but violence, superstition and ignorance of the native Irishmen had thereafter weakened the Protestant organism.. Versions of this myth flourished in Ulster, where Orangeism³ produced pamphlets and ballads celebrating the heroic defence of British liberties which had been granted to Protestant tenants and working class. It seemed that only in the north-eastern corner of Ireland Protestantism had succeeded to secure a bastion which had to keep constant guard against triumphant and seditious Catholic policy, directed from Rome⁴

In contrast, the Catholic myth, instead of admitting to any weaknesses of the ancient church, claimed that England in fact was converted to Christianity from Ireland, "the mainspring of English civilization"⁵. Also, due to her military growth, England tried to monopolize power in church and state, and to destroy Irish

² Garvin, pp. 110-11.

³ The old Orange Institution revived and was organized as political party in the early 1880s to resist Home Rule plans, thus breaking the old party division between the Liberals and Conservatives in Ulster. "No surrender, no concessions" were Orange watchwords.

⁴ Maurice Irwine, *Northern Ireland. Faith and Faction* (Routledge, London 1991), pp. 173-4.

⁵ Quoted from Benedict Fitzpatrick (1922), p. 333.

national life as well. Political pamphlets by the Young Ireland movement in turn had fostered the sense of oppression and injustice caused by the English administration, which was presented as a historical plot through the centuries. The English influence in Irish history had been nothing but "horrid crimes and torture", but obstinate resistance and fidelity to the Catholic Church had allowed the Irish people bear all suffering and persecution. At the turn of the 20th century extreme Nationalist view of history declared that the victory over the English was inevitably approaching. England had lost her prestige since the war with the Boers and England's difficulties had always created opportunities for improving Ireland's condition, as Thomas Emmett assured readers in his republican *Ireland under the English Rule* (1903).⁶

The purpose of Catholic-Nationalist propaganda was, of course, to justify separation from England, the opposite of Unionist politics. The unscrupulous use of history as a political weapon for Irish Nationalism simultaneously effected that the Protestant Ascendancy easily saw all history as a political menace, if freely taught to common Catholic people.

Before the school reforms of the 1860s, Nationalist history learning often started in "hedge schools", i.e. open air meetings with a strong anti-English "curriculum". History teaching in ordinary schools was poorly organised and often its quality was low, if there was any at all. According to David Fitzpatrick, this was due to the failure of educational administrators to introduce impartial and non-sectarian history books, as well as such instruction for teachers. Fitzpatrick has demonstrated the formidable task of the mainly Protestant Commissioners of the Board of National Education throughout the 19th century. Because patriotism had a different meaning for the Nationalists and Unionists, and the Commissioners tried to avoid offending anybody on political or religious grounds, systematic history teaching was simply eliminated from the curriculum. Catholic Nationalists claimed that this was intentional in order to "denationalize" the Irish youth, and produced seditious text-books which the inspectors in vain tried to root out from schools. The more competent of the teachers tried to tackle the dilemma of two histories, but many preferred to have no history at all.⁷

⁶ Thomas A. Emmett, *Ireland under English Rule or A Plea for the Plaintiff*, vol. II (G.P. Putnam's Son, New York 1903), p. 176-7.

⁷ D. Fitzpatrick 1991, pp. 169-171.

Protestant-Unionist attempts to create an alternative history were more uncertain, although there was a need for popular British history, too. Anglo-Irish history was not taught any more competently than the history of the "natives", and British history suffered, too. In England, however, school teaching was not so centrally administrated and supervised as in Ireland. After the codification of English primary education (1862) history remained a rather unpopular option until the curriculum reform of 1900.⁸ To Alice Green this was an evidence that the English, unlike the Irish, were not even interested in the history of their own country, because their national life was created by "political" and not cultural forces.⁹

From the mid-19th century onwards demands for non-revolutionary history teaching grew in moderate Catholic and Protestant circles, and by the end of the century the impact of political and social reform persuaded the administrators to consider that an inoffensive history programme might, after all, be possible. The books by Patrick W. Joyce, Catholic principal of a teacher training college, were the first to be sanctioned for use in national schools. A significant step towards national history teaching was the Irish Intermediate Education Act (1877) which silently brought "Celtic" as a voluntary subject in the syllabus, but history as a subject was not introduced in the national curriculum until in 1900, albeit under the heading of the English programme.¹⁰

It was too late to meet the demands of the Nationalists. In Alice Green's words, history was now "portioned out to Irishmen as a fragment of English history, strictly confined within dates fixed for that history in the schools of England".¹¹ Pádraig Pearse said it more provokingly: "The English... education in Ireland is founded on a denial of the Irish nation". The policy was intentional, Pearse claimed, because "the English are too wise a people to attempt to educate the Irish, in any worthy sense". He demanded that education in Ireland as a whole should be changed, because it "was designed by our masters in order to make us willing or at least manageable slaves". New education would not only restore a

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁹ A.S. Green, *Irish National Tradition* (MacMillan & Co., London 1923), p. 4. This was, of course, a biased opinion to support Green's theory of a higher civilization in ancient Ireland.

¹⁰ Gabriel Doherty, "National Identity and the Study of Irish History". *The English Historical Review*, vol. CXI no. 441 (April 1996), pp. 329-330.

¹¹ A. S. Green, *The Old Irish World* (M. H. Gill & Son, Dublin 1912), p. 2.

national culture, but it would return "manhood to a race that has been deprived of it" and lead Ireland "back to her sagas". The first task of a free Ireland would be, therefore, to destroy "the grotesque fabric of the English education system".¹²

Outside the school world the issue of national history was perhaps less sensitive, but equally divided. Famous antiquarians had produced splendid accounts of local history and editions of the annals, but they were too complicated and detailed for an average reader to form a continuing narrative of the "story of the nation". Common Catholic people preferred non-academic uncritical histories, such as Alex Sullivan's *The Story of Ireland* (1867) and John Mitchel's *The History of Ireland from the Treaty of Limerick to the present times* (1858).¹³ Mitchel (1815-1875) spent long years imprisoned by the English, gaining popularity with his *Jail Journal* (1854) and *History of Ireland* which was a supplement and continuation of Abbe MacGeoghan's older work.

John Mitchel was one of the first who most explicitly made the case for complete separation from England, accepting the use of force for that purpose. He was the key personality in the transmission of revolutionary tradition from the United Irishmen to the Fenians, to the Irish Republican Brotherhood and ultimately to the rebels of 1916. Mitchel's historical vision stressed the "eight hundred years old" national struggle against the "cruel and cunning enemy" whose last attempt to depopulate Ireland had been the deliberately executed Famine. The tradition to blame the English for the Famine originated largely with Mitchel. He was against Catholic Emancipation, because it had made Catholic middle classes content, turning them mere "West Britons", and he was against the Church, too, because it had "ever been the enemy of the Irish Freedom".¹⁴ Yet Pádraig Pearse praised the *Jail Journal* as "the last gospel of the New Testament of Irish Nationality", the first being Wolfe Tone's *Autobiography*.¹⁵

¹² Pearse, "The Murder Machine" (Pearse's own compilation of writings and lecture notes between 1912-14). *Political Writings...*, pp. 8, 16, 43, 47. The reference to "slave education" was adopted from Eoin MacNeill.

¹³ There is little direct evidence of what the Catholic common people read in the late 19th century, but a rare sample from a single parish in 1884 listed Mitchel's *History of Ireland* as well as his *Jail Journal*, and A.M. Sullivan's *Story of Ireland* among the most borrowed books from the Catholic Young Men's Society in Cork. Both histories were reprinted several times. See Foster 1994, p. 135.

¹⁴ John Mitchel, *Jail Journal; or Five Years in British Prison* (James Corrigan, Dublin 1864), pp. xii, xiii, xxvi.

¹⁵ Pearse, "From a Hermitage". *Political Writings...*, p. 168.

Popular histories had no ambition to see the legendary Irish past with critical eyes. On the contrary, they proposed "to tell the History of Ireland through the medium of tales, epical or romantic, written with the object of bringing remote times and men vividly before the minds eye, and within reach of common sympathies", as Standish O'Grady started his "critical and philosophical" *History of Ireland* (1881).¹⁶ O'Grady (1846-1928), who had started out as a lawyer and then turned to journalism and history, was a talented writer but had no education for historical research. It was no wonder, then, that the legendary tradition and uncritical histories encouraged many Irish families to imagine that they could trace their ancestors back to thousands of years, even to the Deluge. This was a source of constant surprise for visitors to Ireland. Many contemporaries and later observers assumed that the "unusual" interest in legendary history was characteristic of the Irish, not a failure in history education.¹⁷

However uncritical and imaginary the genealogies and legendary histories might be, they obviously filled their function of serving the national cause. They provided common Irishmen with an acceptable national identity that was contrary to the English image of Irishmen, which in many cases was indisputably degrading. The integration of Irishmen into the scheme of world history - which traced the descent of the human race from Adam through Noah and his sons - encouraged Irish self-confidence, although the legend itself was quite imaginary. On this basis it was easier to believe in a better future. Alex Sullivan's *The Story of Ireland* ended with a typical nationalist conviction of the time, which could have been applied to any of the rising national states: "Providence has sustained and preserved (the Irish) as a nation for a great purpose, for a glorious destiny".¹⁸ It was easy for the next generation of historians to add fuel to such a dream.

¹⁶ Standish O'Grady, *History of Ireland: Critical and Philosophical*, vol. I (E. Ponsonby & Co., Dublin 1881), preface.

¹⁷ Hans Kohn, for example, in his classic *Idea of Nationalism* repeated most of the clichés about Irishmen, quoting *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: "No people on the face of the globe have ever been more keenly interested in the past of their native country than the Irish". Kohn well agreed this view, although adding that "in their historical writings imagination, exaggeration, and the supernatural play an unusual role". Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*. First ed. 1944 (The Macmillan Co., New York 1958), p. 465.

¹⁸ Sullivan (1909 ed.), p. 617.

6.2 The "reluctant politician"

Eoin (John) MacNeill (1867-1945) was born at Glenarm, Antrim, to an Ulster family which had both Catholic and Protestant ancestors. From St. Malachy's College, Belfast, he was able to finish the second year university examination for the Royal University¹⁹ at Dublin, where he moved in 1887 and continued in Trinity College with courses in jurisprudence, economics and constitutional history. He was introduced to history by the Jesuit Fathers of the University College (an offspring of the Catholic University), starting practical research as an aid in the editing work of old Irish texts. Soon he worked with his own editions and published articles, mainly in the *Gaelic Journal* (founded 1882) and in *An Claidheamh Soluis* (founded 1899), becoming editor of both journals himself. MacNeill's first important appointment as a teacher of Irish was in Drumcondra Teacher's Training College (1897), and in 1904 he was invited to lecture early Irish history at the University College, Dublin.²⁰

MacNeill based his historical study on philological examination of primary texts - annals, genealogies and laws - and reinforced these by a critical evaluation of literature, hagiography and other secondary sources. From Saint Patrick's *Confessiones*, which - besides the *Epistola* - were the first known Irish books, although fragmentary, MacNeill was the first to recognize some place-names. Much of his work was built on earlier findings by antiquarians, and as an expert on 5th century *ogham* inscriptions, folklore and Celtic linguistics, he was able to standardize modern Irish.²¹

By 1908 MacNeill had established his reputation as a historian and was elected the first professor of Early Irish History (including Medieval History) in the newly constituted University College. There was no doubt about his qualification for the chair, although it was not until 1921 that he took his Doctorate of Literature from the National University.

¹⁹ St. Malachy's was one of the intermediate level colleges that had the privilege of giving certain university courses, the temporary Royal University (1879-1909) then being the examination body.

²⁰ For more details about MacNeill's life, see Michael M. Tierney's biography, and F.X.Martin & F.J. Byrne (eds.), *The Scholar Revolutionary: Eoin MacNeill, 1867-1945, and the making of new Ireland* (Irish University Press 1973).

²¹ F.J. Byrne, "MacNeill the Historian". *Ibid.*, p. 17.

MacNeill's first cultural interest and object of devotion in Dublin was the revival of Irish language. Together with Douglas Hyde (1860-1949), whose ancestry was entirely English, he founded the Gaelic League in 1893, the aim of which was to educate a new generation which would give up imitating the English in ideas, literature, music, sports, plays and games, and most of all, in language. According to MacNeill's biographer Michael M. Tierney, the decisive initiative came from MacNeill, but Hyde first gave publicity to the idea that the real Irish were not the English-oriented upper classes, but those to whom the Irish language belonged. The process of Anglicization had to be reversed, and this could be done above all by speaking the language. The tactic of the League from the beginning was to teach the living language, which then as a vernacular was only spoken in distant western parts and islands of Ireland.²² In doing this the League met fierce resistance from TCD professors Robert Atkinson and John Mahaffy who condemned old Irish texts either "religious, silly or indecent" and tried to banish "Celtic" from the intermediate curriculum.²³

The Gaelic Revival was a new force in the Irish society, originally planned to be non-political and non-sectarian. Hyde was, however, less resolute than MacNeill in the tactic that the League should be confined mainly to linguistic purposes. He believed from the beginning that it was just the Gaelic past that prevented Irishmen to become "citizens of the Empire". The revival of Irish language was seen exactly in the same way by the Unionists who could perceive that similar language movements had led to expressions of political nationalism within the Habsburg dynasty and in Russia, threatening to split empires.²⁴ Therefore it was inevitable that the League was associated with Nationalist politics, which was helped by the fact that many of the Sinn Féiners and republican radicals, such as Pádraig Pearse, were active in the League. Yet the overthrow of British rule in Ireland was not in the program of the Gaelic League until 1915.

Political change was manifested in the Sinn Féin organisation, started by Arthur Griffith (1872-1922) and formally established in 1906. Griffith's separatism

²² Tierney 1980, pp. 20, 24-25, 67.

²³ Mansergh, p. 247 and Tierney, p. 57. According to latter, Mahaffy "fortified" his eccentric remark by the opinion of two TCD scholars, Edward Gwynn and Atkinson.

²⁴ Mansergh, pp. 246-7.

was more open to different forms of government, whereas the Irish Republican Brotherhood, then small in numbers, preached the republican ideal. The combined forces of the Gaelic League, Sinn Feinn, IRB and the socialists ultimately accomplished the Irish revolution, and their surviving leaders, including MacNeill, were rulers of the Irish state after only 15 years since the founding of Sinn Féin.

Being a long-time chairman of the Gaelic League, Eoin MacNeill was drawn to political debates and actions, although he often expressed his wish to "go off to his books".²⁵ Many of MacNeill's political acts seemed to be unintentional, but in times of crisis his splendid oratory and cool arguments were greeted with satisfaction even by his more radical allies. On the eve of the Easter Rising the Gaelic League openly abandoned political neutrality, which MacNeill later regretted.²⁶

MacNeill directly initiated the foundation of the Irish Volunteers, the biggest Nationalist organisation that fought in the Easter Rebellion. In November 1913 he had written the famous article "The North Began", in which he praised the Northern Unionists for their resistance organisation, the Ulster Volunteer Force. The establishment of the UVF was, in MacNeill's mind, a delightful proof of Irish self-confidence against the English, and he wanted to encourage the nationalist majority to a similar show of force, in order to hasten Home Rule. Being an Ulsterman himself, MacNeill understood, perhaps better than any of the Nationalist leaders, the tactics of the Northern Unionists, who were bringing the Empire to its knees without firing a single shot.²⁷ MacNeill never planned to use the Volunteers against Ulster Unionists, although the speeches and writings of Pearse did not exclude that possibility. Paradoxically MacNeill objected the armed rebellion against the British state, too, as his cancellation order²⁸ of the Easter

²⁵ An expression recorded by Pádraig Pearse in 1908 when MacNeill would have retired from the leadership of the Gaelic League and from many of his editorial duties. Tierney 1980, p. 78.

²⁶ Donal McCartney, "MacNeill and Irish-Ireland" in Martin & Byrne (eds.) 1973, p. 86.

²⁷ For further details about MacNeill's activity with the Volunteers and the Easter Rising see Tierney's biography and the following articles; F.X. Martin, "Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising", *IHS* vol. XII no. 47/1961, and T. Desmond Williams, "Eoin MacNeill and the Irish Volunteers", in F. X. Martin (ed.), *Leaders and Men of the easter Rising: Dublin 1916* (Methuen & Co., London 1967).

²⁸ Being the president and the Chief of Staff of the Volunteers, MacNeill was formally authorized to cancel the "manoeuvres" which the "military council", lead by Pearse, had planned to start on Easter Sunday, 1916. Despite the confusion concerning the cancellation and participation of the units outside of Dublin, Pearse and his fellow radicals started the militarily senseless *coup* on

rebellion at the last minute showed. Before his order he had warned the rebel leaders that a violent attempt of separation from England would certainly cause a reaction in Ulster - as it did. In principle MacNeill did not deny the possibility of an Anglo-Irish war one day, but in such a situation a united nation - including the Protestants - had to stand behind a national army. In the spring of 1916 this was not the case, although MacNeill saw that both the Southern and Northern voluntary forces were an important step towards national administration.²⁹

MacNeill's role in Easter 1916 left a trauma between him and the extremists of the Irish Republican Brotherhood - the organisation that had infiltrated the Volunteers - although Pearse and another military commander, Thomas MacDonagh, cancelled all their accusations against MacNeill shortly before their executions. Even today the IRA mythology holds that without MacNeill's hesitation and the loss of arms supplies to the English, the rebellion might have had some chances of military success.³⁰ MacNeill nearly missed the execution himself, being sentenced for life which in the end meant a year in an English prison, and also losing his professorship at UCD. Although the following years were economically hard to a father of eight, their positive effect was that MacNeill was forced to publish his first full book, *Phases of Irish History* (1919), based on his public lectures between 1917-18.³¹ Political stresses of the post-rebellion period left their mark on the *Phases*, but in his later publications the tensions were less obvious.

MacNeill's rapid political rise soon compensated his temporary academic losses. Realising that the tide had turned, he joined the Sinn Féin which united the independence movement after 1917, becoming member of its Central Committee with large support. His imprisonment by the English in 1916-17, with additional six months in 1920, helped to save his national prestige that had been slightly

Monday. MacNeill was rather well informed about their plans, but without becoming a traitor to the national cause he could not reveal the plans to the government, nor had he power to prevent the rebellion.

²⁹ These were the dominating thoughts in the so called Memoranda I, written by MacNeill in February 1916. He provided a common national opinion before political actions: "In other words, if we are right nationally, it is our duty to get our country on our side, and not to be content with the vanity of thinking ourselves to be right and other Irish people to be wrong." F.X. Martin, "Select Documents. Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising". *IHS* vol. XII, 47/1961.

³⁰ See, for example, Eamonn O'Doherty, *The IRA at War 1916 to the Present. An Illustrated History* (The Mercier Press, Dublin 1985), p. 7.

³¹ The title referred to MacNeill's vision of four hundred year periods in Irish history.

damaged by the Easter crisis, and along with the landslide victory of Sinn Féin in the 1918 elections MacNeill was returned for the constituencies of Derry and the National University. The Sinn Féin representatives then formed a constituent assembly (the first Dáil Éireann) in Dublin, following the idea of parliamentary *absenteeism*³², which had been developed into a practical plan by Arthur Griffith. MacNeill had an active role in the scheme, and in the Dáil he was appointed Minister of Finance, later of Industries.

During all his political career, and especially after 1916, MacNeill carefully secured his political warrant from the "will of the people", expressed by votes and mandate from elected assembly. Like Griffith, he was not a committed republican, but they both felt that the Easter Proclamation of the Republic had gained the majority support of the people in the 1918 elections, and that Sinn Féin now represented the majority will. Therefore the oath to "support and defend the Irish Republic", demanded by the first and second Dáil, was not problematic to MacNeill. But in the conflict that followed the 1921 Treaty which provided a formal oath of allegiance to the English monarch, MacNeill and other Treaty supporters maintained that their duty was to secure the maximum measure of freedom for Ireland, and not necessarily a republic if it seemed impossible. MacNeill's conviction was that the opponents of the Treaty who could see no other alternative, even temporarily, than pure republic, had no mandate from the people. The Dáil had accepted the Treaty, and if the opponents of it aimed to overrule the legal government by force, they were in fact establishing a military dictatorship, he claimed.³³ Therefore he did not object, in principle, the death penalties ordered by the Government, as military measures against military action that threatened the nation.

In the Free State MacNeill served as chairman of the second Dáil and from 1922 onwards as Minister of Education until 1925, when he was forced to resign after the failure of the Boundary Commission to revise the northern border. MacNeill, in Geoffrey Hand's words "a reluctant political leader", had been

³² Withdrawal from the British parliament and creating a national constitutional assembly.

³³ Tierney 1980, p. 310-11. Michael Tierney, MacNeill's personal friend, was very loyal to MacNeill's Irish-Ireland philosophy based on Gaelic Christian tradition, denouncing the dogmatic policy of de Valéra and his supporters in the Civil War and after. In Tierney's words, MacNeill's philosophy expressed "aspirations from real Irish people, not doctrinaire, not ideological... and it still has power" (p. 270).

curiously passive in the Commission, although the situation admittedly was impossible for him, as it had been in 1916.³⁴ He could not prevent the practical catastrophe which this time was caused by the ambiguous Article 12 of the Treaty, and by the Civil War that had weakened the Free State Government.³⁵ In his biographer's words he was again "blamed because he could not put right what others had already put wrong" by many who depicted him as an "unpractical and unworldly man of books". There surely was some truth in the latter judgement, but it should be remembered that few of the Nationalist leaders had, in MacNeill's words, any "special fitness" for government duties, in contrast to Lloyd George or the Unionist leader Edward Carson, for example. Although a "man of books", MacNeill had done immense work for the Government, not only as an ideologist but also in practical decisions. The badge of the Irish Army was his work, but unfortunately his Irish title for the Army, "Fianna Fáil", was adopted as a party name by his political opponents. Personally he was glad to get back to his study, and in 1927 he finally retired from all political life.³⁶

The founding of the Free State understandably did much to silence the dispute between two historical visions of the Irish past, Nationalist and Unionist, within the 26 counties, expectedly in favour of a narrower Nationalist view. Nationalist propaganda was more apparent in the South, but both in the Free State colleges and in Northern Ireland topics of history teaching were ideologically selected.³⁷ In peaceful times Eoin MacNeill's position as Minister of Education in the Free State would have offered him a chance to carry out fundamental changes education, but his activity was restricted by the physical conditions of the Civil War, and then by his involvement in the Boundary

³⁴ Geoffrey J. Hand, *MacNeill and the Boundary Commission*. In Martin & Byrne (eds.) 1973, p. 265. Hand published the report of the Commission in 1969.

³⁵ As chairman of the Dáil, MacNeill had been excluded from the Treaty negotiations (1921). Article 12 of the Treaty provided that a boundary commission would be nominated to delimit, as the Nationalist plenipotentiaries believed, the area governed by the northern Unionists, if they voted themselves out of the Irish dominion. In 1924 when the British Government had changed and two of the influential Irish negotiators (Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins) had died, the interpretation of the clause was quite different. The Commission came to a conclusion that the six county area should be treated as an entity, and that only minor changes in the border should be executed. Not even these modest revisions were ever carried out.

³⁶ Tierney 1980, p. 274, 277, 353-55, 371.

³⁷ Entrants to the Free State preparatory colleges were asked, for example, "What were the principal industries injured by English legislation during the 18th century?" (1927). D. Fitzpatrick, p. 177.

Commission. During the war MacNeill and his colleagues were compelled to live much of their time under military guard in the Government buildings, not being able to move freely about the country. In April 1922 the Government adopted a national programme for primary schools in which the role of history was to foster a sense of national identity, pride and self-respect, by demonstrating that the "Irish race" had fulfilled a great mission in the advancement of civilization. Most surprisingly, this was to be done through the medium of the Irish language. The programme soon turned out to be non-realistic, and MacNeill had to accept a revision of the plan which came into effect in March 1926, after MacNeill's resignation from the Government.³⁸

MacNeill's literary works before and after 1927 were indeed striking both in quantity and quality, but they were mainly articles in different newspapers, magazines and reviews. After the *Phases of Irish History*, he published two full books, the *Celtic Ireland* (1921) - a compilation of his first lectures for UCD - and *Early Irish laws and institutions* (1935). The obvious reason for the seemingly low productivity was his enormous activity in the Gaelic movement, in the Volunteer organisation and later in government duties, but his philological approach also favoured small scale publication. It is possible, also, that he was content to see his ideas being circulated and popularised by other writers. The greatest "harvester" of the seeds that MacNeill had started to sow in the 1890s was Alice Stopford Green, who in many cases constructed a full narrative of what MacNeill had said in articles and essays.

6.3 Alice Green and her attack on British and Anglo-Irish historians

Alice Stopford Green (1847-1929), daughter of an Anglican Archdeacon, was the Irish widow of the famous English historian John R. Green who had died at a young age in 1833.³⁹ As her husband's secretary and hard-working aid, Alice Green had been trained to write herself, and after the publication of her first book

³⁸ Francis T. Holohan, "History teaching in the Irish Free State 1922-35". *History Ireland*, vol. 2, no. 4/1994, pp. 53-4.

³⁹ For more details about Alice Green's life see León O'Broin, *Protestant nationalists in revolutionary Ireland: The Stopford connection* (Gill & MacMillan, Dublin 1985).

on English history (1894) she became acquainted with MacNeill, turning all her interest to Irish history and the work of the Gaelic League. To MacNeill, Mrs. Green, being 20 years older, was a valuable ally because of her acquaintance with important British Liberal politicians, and MacNeill in turn advised and helped Green to publish her books which consisted altogether of six monographs (1908-1925). MacNeill's principle ideas, scattered in journals and newspapers, were summarized in Green's popular histories, although in a more romantic and higher-flying form. In her letter from 1911, after the first important histories; *The Making of Ireland* (1908), *Irish Nationality* (1911) and *Loyalty and Disloyalty* (1911) had been published, Alice Green told MacNeill that the books might as well have come from him.⁴⁰ MacNeill in turn thanked Mrs. Green in the *Phases of Irish History* for bringing out the literary tradition, "the most characteristic element in Irish nationality".⁴¹

Although Alice Green was closely acquainted with Roger Casement - whom the English (mistakenly) regarded as one of the Easter leaders - she was in no way involved with the armed resistance against the British state. Casement counted Mrs. Green's late husband John Green as a sympathizer of the spirit of Irish nationality, because the idea of a nation to Green, according to Casement, was ever-lasting, unlike the state which could be made or unmade.⁴² Casement and Mrs. Green obviously felt that Mr. Green's historical vision of a thousand-year old English nation did not rival the allegedly older Irish nationality. After the Easter rebellion Alice Green moved to Dublin where she was esteemed as a prominent Nationalist historian and citizen, becoming member of the Free State Senate in 1922.

In his memorial tribute to Alice Green in 1929 Eoin MacNeill noted how the Anglo-Irish gentry had, although being generally ignorant of the national cause, now and then produced courageous men and woman to show "the better way". Being on the same line of "pedigree" as Charlotte Brooke (who published *Reliques of Irish Poetry* in 1789), Philip Barron (educationalist), Thomas Davis and Daniel O'Connell, Mrs. Green had brought the idea of Irish nationality to full fruition in

⁴⁰ Tierney 1980, p. 82.

⁴¹ MacNeill, *Phases...*, p. 346.

⁴² Herbert O. Mackey (ed.), *The Crime against Europe, by Roger Casement* (C.J. Fallon, Dublin 1958), p. 81.

her writings, MacNeill concluded.⁴³ Later assessments of Alice Green's work have been sceptical⁴⁴, but for decades she was the only Irish historian who had, at least, tried to produce a full-scale history of the pre-Norman period.

Eoin MacNeill and Alice Green started their influential careers during an age that was totally different from William Lecky's best years. Mrs. Green was, however, only nine years younger than Lecky and felt that she should challenge the Unionist concept of loyalty, initiated and propagated by Lecky. Her work *Loyalty and Disloyalty* (1911), written in the midst of her campaign to re-write Irish history from a Nationalist point of view, gave an explanation to the question why loyalty had gone out of date in Ireland. Paradoxically the Ulster Unionists could, to a great extent, agree with her.

To Lecky loyalty had meant obedience towards the British state and its conservative ideals, whereas Green accepted only the sovereign as the object of loyalty. The disastrous turn in the Irish history had started in Cromwell's time when the English Parliament had taken supremacy over Ireland. Green asserted that the Irishmen would have stayed loyal and obedient to the kings of England, had they defended their Irish subjects against the Parliament in the 17th century, and against the Prime Ministers in the 19th century. Instead, the English monarchs had completely neglected Ireland, defending the English superiority in every "conflict or calamity", and visiting the island only twice in the 19th century, and even then hastily.

By the 19th century, Green described, the King no more ruled himself, but rather expressed the will of the Prime Minister. Therefore the last chance of mediation between the Irish and English nations was lost, and the "most evil forms of Government - the rule of a nation by a nation" had been established. "Such a rule", Green wrote, "is indeed the most tyrannous and the most intolerable... eternal in its monotony". What made it eternal was the impossibility to influence the millions of "jealous" private wills, whereas the monarch was, in

⁴³ Eoin MacNeill, "A.S. Green. A Great harvester of Irish Culture and Tradition." *The Star* (June 8, 1929).

⁴⁴ In later historiography Mrs. Green is usually classified as an "over-enthusiastic" amateur. See F.J. Byrne, "Ireland before the Norman invasion" in *Irish Historiography 1936-1970*, ed. by T.W. Moody (Irish Historical Committee of Sciences, Dublin 1971), pp. 1-2. Roy Foster has seen Green "as a representative of those Ascendancy Irish whose insecurity drove them to extremes of identification" and who lacked MacNeill's "scholarly subtlety and tentativeness". Foster, "History and the Irish Question" in Brady (ed.) 1994, p. 138.

principle, more open to arguments of reason. In England democracy was not a problem, because people had chosen the forms of union between the sovereign and the people, she believed. But in Ireland there was no hope of a royal sympathy, and therefore it was understandable that to some people a republic seemed to be the only outlet, Green admitted.⁴⁵

Green's idea that Ireland was not governed by any state organ, but by English public opinion, was adopted from the rhetoric of the Nationalist Home Rulers. John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, demanded that Irish affairs should be controlled by Irish popular opinion only.⁴⁶ Éamon de Valéra, president of the Irish Dáil 1919-1922, later confirmed Green's argument about the uselessness of the British monarch as Ireland's assumed friend. In order to resist the Treaty which gave Ireland a dominion status, de Valéra spoke in December 1921: "It is not King George as a monarch (the Irish) choose; it is Lloyd George, because it is not the personal monarchy they are choosing, it is British power and authority as sovereign authority in this country".⁴⁷

The few scholars at TCD who did research on Irish history, and the English historians in general, were accused by the Nationalists of presenting Irish history more or less as part of British history, therefore neglecting expressions of national culture. Some of the historians were suspected of looking everything Irish with an evil eye. In her *Making of Ireland* (1908) Alice Green fired a salvo against such a history: "In no other country in the world has it been supposed the historians' business to seek out every element of political instability, every trace of private disorder, every act of personal violence, every foreign slander, and out these alone neglecting all indications of industry or virtue, to depict national life".⁴⁸

Alice Green's special targets were the living Anglo-Irish historians Litton Falkiner, R.H. Murray, Richard Bagwell, David Chart, John Mahaffy and the English antiquarian Goddard H. Orpen. In Orpen's *Ireland under the Normans*

⁴⁵ A.S. Green, *Loyalty and Disloyalty: what it means in Ireland* (Maunsell & Co., Dublin/London 1911), pp. 3-4, 8-9, 12-14.

⁴⁶ Richard Barry O'Brien (ed.), *Home Rule Speeches of John Redmond* (T. Fisher Unwin, London 1910), p. 237. See also R. B. O'Brien, *Dublin Castle and the Irish People* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., London 1909), p. 8.

⁴⁷ Speech in the Dáil, 19 December, 1921. E. Curtis & R.B. McDowell (eds.), *Irish Historical Documents 1172-1922* (Methuen & Co., New York 1968), p. 329.

⁴⁸ A.S. Green, *The Making of Ireland (and its Undoing) 1200-1600* (2nd ed., MacMillan, London 1909), pp. x-xi.

(1911) the 12th, 13th and 14th century in Ireland had been a "great obscurity", and there was very little good in the next century, either, because the descendants of the English settlers had adopted Irish customs, having become "as lawless and almost as rude as the Irishmen themselves". In purely Irish districts "little real advance" had taken place for three hundred years, Orpen assessed.⁴⁹

Writers such as Orpen were in charge, according to Mrs. Green, of giving a childish, primitive and barbarious picture of Irishmen who in their view were predestined to evil and possessed elements of savagery up till modern times. This kind of history teaching, which was being circulated in British schools and universities, was to a great extent responsible for the "present state of things", i.e. hostility between the English and Irish, Mrs. Green claimed. She explained that the two separate stories of Irish history had started from the English unwillingness to learn Irish, and therefore Anglo-Irish history had declined to the praising of the virtues of the colonists, told by the colonists themselves.⁵⁰ The Nationalist pamphleteers and historians, such as Mrs. Green herself, naturally tried to convert the story and fill the "obscure" centuries with Irish materials and interpretations.

Alice Green's conviction, adopted from Eoin MacNeill, was that there had existed in Ireland before the Norman invasion a versatile "national life" which had been ruined by English subjugation and, most of all, by the destruction of national language. In *Irish Nationality* (1911) Green gave a description of the Gaelic, pre-Norman nation: "The forces of union were not material, but spiritual, and the life of the people consisted not in its military cohesion but in its joint spiritual inheritance - in the union of those who shared the same tradition, the same glorious memory of heroes, the same unquestioned law, and the same pride of literature".⁵¹ After the north-eastern boundary was set up she comforted the readers with a "dream of a union" which had made the Irish stand against invasions and settlements for a thousand years "in the service of a nation without

⁴⁹ G.H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans 1169-1216*. Vol. I. First published 1911 by Clarendon Press (Reprint by Oxford University Press 1968), p. 6.

⁵⁰ A. S. Green, *The Old Irish World*, pp. 10, 13-23, and *The Making of Ireland*, p. xv.

⁵¹ A.S. Green, *Irish Nationality*. Home University Library of Modern Knowledge (Williams & Norgate, London 1911), pp. 13-14.

a flag".⁵²

Green's formulation of the "union forces" suggests that she was familiar with Ernest Renan's famous *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, published in 1882. To the French historian nation was "a soul, a spiritual principle", and the social principle on which the national idea rested was "a heroic past, of great men, of glory". This was a definition that could easily be accepted both by the Irish Unionists and Nationalists, because it gave a practical instruction for the future: "A nation is a grand solidarity constituted by the sentiment of sacrifices of which one has made and those that one is disposed to make again." Renan's most radical idea at the time, however, was the people's free will to form a nation which "renews itself especially in the present by a tangible deed: the approval, the desire, clearly expressed, to continue the communal life. The existence of a nation (pardon this metaphor!) is an everyday plebiscite...".⁵³ Later it will be shown that this particular idea was used to "prove" the existence of two Irish nations. Renan's hero-worship was also shared both by the Irish Nationalists and Unionists.

6.4 Nationality or "state worship"?

According to Francis Byrne's much-cited phrase, Eoin MacNeill had "dragged Celtic Ireland practically single-handed from the antiquarian mists into the light of history".⁵⁴ In doing this MacNeill developed a new nationalist idea which, unlike the earlier Irish ideologies, did not begin with the concept of a nation-state. Although he did not accept imaginary Irish history, MacNeill never intended to diminish the glory of ancient Irish culture, but rather to give it scientific credibility, to de-mythologise it. How much his cultural nationalism supported the claim of one Irish sovereignty for the whole "national" territory, is a matter of

⁵² A.S. Green, *Irish National Tradition* (MacMillan, London 1923), p. 30. The idea of the green colour in the Irish flag probably originated from the 1798 rebellion. The military instructions of the Leinster United Irishmen Committee ordered their flag to be "of green stuff, about two feet square". Robert Kee, *The Green Flag. A History of Irish Nationalism* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1972), intr.

⁵³ Renan's translated (by Ida Mae Snyder) lecture is published in J. Hutchinson & A.D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism* (Oxford University Press 1994), pp. 17-18. The original French lecture was published by Calmann-Levy, Paris 1882.

⁵⁴ Byrne 1973, p. 17.

debate which the following chapters are meant to give some light.

The most crucial element of nationality to Eoin MacNeill was language, because he believed that the real Irish nation could derive its identity firstly from her own language. This was so because in speaking, acting, singing or writing in English the Irishmen expressed the identity of a British nation, like that of American or Australian, but not their "true" nationality. In MacNeill's thinking English-Ireland might as well be a nation, but not an Irish nation in any sense of the word. In his first public appeal for the preservation of Irish (1891) MacNeill claimed that without her own language Ireland would be "a mere geographical expression".⁵⁵

These principles explain MacNeill's enormous devotion to the Irish language. Considering all the efforts that MacNeill spent on the revival of the native language, it is conceivable that language as an element of nationality was even more important to him than history, although they intermingled in his philosophy. The project to change the everyday language of the majority of Irishmen would, indeed, have been revolutionary at any time, in any country.

MacNeill's attempt to define nationality in a new way, dissociated from state politics, was also revolutionary, although not probably quite understood by his contemporaries or by his revolutionary allies. As Donal McCartney has shown, there were different periods in the development of MacNeill's idea of nationality.⁵⁶ The clearest formulations of his ideas about nationality appeared after 1925 when he had been, more or less, forced to resign from political life. In 1929 he defined nationality as "a distinctive kind of civilization, developed by a particular people"⁵⁷, repeating in 1935 that nationality "is a type of civilization which a people has developed, which has become that people's tradition, and is distinctive of that people".⁵⁸ To MacNeill Irish nationhood (= Irish nationality) was not a modern creation, nor invented or discovered by Grattan, Wolfe Tone or by any

⁵⁵ Quoted in D. McCartney's "MacNeill and Irish-Ireland" (1973), p. 79. See also Michael Tierney 1980, p. 67.

⁵⁶ MacNeill's nationalism has been examined by several historians, but Donal McCartney's "MacNeill and Irish-Ireland" (1973) is still the most consistent presentation.

⁵⁷ Eoin MacNeill, "Our Babylonians". *The Star* (July 20th, 1929). *The Star* (An Reult) was a shortlived (1921-29) nationalist journal, "devoted to politics, economics and social affairs". In the same article MacNeill defined civilization as "the totality of all those activities by which man exerts his mastery over nature".

⁵⁸ Eoin MacNeill, *Early Irish laws and institutions* (Burns, Oates, Dublin 1935), pp. 53-54.

other politician, patriot or poet of modern times, but it had existed from antiquity. In the early Christian period, when the Irish were the "schoolmasters of Europe", a "conscious nationality" could be found in Irish literature, MacNeill claimed.⁵⁹

Before 1913 MacNeill had developed the idea of an ancient cultural nation, from which the modern nationality should be derived. It was not a new thought in itself. As early as in the 1840s Thomas Davis, the famous national poet and Young Irelander, had declared that "there was once civilization in Ireland... a time when learning was endowed by the rich and honoured by the poor". MacNeill's idea of Ireland as a "schoolmaster" was adopted from Davis, too, because Davis had directed attention to the ancient scholar-exchange when "men of every rank came here from the continent to study under professors and system of Ireland", in "schools and colleges".⁶⁰

MacNeill's ancient nation was introduced in his first lectures for UCD and in short articles, but before the publication of *The Phases of Irish History* and *Celtic Ireland* (1919, 1921) the great public could more easily learn about it from Alice Green's *The Making of Ireland*, *Irish Nationality* and *The Old Irish World*, published between 1908-1912. These books were also in use at schools, and they appeared at a crucial reform phase of history education which was taking place in Irish schools and universities. Before 1908 history had no centralised instruction for school teachers as a separate subject, but thereafter it became a definite course supported by approved text-books on British and Irish history for more advanced pupils.⁶¹ Green's works were, of course, mild compared to partisan non-accepted books, such as Mitchel's *Jail Journal*.

In *The Making of Ireland* Alice Green had described the "spiritual forces" that had created the ancient Irish nation. At that time MacNeill also emphasized the "will and the spirit" of the people to make a nation, in contrast with "laws", i.e. treaties, declarations and constitutions.⁶² This was perhaps a lapse from MacNeill's general line of argument which usually was more based on history. The "will and

⁵⁹ Tierney 1980, p. 84. MacNeill was convinced that the destiny and duty of the Irish was to become again "the schoolmasters of Europe", which he stated again as Minister of Education in his address to the Dáil in 1923. J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985. Politics and Society* (Cambridge University Press 1990), p. 129.

⁶⁰ Thomas F. O'Sullivan, *The Young Irelanders* (The Kerryman, Tralee 1944), p. 448.

⁶¹ D. Fitzpatrick, p. 173.

⁶² McCartney 1973, p. 83.

spirit" in Unionist rhetoric, which could be expressed at any time by any group of men, was not necessarily dependent on a slowly developing civilization or ancient historical nationality. Indeed, the idea of a cultural and historical nationality was not consistent with the principle that people could create a nation with plain will and spirit.

Later in the 1930s MacNeill clearly stated that the obsession of the political leaders to form a state had nothing to do with a nation. He pointed out the obvious confusion of concepts when the political union of states was named "the League of Nations", or when Grattan had declared the birth of an Irish nation, although only the administrative system had changed. Even Thomas Davis had, according to MacNeill, mixed nation and state when he expected in his famous poem that "Ireland, long a province, be nation once again". In his journal *The Nation* Davis had also written that the Irish would detest all the "English gifts", if the condition were that Ireland should remain a province", and that Ireland "shall be a Nation" come what may.⁶³ In MacNeill's thinking Ireland could not be a nation "once again", because she had never ceased to be a nation. Therefore Davis clearly had meant a state, whether independent or autonomous, MacNeill argued, but not a nation.⁶⁴

Nationalism which by all possible - moral or immoral - means aspired to establish a state, was a political doctrine that MacNeill characterized as "localised statism", statism meaning "state absolutism" or even "stateworship". In state-worship doctrine, MacNeill observed, "the state is the supreme and absolute which the people is required to subserve and defend". In his view the conflict between the Christian, national culture and the state originated from the Roman times. According to MacNeill, after the Renaissance "the reasons of state" had come into open competition with the moral laws of Christianity, leading to rational declarations of "new nations", such as Grattan's Ireland, and to more devastating wars between states than ever before.⁶⁵ In contrast, national civilizations and their diversity had never been a threat in Europe or elsewhere,

⁶³ As a poet, Davis was not very dogmatic about concepts; he also wrote of Ireland still being a "serf nation", which could not imply a state. T. F. O'Sullivan 1944, pp. 436, 445, 448.

⁶⁴ McCartney 1973, p. 85. Ironically, "Ireland takes her place among the nations" was the title of a chapter in Tierney's biography of MacNeill which told of the Free State joining the League of Nations.

⁶⁵ MacNeill, "Our Babylonians". Babylonians was a byname used by the Christians about Rome and the Romans.

but it was the "privilege of statecraft" to hate, suspect and make war with other states, MacNeill stated.⁶⁶

However, MacNeill himself had been in the service of a rising "statecraft", aiming to establish an Irish state which, however, had failed to persuade the Ulster Unionists to join in. Originally he had wanted Home Rule to be duly executed, but feeling that time was passing it, he did not refuse to participate in more radical actions. Between 1913-1925, when MacNeill was more involved in politics himself, less criticism of the state as the centre of national politics was heard from him, and these were the very years when the Irish partition was carried out and the nation had to start "her new live sadly crippled and handicapped", in the words of a Trinity College observer, professor Walter Phillips.⁶⁷ The fatal split in the Nationalist movement which led to the Civil War, and was present thereafter, obviously sharpened MacNeill's criticism and disillusionment against "state worshippers". It was, of course, late wisdom from him to realise it after the Civil War and partition, but in hindsight it seems obvious that his practical non-revolutionary policy would have delivered the state with less pain.

6.5 An ancient national state?

Donal McCartney has emphasized that the distinction between state and nation was implicit in Eoin MacNeill's earliest writings, and that he had always been a critic of politicians and of a state which was based merely on political acts and laws, instead of cultural heritage.⁶⁸ Yet MacNeill's earlier thinking was not always clearly outlined, and the common people who occasionally read his articles or attended his public lectures hardly saw the distinction as an intentional policy. Indeed, those who read Alice Green's works, MacNeill's *Phases of Irish History* or listened to his lectures, could not fail to understand that, besides defending the

⁶⁶ MacNeill, *Early Irish laws...*, pp. 53-54.

⁶⁷ Phillips 1923, p. vii. In the first edition of his *Revolution in Ireland* Phillips was pessimistic about the future of lonely Ireland, "a prey to the civil strife", but in 1926 edition he had to admit that the Free State had taken the power into firm hands and that the decision not to touch the Northern boundary had "removed a fruitful source of unrest". (1926 ed., p. v).

⁶⁸ D. McCartney 1973, pp. 82-83.

glorious culture, they also defended the existence of an ancient political, state-like system of administration.

To Alice Green the separation of nation and state was remarkably less consistent than to Eoin MacNeill, but between 1908-12 she had started the debate in favour of "self-government" of the pre-Norman Irish people. She argued that the Roman idea of a state, in which national life was expressed in the emperor's will and power, was in total contrast to the Gaelic national idea where the people were held together in a "union" by spiritual forces, and not by "military cohesion".⁶⁹ This was a counter-attack against Anglo-Irish and English historians to whom the old Gaelic society was "nomadic" and in a "tribal state", without any government at all.

The English historian Goddard Orpen had argued in 1911 that before the Norman conquest Ireland "was still in the tribal state", with only a theoretical link of subordination leading from the tiller of the ground through his immediate lord to the "ard-rí" or chief king of Ireland. Despite its superficial resemblance to the feudal system, there was no adequate legal machinery for enforcing the observance of rights and the performance of duties, Orpen argued. The only bond of union existed within a particular tribe and a few neighbouring ones, connected "perhaps by traditional kinship or actual conquest". In Orpen's view, the sub-king of this "mór-tuath" seldom acknowledged the superiority of any other, and if he did, it resulted from compulsion and lasted only as long as the compulsion lasted.⁷⁰ In other words, there was no trace of a central government or singular lord who would have ruled whole Ireland or even greater part of it.

To Irish Nationalist historians Orpen's view was a continuation of the English tradition of justifying the Norman conquest of Ireland by claiming that the Irishmen were at a lower stage of national development. In *Phases of Irish History* Orpen received a detailed and furious reaction from Eoin MacNeill. MacNeill argued that among the world-intercourse which had sent missionaries to Britain, Gaul, western Germany, Italy and as far as Iceland, "the most intense national consciousness" had grown in Ireland. The Normans, in contrast, could not represent any nationality, because no Norman nationality was known at the time, and in England the Normans were still a foreign element. Some of the Norman

⁶⁹ Green, *Irish Nationality*, p. 13-14.

⁷⁰ Orpen, pp. 20-21.

invaders of England had went straight to Ireland, expressing their loyalty in the feudal order to the Duke of Normandy who was a vassal of France, MacNeill explained. The conclusion was that the Irish Normans, had no nationality until they became "Irelandmen, and ultimately more Irish than the Irish".⁷¹

MacNeill admitted that the Irishmen of the first millennium AD had no centralised government - except for ecclesiastical purposes - and that their society was entirely based on rural life. Society was divided into families of which MacNeill preferred to use the term clan rather than tribe. The word tribe, of course, had a less civilised connotation, and therefore MacNeill pointed out that the Normans developed exactly similar clans as the native Irishmen. MacNeill's main argument was that at certain times one of the clan chiefs was understood, and sometimes was elected, to be the "high-king" of the whole Ireland, although his practical powers might have been vague and threatened by rebellious clans. The laws concerning the succession of the high-king were, unfortunately, open to disputes, but this did not cause more disturbance and petty wars than had been recorded in the Roman Empire, or in the War of the Roses in England, for example. MacNeill continued that the Irish wars between clans proved, as has the battle of Clontarf (1014) between Irishmen and the Norsemen, that Ireland was understood to be one geographical entity, a kingdom, because the wars were a contest for the sovereignty of all of Ireland.⁷²

At Clontarf died the mythical king Brian Bóru whom MacNeill saw as an example of a new type of national high-king. Bóru had recognised the spiritual primacy of the Armagh bishop seat, thus settling disputes with the Church, and his own historian called him "Emperor of the Irish". He was challenged by petty kings and high-kings, but he endeavoured to stabilise his position as a ruler of the the whole of Ireland by building causeways and fortified garrisons in various parts of Munster, and by avoiding unnecessary battles with lower kings.

Although the monarchy of Ireland was temporarily lost through the battle of Clontarf, the restoration came in the 13th century, according to MacNeill. He saw that the series of events that started in 1258, when king of Tyrone, Brian O'Neill, was asked by the clan kings to join the defence against Normans, was a decisive

⁷¹ MacNeill, *Phases..*, pp. 244, 307-308. According to MacNeill, the contemporary Anglo-Saxon, Welsh and Irish chronicles called the Norman invaders by the same name "Franks", and "Franks they were in language, customs and institutions" (p. 302).

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 272, 294-95, 253.

evidence of Irish will for national sovereignty. This was the first voluntary and peaceful transition of the high-kingship from provincial kings to one of their numbers, MacNeill recorded, which "implied a repudiation of the authority that set up feudal lords over Irish kings, and amounted to a declaration of national independence". MacNeill also remarked that half a century later Brian O'Neill's son, in a letter to the Pope, repeated the Irish demand and right to determine their own sovereignty, disregarding the Plantagenet lordship.⁷³

In MacNeill's historical vision the Irish "national" culture had developed an administrative system which he did not hesitate to call a state. What kind of a state? "On broad and simple lines, the government of an Irish State resembled that of the Roman republic, with the king added as the chief officer of state", he wrote in *Phases*. But the authority belonged to the "patrician class" which ratified in assemblies new laws and important legal decisions, such as the sentence of death or deposition of a king. In his admiration of the Roman system MacNeill went so far that he occasionally called the minor Irish kingdoms "states", as if the monarch had been an emperor in the Roman style.⁷⁴ Later he wrote that, in contrast to the centralised feudal monarchy of the Normans, there was on the other side "an extremely decentralised system of small states, with no common council or political machinery, united indeed, but not politically, by a common national law and by a common national tradition and culture of great potency and intensity..."⁷⁵

Alice Green also called the Gaelic system a state in the title of her *History of the Irish state to 1014* (1925), although she was more interested in the Celtic literary traditions. Green's book was, as well as the *Irish National Tradition* (1923), inspired by the new Irish state, but it was also a response to continuous British arguments that pre-Norman Ireland could by no means be called a nation. The British college teacher L. B. Cundall, already mentioned in the racial debate, had written in a geography textbook (1920) that in central Ireland "numerous marshes, bogs and lakes made it impossible for a strong central power to grow up under which Ireland could be united. Thus Ireland remained a number of small independent tribes until conquered and given good communications by England". If only Ireland could have developed political as well as religious unity before the Viking

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 269-71, 330-31.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 269, 352.

⁷⁵ MacNeill, *Irish Free State Official Handbook* (1932), p. 53.

attacks, "she might have become a nation", Cundall reasoned.⁷⁶

In Alice Green's romantic vision the literary tradition of ancient Ireland alone would have been enough to make a nation. The English, too, had their glorious literature, but it had never been a "binding force" for them. The English were, according to her, incapable of conceiving the idea of a nation without a fixed political form, because their national life had, up till the 20th century, been dominated by political and military, but not by intellectual forces. The contrast to Ireland was complete, because "no single Celtic ruler was in a position to determine what the people should think, believe or do".⁷⁷ Even if there did not seem to be any government at all in Green's ancient free state of Ireland, there was, however, a state legislation of sorts. The shift of power for high-kingship between the two clans of ancient Tara indicated a "constitutional pact" to Mrs. Green.⁷⁸

The arguments given by MacNeill and Mrs. Green seemed to make clear that up till the 13th century there had existed a national state in Ireland, whereas the rest of Europe was still at a feudal stage. In their opinion there had not only been a tradition of a central monarchy in Ireland, but also a kind of bourgeois democracy in higher legislation and decision-making, compared to the feudal, autocratic system of the Normans. Padraig Pearse added education, which was "more democratic than any education system in the world to-day", to the values of the ancient society. Great poets, priests and scholars gathered "foster-children" to their household, and under a Christian rule the pagan ideals of "strength and truth" were added to Christian ideals of "love humility". In Pearse's view the hedge schoolmasters of the 19th century were "the last repositories" of this old tradition.⁷⁹

Later MacNeill denied that the demand for the Irish state was ever based on the existence of an ancient state, but on the existence of the Irish nation throughout history.⁸⁰ Yet his readers could hardly avoid the conclusion that the claimed political sovereignty went hand in hand with a glorious civilization, and

⁷⁶ Cundall, pp. 296-7.

⁷⁷ Green, *Irish National Tradition*, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁸ Green, *H. of the Irish State*, p. 417.

⁷⁹ Pearse, "The Murder Machine". *Political Writings...*, pp. 26-27

⁸⁰ Tierney 1980, p. 84-85.

that there was nothing wrong in the desire to get it back without waiting till everybody spoke Irish. As Michael Tierney put it in MacNeill's biography, the new interpretation of the Irish past naturally "constituted a powerful argument for Sinn Féin's claim to full national independence".⁸¹ In the post-rebellion political situation it perhaps appealed more effectively to people's emotions than did pointing to singular failures of the English administration during the last hundred years, although that was effectively done, too.

MacNeill's dogma of an ancient state was adopted as part of the official state politics. After the first Dáil had issued a declaration of independence in January 1919, the new national leaders sought recognition from the presidents of France and United States who, at the time, were involved in the peace conference at Paris. To their great disappointment Clemenceau resisted the Irish claim, and Wilson, although he probably favoured the Irish independence in principle, did not want to annoy his British allies.⁸² At the end of his North-American tour (1919-20) Éamon de Valera, then president of the first Dáil, published an open letter to Wilson in which he orderly repeated MacNeill's theory of one Irish nation, "one of the oldest and most clearly defined in Europa", and then launched the biggest argument: "Their nation is not a nation merely in the sense of modern political science - it was a sovereign independent state for over a thousand years, knowing no external master..."⁸³

Although merely a sideshow, de Valera's Finnish contact during his North-American tour is worth noting, because it reveals his, or his aides', limitations in historical arguments. In his letter to Wilson de Valera made some comparisons between Ireland and other newly established states, of which he mentioned Czechoslovakia, Armenia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Finland. None of them could, de Valera claimed, "approach the perfection of nationhood manifested by Ireland", nor could they be compared to Ireland on other grounds, because those nations had not "elected or organised government of their own".⁸⁴ Clearly he was not aware that Finland had enjoyed a national government (Senate) throughout the

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁸² See, for example, Michael Kennedy, *Ireland and the League of Nations 1919-1946* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin 1996), pp. 19-20.

⁸³ Open letter to President Wilson, 27 October 1920. Maurice Moynihan (ed.), *Speeches and Statements by Eamon de Valera 1917-1973* (Gill and MacMillan, Dublin 1980), p. 36.

⁸⁴ *Id.*

autonomy period, that the Finnish Diet had assembled several times between 1867 and 1906, or that the Finnish Parliament with universal suffrage was established in 1907. Yet de Valéra had had a chance to acquire information about Finland from a Socialist Finnish ex-MP, Santeri Nuorteva, half a year earlier in the USA. In the spring of 1920 Nuorteva and his Russian staff represented the Soviet Government, from whom the delegates of the Dáil and the American republican activists tried to get recognition for a sovereign Irish state. Nuorteva supported the Irish Nationalists and almost succeeded in his diplomatic manoeuvres before his dismissal from high diplomatic posts. Although the Dáil acted as the supreme head of Ireland, the Russian Bolsheviks were resentful about its recognition. By 1921 the Bolsheviks had secured their rule in Russia and were negotiating with England in order to cease hostilities and the economical blockade. Therefore the efforts of the Dáil representatives, whom president de Valéra sent from the United States to Russia for moral support, were all in vain, despite their eloquent appeals to “national idealism”.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ For further reading about de Valéra’s tour and Nuorteva see Sean Cronin, *The McGarrity Papers* (Anvil Books, Tralee 1972), pp. 86-7, 205-8, and Auvo Kostiainen, *Santeri Nuorteva. Kansainvälinen suomalainen* (SHS, Helsinki 1983), pp. 98, 124. Although efforts to gain recognition for an Irish republic were fruitless, the Free State, as well as Finland, were accepted to the League of Nations in due course. William Cosgrave, President of the Free State, and Eoin MacNeill had a chance to acquire better information, if they needed, of the Finnish government under Russian sovereignty when they dined in Geneva with the Finnish Delegation to the League, in September 1923 (Tierney 1980, p. 335).

7 CHALLENGING ONE-NATION VIEWS BY MACNEILL'S DISSENTING ALLIES

7.1 One nation with a shorter ideological perspective

Eoin MacNeill's and Alice Green's historical arguments about common Irish nationality were not shared by all of those who during the pre-rebellion years became MacNeill's political allies. The more radical sections of the Nationalist movement, represented by Fenianism and later by Sinn Féin, had their own modern ideals, inspired by the French revolution. In the 1890s a new political force, the labour movement and trade unionism, emerged which rivalled and came into conflict with the Fenian claim to national leadership. However, the writings by Marx, Engels and Lenin never aroused great public interest in Ireland where socialism was fiercely condemned by the Catholic Church. Socialism was not the only movement that appealed for new ideas. Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Féin, in his journal *United Irishman* demanded modernization of the Irish society, which in his view needed no models from Gaelic Middle Ages.¹

Nor were all moderate Home Rulers, MacNeill's closer political associates, anxious to look back a thousand years when a hundred seemed enough to prove that Ireland deserved self-determination. The leaders of the Irish Parliamentary Party had been watching the growth of the Gaelic League with suspicion, because they saw in it a potential rival - quite correctly as it turned out. In 1907 John Redmond, leader of the Party, remarked publicly that "our claim to self-government does not rest solely upon historic right and title. It rests also... upon

¹ Garvin, pp. 108, 113.

the failure of the British government in Ireland for the last one hundred years".² Indirectly, the statement witnessed the vitality of MacNeill's vision in the Nationalist campaign. It was more or less used by all Nationalist sections, if not as a fundamental dogma but at least as a useful propaganda aid.

The main ideological rivals of MacNeill's historical nationality were the republican one-nation theory and the principles of a socialist model society. Or they might have been rivals, had their main ideologists, Pádraig Pearse (1879-1916) and James Connolly (1868-1916), not been executed after the Easter Rising. Publicly there was hardly any debate on the national concepts between MacNeill, Pearse and Connolly, although their divergent opinions lay open to the public. After 1916 Marxist principles of socialism became almost extinct in Ireland, and it seemed also that, after Pearse was gone, the younger republicans could not offer ideological challenge to Eoin MacNeill.

Since the 1970s historians have unveiled Pádraig Pearse's controversial personality from the mythical elements, most notably by R. D. Edwards in her *Patrick Pearse, Triumph of Failure* (1977). Whether Pearse's motivation for revolution and obsession for armed struggle grew from personal frustrations is irrelevant here, but the question now is how much his ideology really differed from that of MacNeill's.

The writings and speeches by Pearse that established his later myth mainly appeared during a short period between 1912-1916. Some of his public speeches he himself revised for publication, and the most prominent writings were compiled in Pearse's *Collected Works* as early as 1922. It was reprinted in 1952 by another publisher under its former subtitle *Political Writings and Speeches*. *Collected Works* was read as Pearse's last will, as he himself had planned. Being a product of its own time, it is an important document of what Pearse wanted the posterity to think of, not necessarily of what he "really" thought. The propagandist nature of the *Works* is, therefore, more apparent than in many of MacNeill's articles. The famous memorial speeches for Wolfe Tone (1913) and Robert Emmett (New York 1914), for example, were intended to raise emotions among the audience and later readers, instead of submitting a scholarly analysis of the Irish identity. Therefore conflicting arguments and obscure metaphors are easy to identify in Pearse's works, and we can only speculate about how his thinking might have developed

² R.B. O'Brien 1910, p. 238 (Redmond's speech in Dublin, 4 September 1907).

in older age.

Like Eoin MacNeill, Pearse also started his revolutionary career as a "harmless cultural nationalist", according to his own words.³ Instead of practising law profession for which he was educated, he devoted himself to teaching of Gaelic Irish for which he established a school, St. Enda's. As with MacNeill, Pearse's exceptional skills as an orator and writer soon drew him to politics. They met at the Gaelic League, and in 1903 Pearse took over from MacNeill the editorship of *Claidheamh Soluis*, the League's journal in Dublin. According to Michael Tierney, as an editor Pearse was sometimes criticized as being too controversial, but in the atmosphere of the time it was more of a tribute, because the League indeed sheltered different opinions and controversy.⁴

Pearse was as devoted to the Gaelic Revival as Eoin MacNeill, and both did immense work in practical teaching of the Irish language. Irish should in their view become language of instruction in schools for those pupils who still heard Irish spoken at their homes, English then being their second language. In English speaking areas Irish would be taught as a compulsory second language, but most of all it should be revived by using it in everyday life, as Pearse and MacNeill did themselves.

Pearse and MacNeill both shared the view that the essential thing in the spiritual nationality was language - language understood as including literature and folklore as well as "sounds and idioms". But in the early 1910s when MacNeill seemed to accept the coming home rule, Pearse started to criticize the "philological approach" which, in his view, forgot the nation. The target was obvious when Pearse wrote that he had "all along been working not for the language merely, but for the nation", and underlined that anybody who wanted to restore the language only had not understood the true Gaelic League spirit: "I protest that it was not philology, not folklore, not literature, we went into the Gaelic League to serve, but: Ireland a Nation".⁵

Pearse, of course, was not a historian by profession or inclination. However,

³ Quoted in Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse, Triumph of Failure*. First published 1977 (V. Collanz, London 1990), p. 178.

⁴ Tierney 1980, p. 75.

⁵ Pearse, "The Spiritual Nation" and "Psychology of a Volunteer" in *Political Writings..*, pp. 107, 302. "I have spent the best fifteen years of my life teaching and working for the idea that the language is an essential part of the nation" (p. 106).

his demand that education should lead Ireland "back to her sagas" was not an unusual reference to ancient history. He wrote of nationality as "an ancient spiritual tradition, one of the oldest and most august traditions in the world".⁶ But those who looked for some rational explanation for the birth of this spiritual tradition, or the "soul of the nation", had to be content with Pearse's faith that nation was "natural division, as natural as the family, and as inevitable". And it was, indeed, because "a nation is holy... knit together by natural ties mystic and spiritual, and ties human and kindly."⁷

In his writing that was later named "The Spiritual Nation", Pearse tried to extract components from his spiritual nationality, dividing nation to body and soul. In Pearse's view Wolfe Tone, who had united Ireland in action, represented the body, and Thomas Davis the soul, the "nation's heartside". These were, of course, poetic metaphors, but Pearse also divided nationality into two components, "spiritual" and "intellectual", which corresponded the "soul" and the "mind" of an individual. Pearse's examples suggest that his "soul" was something close to human morality, because "that is a book which only God reads plainly". On the other hand he believed that the soul of Ireland was "a spiritual tradition" which made Ireland "a living nation", as it made all true nationalities living. He paid less interest to the "intellectual" part which - like its human counterpart "mind" - was "to a large extent dependent upon the material", i.e. influenced by the surroundings, other people and ideas. The soul, however, revealed itself through the mind, and these together, as the sum of facts that "mark off one nation from another", formed the nationality.⁸

Pearse was fond of dualistic allegories, although he never developed them further. When he appealed to Thomas Davis in "The Spiritual Nation" he used a human metaphor about nation's "inner and outer life". Now the inner thing was the soul only, and the inner and outer life together meant "nationhood" with both spiritual and political consequences, the same that Davis, according to Pearse, had meant when he had written of Ireland's aspiration for "unbounded nationality". By this Davis had meant sovereign nationhood, i.e. spiritual, intellectual and

⁶ Pearse, "Ghosts" (1915). *Political Writings..*, p. 228.

⁷ Pearse, "The Sovereign People". *Ibid.*, p. 343.

⁸ Pearse, "The Spiritual Nation". *Ibid.*, pp. 299-301.

political independence, Pearse explained.⁹ Years before Eoin MacNeill referred to the fact that Davis had used the word nation when actually meaning a state, Pearse observed the same misunderstanding. When Davis had anticipated an Irish nation "standing supreme on this island" he really meant, according to Pearse, a sovereign Irish state, "with her ambassadors in foreign capitals and her flag on the seas".¹⁰

The readers surely agreed with Pearse when he admitted that the distinction between the nation's "soul and mind" was not easy to express. His obscure analysis appears, however, to be a conscious attempt to talk to the "people" with familiar, non-scientific metaphors. Yet more important was his denouncement of MacNeill's view of historical nationality. In his writing "From a Hermitage" (re-issued 1915) Pearse held that new theories were not needed, because Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmett, James Fintan Lalor and Thomas Davis had already said all that was worthy about Irish nationality. The summary of their teaching was not a theory, but rather the voice of the ancestors which, if properly heard, would get the present generation "to fuller communion with what is most racy in our past". This voice had wakened the instinct of the Fenian artisans, which was "a finer thing than the soundest theory of the Gaelic League professor", Pearse assured.¹¹ A reader may note that this argument itself is contradictory, and not consistent with Pearse's "ancient spiritual tradition", either.

At Tone's grave Pearse had claimed that Tone was the first to define Irish nationality when he had expressed his intention to "unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter". In these words Pearse found implicit all the philosophy of Irish nationalism, the "great, clear, sane conception" that in Ireland there must be not two nations or three nations, but one nation where "Protestant and Dissenter must be brought into amity with Catholic", uniting in order to "achieve freedom for all". In the same speech Pearse introduced the immortal slogan "Ireland one and free"

⁹ Ibid., p. 320.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 315.

¹¹ Pearse, "From a Hermitage". Ibid., p. 211.

as the perfect definition for the Irish nation.¹²

The obscure human and religious allegories that Pearse cultivated in his speeches and pamphlets hardly offered any more theoretical ground for the unity of Ireland than did MacNeill's theory of an ancient nation. Pearse summed up Tone's teaching: "And I come back again to this: that the people are the nation; the whole people, all its men and women".¹³ Such an argument required faith on the dogma itself, not theoretical justification.

The people of the nation, however, could be wrong and betray the national cause. In his writing "Ghosts" Pearse accused the generation that had been deceived by the mirage of Home Rule: "There has been nothing more terrible in Irish history than the failure of the last generation." Other generations had failed, too, in their main objective, but "nobly". The failure of the last generation "has been mean and shameful", Pearse wrote on the eve of the Easter Rising, meaning that no armed rising had emerged after 1867, except in the North.¹⁴ These accusations were, of course, preparatory propaganda for the Rising, with the aim of indicating the continuity of armed resistance against Britain.

7.2 Workers as the primary people of the nation

The Irish labour movement reached its zenith under James Connolly in the 1910s. After the Dublin riots of 1913 Connolly, with Captain Jack White, an ex-officer of the British army, created the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) to protect the workers in conflict situations. Before this, "Big Jim" Larkin, the trade union organizer, had tried to establish a non-sectarian union for unskilled workers in Belfast. It was bitterly opposed by Orange employers, police and civil authorities who labelled Larkin's attempt socialist and Catholic. The riots in the summer of 1907 alarmed Unionist employers in Belfast about the possibility of a united labour movement, and to counter-attack this they established the Unionist-Labour Association which

¹² Pearse, "How does she stand". *Ibid.*, pp. 55-63. Pearse let his readers understand that Tone, who sought French military assistance for the liberation of Ireland, was dangerous to the English government only because he preached "peace among brother Irishmen".

¹³ Pearse, "The Sovereign People". *Ibid.*, p. 341.

¹⁴ Pearse, "Ghosts". *Ibid.*, p. 223.

should "demonstrate the identity of working men with Unionism".¹⁵ Although the Association was not very successful, labour split according to sectarian lines was unavoidable in Ulster.

In Dublin the opponents of organized labour were mainly Catholic employers, along with the whole British administration and its orderlies. This explains why Connolly could see the common enemy with Pearse, and why he led the ICA to the Rising as "comrade-in-arms" with the Volunteer organisation. He was, if possible, more eager for rebellion and self-sacrifice than Pearse, and in the same way as Pearse's republican ideal, Connolly's socialism was also to be overshadowed by their "final existential commitment"¹⁶, i.e. by their dramatic deaths which made their ideas and persons "immortal" in the national myth and worship.

Yet Pearse and Connolly were odd allies, because their concepts of a nation were quite different. In 1897 when Connolly was starting his public career he expressed ideas about the "country" of Ireland as comprising "all the men, women and children of our race". This was similar to Pearse's slogan "the people are the nation" ten years after, except for the racial connotation. But instead of defining patriotism as devotion to a mythical nation, Connolly demanded social attitude: "True patriotism seeks the welfare of each in the happiness of all, and is inconsistent with the selfish desire for worldly wealth which can only be gained by the spoliation of less favoured fellow-mortals."¹⁷ Added with the socialist principle of collective ownership and class warfare, he repeated the same basic idea in his famous debate with Father F. S. Kane who in 1910 propagated against socialism. Connolly wrote in his pamphlet: "The Socialist does not cease to love his country when he tries to make that country the common property of its people; he rather shows a greater love than those who wish to perpetuate a system which makes the great majority of the people of a country exiles and outcasts, living by sufferance of capitalists and landlords in their native land."¹⁸

¹⁵ Andrew Boyd, *The Rise of the Irish Trade Unions 1729-1970* (Anvil Books, Dublin 1976), pp. 74-76, 93.

¹⁶ Expression used by his biographer; Austen Morgan, *James Connolly. A political biography* (Manchester University Press 1988), p. 202.

¹⁷ *James Connolly, Selected Writings*. Ed. by Benesford Ellis (Pluto Press, London 1988), p. 129.

¹⁸ James Connolly, *Labour, Nationality and Religion*. First published in 1910 (reprinted by New Books, Dublin 1983), p. 50.

By 1916 Connolly had adopted an orthodox Marxist conception of the workers' primary role in all progress, including national freedom. A few days before the Rising Connolly stated in a republican newsletter that the Irish working class was "the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared"¹⁹, and this was left as his last definition for the Irish nation.

Pearse's and Connolly's attitude towards Unionist Ulster will be discussed later, but it is worth noting how later historians have refuted all claims that Connolly would have successfully married socialism with nationalism.²⁰ The mixing of Marxism and Nationalist interpretation of history has only been able to strengthen anti-British elements in Irish Republicanism, asserting as a standard dogma that only England stands between united Ireland, and that the first aim of a Socialist in Ireland must be to drive the "foreigners" out.

7.3 "The nation is of God"

The historical background of the nation was not the only difference of opinion between Eoin MacNeill and Pádraig Pearse. In their relation to the Catholic Church and religion they represented opposing ideologies, too. MacNeill was a devoted Catholic and one of his major interests lay in Irish ecclesiastic history. The most glorious period in Irish history to him was the pre-Norman time, which had been, in his view, essentially Christian. MacNeill accepted that the Catholic Church would have a special position in the new national state and that religion should maintain its vital role as an element in the Irish nationality.²¹ However, religious and nationalist rhetoric was not openly mixed in his political writings and activity. Later historians have assumed that MacNeill's and Douglas Hyde's support for the Church was more tactical than a question of principle, because they saw that the common people would not be inspired by the Gaelic idea without the assistance of the priests.²²

¹⁹ Ellis (ed.), p. 145. This was an article (8 April 1916) with the title "Worker's Republic".

²⁰ See Morgan's biography and D. G. Boyce, "1916, Interpreting the Rising" in Boyce & O'Day (eds.), p. 169.

²¹ See, for example, Lydon, p. 41.

²² See, for example, Garvin, p. 64.

Pádraig Pearse's background and activity in the Irish Republican Brotherhood explains his different tactics in Nationalist propaganda. The Catholic Church disapproved secret societies such as the IRB, and only a few Catholic priests were, in fact, active in the organisation. The attitude of the Catholic bishops had embittered many of the Republican leaders, who expected, however, that the Church would ultimately follow "the people", i.e. their movement.²³

Modern historians have pointed out how Pearse was deeply influenced by two seemingly contradictory themes: the Catholic religion, and the pagan tradition embedded in ancient Irish sagas.²⁴ Pearse's intermingling of Catholicism and paganism hardly was successful from the standpoint of the former. His continuous use of religious vocabulary and metaphors, along with political declarations, convinces his modern reader less of a religious conviction, but rather demonstrates his tactics of national propaganda. He certainly realized that in contemporary Ireland mystery and acts of sacrifice had more political effect on less educated classes than a theoretical analysis of a political movement. Therefore he chose to use Biblical comparisons in almost every context. The approaching armed revolution, the very probable civil war and the prospect of "shooting the wrong people"²⁵ in the beginning could all be justified by the Bible: "Ireland will not find Christ's peace until she has taken Christ's sword".²⁶

Pearse's nation was not only Divine, it also had saints: Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmett, James Fintan Lalor and Thomas Davis, as already noted. To strengthen Tone's authority, Pearse himself declared that he staged all his "mortal and immortal hopes" on the belief that "God spoke to Ireland through Tone". Echoing 19th century romanticism, Pearse assured that "the nation is of God", unlike empires which were "of man - if it be not of the devil". The empires were "commercial corporations... at best held together by ties of mutual interest, and at worst by brute force".²⁷

During the Easter Rebellion Pearse was worried about possible reactions

²³ See, for example, Sean Cronin, *Irish Nationalism* (Irish Academy Press, Dublin 1980), pp. 23, 36.

²⁴ See Boyce, "1916..." in Boyce & O'Day (eds.), p. 168.

²⁵ Quoted from "The Coming Revolution". Ibid., pp. 98-99. According to Pearse, mistakes should be forgiven, because "bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood".

²⁶ Pearse, "Peace and the Gael". Ibid., p. 218.

²⁷ Pearse, "The Sovereign People". *Political Writings...*, p. 343.

from the Catholic Church in case the militarily hopeless attempt would be condemned as suicidal. Suicide, of course, was strictly forbidden by the Church. Waging a war itself was not so suspect from the point of theology; churches seldom proscribe war so long as it was fought for a worthy cause, and surely nobody could doubt that the freedom of Ireland was such. These were constant themes of discussions between Pearse and two other revolutionaries, Joseph Plunkett and Desmond Fitzgerald during the Rising. Their conclusion was that the Rising might be called sacrificial, but not suicidal, because anybody killed in action would give his life for a great cause, the Irish freedom, just like Christ had given his for the whole mankind.²⁸ Needless to say, there is very little justification in serious theology for such arguments, nor for Pearse's "Divine nation".

Pearse's strong military ally, James Connolly, a self-educated working man by origin, had argued more competently and demonstrated much deeper knowledge on history than Pearse. In his pamphlet (later titled as *Labour, Nationality and Religion*, 1910) Connolly managed to nullify many of the accusations presented by Father S. Kane, a Church propagandist, without questioning Christianity itself. Although Connolly, unlike Pearse, avoided religious vocabulary in general, in this context he appealed to the Master himself. Some Churchmen had forgotten, he claimed, that they should serve the laity, i.e. the people, like Christ had done, and not vice versa. The right of rebellion against injustice, freely expressed by the Papacy also, was the inalienable right of the laity, Connolly wrote.²⁹ The statement indicates how Connolly, like Pearse, believed in the need for the ultimate support of the Catholic Church. Later his associate Captain White found a theological "justification" for their conviction. In White's argument Catholicism in the main stood "for the rights of the community", compared to Protestantism which stood for the "individual".³⁰ The Catholic Church, however, condemned the Easter Rising, and later supported the Free State Government against the Republican rebels.³¹

²⁸ Coffey, pp. 147-8.

²⁹ Connolly, *Labour...*, p. 7.

³⁰ Jack R. White, "Shane's Cairn vs. Shane's Castle". *The Red Hand Magazine*, Sept. 1920 (W. Forbes Patterson, Belfast), p. 22.

³¹ John Whyte, *Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923-1970* (Gill & MacMillan, Dublin/London 1974), p. 8.

8 THE "ULSTER DIFFICULTY" - HISTORY AGAINST GEOGRAPHY?

8.1 The Nationalist claim to the "nation's soil"

The faith in natural state frontiers was nothing new in 19th-century Europe. It had been apparent in the case of island states like Britain, and the example of revolutionary France, which fought for the extension of its north-eastern border to the Rhein, invigorated other powers for similar goals. Throughout the century, most national movements in the Continent were seeking their "natural borders", even if they were hard to find in all directions, as in the case of Finland.

There was almost an unbroken concord about the "national" territory among the diverse parties of the Irish national movement, and - paradoxically - among most of the Unionists, too. As Nicholas Mansergh remarked in his classic *Irish Question*, the "nationalists accepted as an article of faith that Ireland, like Mazzini's Italy, had 'her own irrefutable boundary marks'; that the sea had made of her for ever one nation".¹ The Unionists would have accepted the same view, if the country remained part of the Empire. In Ireland the geographical entity was easy to recognise, but it was powerfully strengthened by the myth of an ancient nation-state. State was something concrete and naturally referred to some specific area; if nation was primarily a spiritual force it might not have exact boundaries at all, but if that force had created consciousness of a state or country that needed to be

¹ Mansergh, p. 189.

ruled, the weight of the historical argument grew significantly. In 1915 Eoin MacNeill wrote: "Ireland is a well-defined country every inch of which we claim for the Irish nation."²

James Connolly had seen it less dogmatically in 1897 when he had written that "our 'country', properly understood, means not merely the particular spot on the earth's surface, but also comprises all the men, women and children of our race".³ By 1916, however, Connolly shared MacNeill's view. While demonstrating that Belgium was an artificial product of statesmen, Connolly convinced the readers of his pamphlet that the frontiers of Ireland, "the ineffaceable marks of the separate existence of Ireland, are as old as Europe itself, the handiwork of the Almighty, not of politicians".⁴ Neither was the whole island "country" questioned in the popular nationalist histories during the first decade of the Free State, as later will be shown. Stephen Gwynn, for example, asserted that "there is no instance in which the history of a people was more determined by geographical facts", believing that the complete nationhood could one day be achieved within "the limits which Nature has imposed upon Ireland's national distinctness".⁵

There were, however, discordant notes from the Nationalists' own ranks which were later almost forgotten in Nationalist historiography. It was not difficult to perceive incongruity between a certain geographical area and the idea of a cultural nation. Father Michael O'Flanagan, a well-known Sinn Féin activist and later member of the Dáil, made it clear by writing after the Rising in *The Freeman's Journal* that national and geographical boundaries in fact seldom coincide: "Geography would make one nation of Spain and Portugal; history has made two of them. Geography did its best to make one nation of Norway and Sweden, history has succeeded in making two of them. Geography has scarcely anything to say to the number of nations upon the North American Continent; history has done the whole." O'Flanagan's view was partly tactical; the great powers - the USA, France, Germany, Russia - to whom the Nationalists were appealing, had "shifting boundaries" and therefore the geographical argument

² Quoted in MacCartney 1973, p. 87. Notice the word "country"; here meaning the territory belonging to the "nation".

³ Ellis (ed.), p. 129.

⁴ Connolly, "Worker's Republic" (12 February 1916) in Ellis (ed.), p. 142.

⁵ Stephen Gwynn, *Ireland* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1925), p. 13.

would "have no force whatever".⁶

The question of who belonged to the Irish nation and what territory belongs to that nation was brought up in the second declaration of independence by the first Dáil in 1919. This declaration was directly influenced by Eoin MacNeill. The first declaration, with less historical dimensions, had been drawn by the rebels during the Easter 1916. Instead of the word "Poblacht" for republic, used by Pearse, MacNeill introduced the word "Saorstát" (Free State) in the Irish version of the Dáil's declaration.⁷ The change was a significant demonstration of MacNeill's non-commitment to Pearse's ideology.

The new declaration admitted that the Easter rebels had acted on behalf of the Irish people - an obvious compromise that MacNeill might not have accepted alone - but added that "for seven hundred years the Irish people... has repeatedly protested in arms against foreign usurpation" and that the Dáil members were now "representatives of the ancient Irish people".⁸ There was no direct reference to the territory, but "the people of Ireland" apparently meant the population of the whole island. In the Democratic Program, accepted by the Dáil on the same occasion, it was more clearly stated: "the nation's sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the nation, but to all its material possessions, the nation's soil and all its resources...".⁹

What was "the nation's soil"? In his *Jail Journal* John Mitchel had defined the soil of Ireland, which unfortunately had been left in English possession and use, as being "all that grows and lives thereon".¹⁰ The clause in the Democratic Program, however, was a direct quotation from Pearse's writing of March 1916.¹¹ In that context the soil was more of an abstract concept than a geographical area, because Pearse tried to formulate judicial principles of national sovereignty instead of drawing the national borders. On other occasions he had claimed that

⁶ Michael O'Flanagan, "Questions to be considered". *The Freeman's Journal*, 20 June 1916. *The Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* was a Liberal anti-Nationalist newspaper in Dublin (1807-1924).

⁷ Tierney 1980, p. 276.

⁸ Declaration of Independence, 21 January 1919. *Irish Hist. Documents*, pp. 318-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

¹⁰ Mitchel (1864), p. III.

¹¹ Pearse, "The Sovereign People". *Political Writings...*, p. 336.

Ireland "from the centre to the zenith, belongs to the Irish".¹² The soil of Ireland was more than a geographical issue to Pearse; it was in fact the political part of the Irish nationality, the freedom of "all Ireland, of every sod of Ireland", or the "full and absolute independence for this island".¹³ That the island as a whole belonged to the Irish nation was a given value to Pearse, as it was to MacNeill, although they had disagreed on many other issues.

Pearse's and MacNeill's one-Ireland dogma dictated the official policy of the Free State, as well as that of the later Republic. Until the Northern border was finally ratified in the Agreement of 1925, the Free State Government, although it virtually governed only 26 Irish counties, held that the Free State "comprises the whole of Ireland". The vague - although formally correct - argument to justify this was that the Peace Treaty of 1921 was "a Treaty with the whole Ireland and not with any part of it", although admittedly "a real problem existed in the North-Eastern corner of Ireland".¹⁴

It was, of course, clear before the Treaty that the Ulster Unionists would not join the Irish dominion. They had already secured their rule in the region which, from the Nationalist point of view, belonged to the "nation's soil". In all nine counties of Ulster the non-Catholic population, generally classified as Unionist, formed only a small majority (56 %), whereas in the six-county area (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Londonderry, Fermanagh and Tyrone) their portion was slightly bigger (66 %), according to the census of 1911. Tyrone and Fermanagh, however, inhabited a Catholic majority (56 and 55 %).¹⁵ In the six-county area Gaelic Irish was seldom heard, and only a few could understand it as a second language.¹⁶ The Nationalists did not question these figures, but they refuted all claims that the six-

¹² Pearse, "To the Boys of Ireland" (Nov. 1913). *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹³ Pearse, "Ghosts" (Xmas 1915). *Ibid.*, pp. 229, 252.

¹⁴ Quoted from the official reply by the Free State Government to the secretary of the North-Eastern Boundary Bureau (E.M. Stephens), signed by Diarmuid O Héiggeartuigh, November 20th, 1924. Geoffrey J. Hand (ed.), *Report of the Irish Boundary Commission 1925* (Irish University Press, Shannon 1969), p. 43 (App. II).

¹⁵ The North-Eastern Boundary Bureau, *Handbook of the Ulster Question* (The Stationary Office, Dublin 1923), p. 47.

¹⁶ Between 1851 and 1911 the number of native Gaelic-Irish speakers dropped from 6 to 0,5 % in the whole of Ireland. In the six-county area native speakers did not exist, but in 1851 2,7 % of its population could understand Irish. By 1981 the number had increased to 7,8 %. Nowadays there are less than 2 % of daily Irish speakers in the whole of Ireland, yet Irish is the official first "national language" in the Republic. Coakley, pp. 29-32.

county area could be defined as homogeneously non-Irish. Even if there was political opposition against all-Ireland government among the non-Catholic population, the North-Eastern corner still was "part of the Irish nation", as Sean Milroy, member of the Dáil and secretary of the Irish peace delegation of 1921, concluded in his book *The Case of Ulster* in 1922.¹⁷

The option of a six-county exclusion from an all-Ireland self-government had been the minimum demand by the Ulster Unionists since 1913, although they very reluctantly accepted that partition perhaps was the only way out of the crisis. Edward Carson, the Unionist leader, proposed the six-county exclusion again in 1914, strongly backed by the King George V, and after the Easter Rising it was presented as the Government's proposal by Asquith's minister David Lloyd George.¹⁸

The six-county proposal was, however, a compromise from the Coalition Government which originally had recommended a nine-county Northern Ireland, with a view that it would not remain so easily permanent as a six-county entity would probably do.¹⁹ The leaders of parliamentary Nationalists in the South and North, and the Unionist leaders accepted the six-county plan in June 1916, although there were different opinions about the permanence of exclusion.²⁰ After the World War it was adopted into the two-parliament plan which was executed in 1919-1920 through Imperial legislation. In the peace talks of 1921 Lloyd George still insisted that the nine-county Ulster was the only "recognised unit" for exclusion, although the British Government had been unable to work it out.²¹

The Nationalist and Unionist concept of the North-Eastern Irish "nationality" will be discussed in the following chapters, but the conclusion of the debate on the Irish national boundary is unambiguous: the exact running of the land boundary was irrelevant from the ideological point of view. The six-county

¹⁷ Milroy, pp. 15, 157.

¹⁸ See, for example, Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (Papermac, London 1994), pp. 315-6, 399, and Stewart 1977, p. 169.

¹⁹ Boyce 1996, p. 67.

²⁰ See, for example, Maureen Wall, "Partition: The Ulster Question (1916-1926)", in D. Williams (ed.), pp. 80-81. The Nationalists accepted the six-county plan on the condition that partition would be temporary, but the Ulster Unionists were encouraged to believe that it was to be permanent.

²¹ K. Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones. Whitehall Diary*, vol. III (Oxford University Press, London 1971), p. 131.

border resulted from a long-standing political stalemate and it was understood to be a compromise by all parties, whether they accepted it or not. The only border with a slight historical justification would have run along the whole of Ulster, but the Nationalists condemned it as a state border, and the Unionists did not seriously demand it.

8.2 Pearse and Connolly on Ulstermen

The arming of the volunteers, both in the South and in Ulster, became a propaganda issue and an item of accusations between the Nationalists and the Northern Unionists. Both had good arguments to defend their own view. Apparently the Unionists had been the first to organise a large-scale arming, but the Nationalists were the first to use arms in serious action. Like Eoin MacNeill, Pearse did not condemn the Unionist arms itself. On the contrary, "I am glad that the Orangemen have armed, for it is a goodly thing to see arms in Irish hands"²², Pearse wrote in November 1913, at the time when MacNeill had published his famous article *The North began*. Pearse's tactical arguments that only an armed Irishman was a real citizen of the Irish nation resulted from his military attitude, but such an argument forces to ask how he explained the position of the Unionist Ulstermen who, according to his authority Wolfe Tone, were Irishmen and part of the one and only Irish nation.

According to a contemporary stereotype of a fanatic Orangeman, Pearse saw the Unionists as "funny" persons whose main feature was lack of humour and sense of incongruity. Yet "the rifles of the Orangemen give dignity even to their folly", Pearse wrote. He was willing to recognise the Provisional Ulster Government, even to "obey it", if it was a Provisional Government of Ireland and not a British one. The Nationalists lacked determination in arming, and therefore their position as an equal partner in negotiations was far ahead: "The chief obstacles are the Orangeman's lack of humour and the nationalists lack of guns." Future, however, was not hopeless to Pearse, because "a sense of humour can be

²² Pearse, "The Coming Revolution". *Political Writings.*, p. 98.

cultivated and guns can be purchased".²³ Such stereotypes were, indeed, dominating the revolutionary leaders, as modern historians have noted.²⁴

The idea that guns and dissatisfaction to the British government could unite the North and South of Ireland was Pearse's great vision, and the possibility that MacNeill shared some of this inspiration during the pre-Rising period cannot be excluded. It was, however, a fantasy already at Pearse's life time, although it was never tested through negotiations that Pearse suggested to be held. The last years had made it clear that the Northerners were "no more loyal to England than we are" which opened the opportunity for "business-like negotiation", Pearse believed. The security of property was the only real issue in the Unionists' fears, and the "foolish notions of loyalty" being eliminated the matter could calmly be settled. Because both objected Home Rule, Pearse claimed, "why not unite and get rid of the English?".

Pearse believed that a common enemy would unite all Irishmen in the national struggle, but despite their rebel behaviour the Ulster Unionists did not recognise the common enemy. Perhaps Pearse realised the impossibility of his dream, because he did not exclude the possibility of a civil war that would also touch the North: "Better wipe out Ireland in one year's civil war than let England slowly bleed her to death".²⁵ Pearse was, of course, right in the fact that to a certain extent the Nationalists in the South and Unionists in the North shared distaste, suspiciousness and conspiracy towards the British Government, but he either misunderstood or consciously avoided to admit the fact that the Ulster Protestants never expressed such a deep-sown hatred and disgust towards the British state in general like he and many of his fellow republicans did. Today we can say that after the Easter Rising nothing could have, perhaps, prevented partition. Protestant Ulstermen were heavily committed to British war efforts under Henry Asquith's Government, and for them the prospect of entering a Nationalist Ireland that had tried to "stab the Empire in the back" was less alluring than ever.

Connolly's view of the Ulster question was basically the same as V. I. Lenin's, although we do not exactly know to what extent Lenin's writings were available for him. Lenin clearly favoured Home Rule for the whole island. At the time of the

²³ Pearse, "From a Hermitage". *Political Writings...*, p. 188.

²⁴ For example, J. J. Lee, p. 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Unionist rising in Ulster (1914) Lenin had written: "The English Conservatives, led by that Black Hundred landlord, that Purishkevich... i.e. Carson, have raised a frightful howl against Irish autonomy. That means, they say, subjecting Ulster to an alien people of an alien religion!"²⁶ Lenin's colourful language implies that in his opinion the Ulster Protestants were incited to act against their own Irish nation. Landlords and capitalists had mislead the workers and prevented them from uniting. They had succeeded in this, according to Connolly, because "the master class" skilfully used "religious rallying cries which, long since forgotten elsewhere, are still potent to limit and weaken Labour here" (in Belfast).²⁷ We do not know what he thought of the religious "rallying cries" of his ally Pearse, but the propaganda tactics obviously tolerated more from the Nationalists than from the opponents. On the other hand, so many of the southern Protestants supported Home Rule, even independence, that it seemed reasonable for Connolly to point out that the religious "problem" existed merely in the North.

As already noted, Connolly did not hesitate to claim that the boundaries of the island coincided with the boundaries of the Irish nation, although the North and the South of Ireland did not "clasp hands" as Connolly had anticipated they would do in his movement²⁸. Therefore his heritage to later socialist generations in Ireland was based on the one nation principle and on the demand that Ireland should unite sooner or later.

8.3 The Ulster-Irish "nationality" and the principle of self-determination

William Lecky's "loyal nation" had not been limited to north-eastern Ireland, but the Orange resistance against Home Rule plans persuaded many observers to see

²⁶ Lenin (March 1914), *British Labour...*, p. 56. The Black Hundred (chernaja sotnia) or The League of the Russian People referred to the infamous paramilitary organisation which declared as its duty to protect the Orthodox Church and private ownership. Purishkevich was a rich Russian landowner and member of the Duma. Connolly's biographer Austen Morgan has suggested that the one Irish nation perspective did not exist in the Leninist canon, but the quotation above seems to indicate that it did. Morgan, p. 203.

²⁷ James Connolly, *The Re-Conquest of Ireland*. First published in 1914 (New Books, Dublin 1968), p. 33.

²⁸ Quoted in T.A. Jackson, *Ireland Her Own* (Cobbett Press, London 1946), p. 423.

the Ulster Unionists as a different nationality compared to southern and western Irishmen, if not yet to the other British nations. Arthur Keith's definition of a new Ulster-Irish nationality, based on the Anglo-Saxon race consciousness and the parallel case of the North American colonies, has already been introduced. Racialist theories in favour of a separate Ulster race, whether it be Celtic, Scotch-Irish or Anglo-Saxon in nature, formed a block of arguments, but also non-racialist explanations and more modern theories were presented to "prove" that the Ulster Unionists indeed formed a nationality of their own.

It was hardly surprising that theories of nationalities in the Ulster context increased significantly after the Unionist arming started in 1911. Earlier it was more common to point Ireland generally - like Lecky had done - as comprising two races, two religions, two nations or two "countries". Sir Horace Plunkett (1854-1932), president of the Irish Agricultural Organisation, acknowledged the divisions with sharpness when he wrote in 1904: "It is commonplace that there are two Irelands, differing in race, in creed, in political aspiration, and in what I regard as a more potent factor than all these others put together - economic interest and industrial pursuit."²⁹ Plunkett was a keen advocator of the British connection, but he also voted for home rule, thus becoming a Treaty supporter after 1921.

Two-nation arguments were actively opposed by Nationalist politicians and historians. Alice Green started her propaganda work in her *Irish Nationality* (1911), by calling forth the powers of the ancient nation. She believed that the "spiritual forces" that had held together the past society, would eventually win, because they already formed "a link of fellowship between classes, races and religions". Although the Famine and the English schools had destroyed the last sympathy towards Englishness, the Gaelic League had outdone the divisions and "united Catholics and Protestants, landlord and peasant", Mrs. Green fantasized.³⁰ In reality the few Protestants or Anglo-Irish, such as TCD scholar Thomas W. Rolleston, who had joined the League for purely cultural interest, soon abandoned the League because of its rising Catholic and political atmosphere.³¹

²⁹ Horace C. Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century* (John Murray, London 1904), p. 37. In 1922 Plunkett became member of the Irish Senate, but after his house was burned in the Civil War (1923) he moved to England.

³⁰ Green, *Irish Nationality*, pp. 247-8, 254.

³¹ Tierney 1980, p. 31.

It is well noted by historians that only few of the Nationalist leaders at that time (1912-1916) were seriously troubled by the future position of Ulster. Despite the Unionist resistance, members of the Parliamentary Party seemed to be content of the passing of the Home Rule Bill, although its execution was postponed. As Michael Laffan has put it, "few of them knew much about the north or could sympathize with its problems and way of life". Tim (Timothy) Healy, MP, said that he knew nothing whatever about Belfast, having spent there only "24 unhappy hours".³² Yet Healy wrote two historical pamphlets on Ulster; *Stolen Waters* (1913) and *The Great Fraud of Ulster* (1917), in which he accused the English plantation officers in the 17th century of "great crimes of corruption and robbery".³³ Most of the activists in the Gaelic League, Sinn Féin and IRB were too busily involved with the preparations of the Rising to care about a possible Northern reaction. The two prominent Ulstermen among the leading Nationalists, Eoin MacNeill and Bulmer Hobson (1883-1969), were against the Rising, but there were enthusiastic Ulstermen among the rebels, too, such as Tom Clarke, Sean McEntee, Sean MacDermott, Denis McCullough and last but not least, Roger Casement.³⁴

As already noted, Father Michael O'Flanagan was a remarkable figure as a two-nation theorist. He had quite different thoughts about nationality, compared to one-nation confessionists, such as Eoin MacNeill, Pádraig Pearse or James Connolly. Nobody in the Nationalists' ranks so openly accepted the two nation concept as O'Flanagan did, and it is notable that this happened before the formal partition took place. In "Questions to be considered" (*Freeman's Journal*, June 1916) he defended the minority right to define their nationality: "In the last analysis the test of a separate nationality is the wish of the people. The Unionists of Ulster... may be *Irelanders*, using Ireland as a geographical term, but they are not Irishmen

³² See, for example, Michael Laffan, *The Partition of Ireland 1911-1925* (Dundalgan Press, Dundalgan 1987), p. 16, and Lee, p. 19.

³³ Healy's special target was Sir Arthur Chichester and his companions who had taken the lands and fishing rights around Lough Neagh and at river Bann without legal permission from the King and without compensation to the natives.

³⁴ After 1916 Hobson devoted himself to economics and theatre, believing that the only sensible policy about Ulster would be "to make Ireland so prosperous that Ulster cannot afford to stay out of it". For more details see his *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Anvil Books, Tralee 1968) and Byrne & McMahon (eds.) 1994. Casement was born in Dublin (1864) as a son of a British army officer from Co. Antrim, where young Casement moved, after his parents had died, to be warded by his relatives.

in the national sense." To demonstrate it plainly and simply he continued: "They love the hills of Antrim in the same way we love the plains of Roscommon, but the centre of their patriotic enthusiasm is London, whereas the centre of ours is Dublin." If the Nationalists fought for their right to define their own nationality, then the Unionists should not be refused the right to do the same, O'Flanagan argued.³⁵

O'Flanagan's writing was a strong argument in favour of "let them go", i.e. of leaving a major part of Ulster outside the approaching Irish national state. Accepting that geography was not enough to unite what "history" had separated, O'Flanagan demonstrated two alternatives for the Nationalists; either accept a Home Rule parliament for the 26 counties, towards which the neutral world would show "mild and sympathetic interest", or to take the whole 32 counties "under a new and slightly improved form of friendly Birrelism". But in the latter case the neutral world would turn "away from us in disgust as an impracticable and impossible race", O'Flanagan warned. There should not be any difficulty of choosing, he ended.³⁶ O'Flanagan's logic is not too easy to follow. By "friendly Birrelism" he apparently meant gradual social, legislative and educational reforms, as manifested during Birrell's period as Chief Secretary, but why should "neutral world" think of Irishmen as an impossible race if they chose that option? O'Flanagan obviously stressed that the contentment with less than full autonomy would, after the armed Rising, look astonishing to the outside world.

The six county plan aroused plenty of discussion in newspapers, and it was either totally rejected, or accepted with a reduced area by more or less moderate Nationalists. Within a few days after O'Flanagan's article several letters appeared in *The Freeman's Journal* which either supported O'Flanagan or criticized partition plans in general. The Unionists of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal understandably opposed plans for a six-county partition, because they would then be left outside the British Ulster. In the same issue Ernest Kelly observed that the "six counties" seemed to be unanimous in their obstinacy to oppose one-Ireland government, but this claim aroused protests from Joe Devlin, leader of the Ulster Nationalists, who pointed to the large minority of Catholics in that area.³⁷

³⁵ O'Flanagan, "Questions to be considered". *The Freeman's Journal*, 20 June 1916.

³⁶ Id.

³⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 June 1916.

Another Ulster Nationalist, Joseph P. O'Kane, warned about attempts to force the Unionists, because they would "fight to the death against you for they will be fighting, according to their lights, a holy fight for civil and religious liberty, won at the Boyne". O'Kane believed that many of the Unionists in fact admitted the benefits of Home Rule, but "the fear of Rome, their sole argument" silenced other arguments.³⁸ Apart from their leaders, the Ulster Nationalists showed more sympathy to the principle of minority rights than their Southern compatriots, and in general understood the Unionist position better.

In Dublin Dr. F. P. Ferran, later member of the Dáil, continued the debate by asserting that "there is no argument of justice for the exclusion, even for an hour, of Tyrone and Fermanagh". However, he was willing to "let Orange Ulster shake itself free", because in the end it would, after having found it impossible to exist without Ireland's support, return back and Ireland could "kill the fatted cow".³⁹ During the Treaty debates in the Dáil, when the feast of the fatted cow had faded away, Ferran described the six county self-government as "a hostile State" which would have only been entitled to 3 ½ counties.⁴⁰

Nationalist MP Stephen Gwynn, although "he knew only one nation in Ireland", also demanded that if there was to be a boundary, it should not close in Tyrone and Fermanagh.⁴¹ Gwynn, a Protestant and acquaintance and former student of MacNeill's, criticized the "criminal folly" of the Easter rebels who had brought civil war into land, and given substance to Ulster's fears which the Nationalists themselves generally called "imaginary".⁴² Later Gwynn recognised that, although the Irish division had a geographical aspect, the causes of the real division were "not limited by any territorial boundary."⁴³

Between the Rising and the passing of the partition bill in the British Parliament (1916 - December 1919) relatively few books dealing with the Ulster question appeared. Robert W. Lynd (1879-1949), a Belfast born essayist and Nationalist, supported some sort of Ulster autonomy in his *Ireland a Nation* (1919),

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 June 1916.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 June 1916.

⁴⁰ *Irish Independent*, 7 January 1922 (a report of Ferran's speech in the Dáil).

⁴¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 2 September 1916 (a speech in Gwynn's Galway constituency).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 22 June 1916.

⁴³ S. Gwynn, *Ireland* (1925), p. 12.

if it did not conflict with Irish autonomy as a whole. He held that "any homogenous minority, desiring to secede, should be permitted to take its case before the League of Nations and... allowed to 'contract out' out of the nation which it is an unwilling part". The problem, according to Lynd, was that Ulster was not homogenous; the Nationalist minority of Ulster was proportionally bigger than the Ulster minority in the whole of Ireland.⁴⁴

O'Flanagan's writing had seriously undermined the Nationalist one-nation propaganda, and it did not remain unnoticed by those already sceptical about it. Sir James O'Connor, a moderate Nationalist, found it a useful argument in his *History of Ireland* (1925). With the evidence of O'Flanagan's article and the writings by Walter MacDonald, professor of the Maynooth College, O'Connor was able to demonstrate how the Catholic intelligentsia was far from being unanimous about the one-nation theory. O'Connor accepted partition as an accomplished fact, including the six county border on the basis that "separate national existence clearly cannot be conceded to a territory which is either too small or too sparsely populated to maintain it".⁴⁵ O'Connor's statement indicated how the idea of a separate Ulster nationality had spread during the crucial years of partition among moderate Nationalists, despite the "last wills" of the dead leaders of 1916, or the efforts of the Nationalist historians.

Ideas of a separate Ulster nationality, based on Anglo-Saxon race consciousness or other racialist beliefs, had been presented years before the formal partition took place. Yet the leaders of the Ulster Unionist movement did not particularly stress the two nation theory, but rather the principle of self-determination for the minority, or for the majority if the whole of Britain taken into account. This was observed by Nationalist propagandists who were delighted that their Northern opponents neglected the dangerous two-nation argument. James W. Good, who boasted himself an Ulsterman after having spent several years in Belfast (although he was a native of Munster), wrote in his *Ulster and Ireland* (1919) that Edward Carson's claim for self-determination could only be based on a distinct nationality of its own. Because the Ulstermen did not complain

⁴⁴ Robert Lynd, *Ireland a Nation* (Grant Richards, London 1919), pp. 241-2. Lynd was an admirer of James Connolly and a friend of Bulmer Hobson and Roger Casement, although his political ideas could be characterised as non-violent Griffithism, the line of original Sinn Féin. Byrne & MacMahon (eds.), pp. 126-7.

⁴⁵ O'Connor, *H. of Ireland*, pp. 256, 260.

of being classified Irishmen, and true Irishmen in their opinion, there was naturally no ground in their demand, Good argued.⁴⁶

After 1920, when partition was being executed, the self-determination argument was carefully supported with fresh political arguments by Ulster Unionists. Ronald McNeill (Lord Cushendun), a well known Ulster politician and member of the Unionist Council, in his already noted *Ulster's Stand for the Union* (1922) recognised partition as an accomplished fact, not made by the Act of 1920, but by "history" long ago. The line of cleavage between Ulster and the rest of Ireland would be "more than unintelligible" to those who would not trouble themselves "about anything more ancient than their own memory can recall", McNeill wrote.⁴⁷

That history changes the world and perhaps guides development in some direction was, of course, a semantic circle, but it was used as a general phrase by historians and other writers at that time. Ronald McNeill wanted that people should be more aware of history, because "it is nowhere more true than in Ireland that the events of to-day are the outcome of events that occurred longer ago than yesterday". Yet he did not go far into history himself, but with the eloquence of a learned writer he mainly analysed the last 50 years of the Ulster debate.

Instead of a long history, Ronald MacNeill appealed to modern political concept of a national state. Ernest Renan's definition of nationality as "the will to live together" was, in McNeill's view, a precondition that harmonised "ill with the actual conditions of Ireland north and south of the Boyne". He admitted that there existed many obvious "identities of interest, of sentiment, or of temperament" which the Southerners and Northerners in Ireland shared, but they were comparable to the common identities of the Greek, the Bulgar and the Serb who all lived in the same Balkan peninsula, but whom nobody would imagine to be of the same nationality. Similarly, the Ulsterman was "more deeply conscious of the differences than of the likeness between himself and the man from Munster or Connaught".⁴⁸

⁴⁶ James Winder Good, *Ulster and Ireland* (Maunsel & Co, Dublin/London 1919), pp. 237-8.

⁴⁷ R. McNeill, *Ulster's Stand..*, pp. 1-2. McNeill was born in Antrim (like Eoin MacNeill), educated in Harrow and Oxford and acquired experience as an editor at St. James Gazette and Encyclopedia Britannica. In 1924 he became Privy Councillor, and the high-point of his career was reached when he, as acting British Foreign Minister, signed the Kellogg-Briand anti-war Pact in Genova, 1928.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

The standard accusation made by Nationalists against Protestant Ulstermen for resorting to "religious cries", Ronald McNeill returned back to the Catholics. A Catholic priest was as kind and conscientious as any other religious minister, but the Catholic Church had, according to McNeill, always made a larger claim than any other church on the obedience of its adherents, and it had enforced that obedience with methods which, in Protestant opinion, were "extremely objectionable". Although fears of "thumbscrew" persecution were illusory, the role of the Holy Office and the Catholic parish priest as a director of everyday life, including politics, was the mainspring of Protestant distrust and the reason why "disloyalty" was attributed to the Catholics as a body, McNeill explained. The sectarian feelings, "everywhere common between rival creeds", were also present, McNeill admitted, and this was something that the Englishmen found hard to understand due to the "astonishing shortness of their memory in regard to their own history". In McNeill's view "No Popery" feeling in mid-Victorian England had been hardly less intense than in the Ulster of his times.

Personally Ronald McNeill did not put much weight on religious feelings, nor was nationality itself the main argument for him. To the Nationalist claim that Ireland as a whole was a nation, the Ulstermen had replied that "it was either two nations or one", but it was the different interpretation of the principle of self-determination that had led to the conflict. The Unionists appealed to the majority in Britain, whereas the Irish Nationalists argued that the majority in Ireland, as a distinct unit, was the only one that should count, McNeill explained. This is how democracy was in fact 'paralysed by the plea of nationality'⁴⁹, since "the contending parties appealed to the same principle without having any common ground as to how it should be applied to the case in dispute."⁵⁰ This was the central idea of an open letter that the Unionists had sent to the U.S. President Wilson in 1918, as a reaction to a Nationalist letter to the same address emphasizing the principle of one Irish nation, and the claimed analogy between Ireland and the liberation of the British colonies in North-America. McNeill had attached both letters to his book.

In Ronald McNeill's view the Ulster Unionists opposed Irish Home Rule

⁴⁹ Expression used, according to McNeill, by Maine (the French philosopher Maine de Biran?, 1766-1824).

⁵⁰ R. McNeill, *Ulster's Stand...*, p. 15.

because they saw it inevitably leading to complete separation from Britain, which was the worst scenario that the unionists could imagine. No argument in favour of a mere local administration or constitutional rights had ever masked the final goal of Irish Nationalism, full independence, from the Unionists, McNeill convinced his readers, and therefore no compromise was practicable, because there was no "halting place" between legislative union and total separation.

This was a line of argument that the Unionists had presented since the introduction of the first Home Rule Bills. Edward Carson, for example, had prophesied in 1913 that the Nationalist Party would sooner or later take, through the Home Rule parliament, the practical independence of a dominion, or at worst "irresistible forces would be set up which could only be set at rest by the complete independence of Ireland".⁵¹ In 1922 the dominion of Ireland was a fact, and the "irresistible forces" demanding full independence had been awakened. The Unionist offensive against Home Rule therefore seemed, in McNeill's argument, retrospectively justified.

Ronald McNeill's appeal to Renan's radical idea of the people's free will to form a nation was a wise political argument, because the Nationalists had greatly neglected democratic theory in their propaganda. McNeill could easily question the historical and other abstract theories of one Irish nation which already were regarded as fantasy in British propaganda. Nor did theories of an Ulster nation or a separate race arouse much confidence among those who were engaged in partition plans. Therefore attempts to focus the Irish Nationalist propaganda back on the majority principle came too late to counter democratic ideas, such as Ronald McNeill's, which seemed to appeal better to a modern observer.

Ernest Renan's idea was perfectly suited for the defence of a minority position, because the population who had "free will" could refuse to join an undesirable nation-state, or could establish a new one if dissatisfied with the old. Ronald McNeill's *Ulster's Stand for the Union* effected, therefore, a long-standing influence on Unionist arguments, and obviously discouraged pro-Unionist writers to develop wilder theories of an Ulster nation, or a full "story of a nation" from cradle to manhood, like the Nationalists had done for their nation. Yet there was an ideal opportunity for scholars to create a completely new historical

⁵¹ Pembroke Wicks, *The Truth about Home Rule* (Isaac Pittman, London 1913), Carson's preface, pp. ix-xi.

introduction for the new political entity, Northern Ireland.

8.4 Eoin MacNeill and the "foreign faction"

Eoin MacNeill and Alice Green had based their claim of one-Ireland sovereignty on the premise of an ancient Irish nation. One of the most curious questions is how they projected the imminent effects of that theory to realities of their day, most of all to the obstinacy of the Ulster Unionists in resisting any form of a "national" government and legislation. The public arguments that they used are well presented in modern research, but a reader can still ask how MacNeill, for example, explained the obvious historical contradiction and incongruities of his vision.

It was, of course, well known that the Protestant Northerners were descendants of the mainly Scottish and English 17th-century colonists, and could not therefore have participated in the founding of a thousand-year-old nation, if such had existed. Also it was known that they were not interested in the Gaelic-Irish language, the essence of the new national ideology. Everybody could see that by 1914 the Ulster Unionists were prepared to and were able to govern at least Belfast and its surrounding counties. How could a unified Ireland, even theoretically, be created out of this conflict?

Eoin MacNeill was probably not alarmed by the Ulster question until 1914 when the arming of the Volunteers had shown its force. In 1915 he published a pamphlet - *Shall Ireland be Divided* - that concentrated on the subject of partition. It may have been drafted earlier, because it was a protest to Arthur Synan who in 1905 had proposed a boundary line from Derry to Newry, in order to cut the "Black North" like a "diseased hand" from a wealthy body. MacNeill's pamphlet is worth studying in detail, because it is one of the few writings in which he explained his vision of the modern Ulster conflict.

MacNeill naturally denounced Synan's remedy, remarking that partition had (so far) been rejected by the Unionists, and besides, that it would be impossible to map out any compact, homogenous territory. No matter how the border might be drawn, isolated minorities would still remain. MacNeill predicted that the Unionist Ulstermen on the Irish side would rebel, and the situation would soon

resemble that of the Balkan Peninsula. On the British side things would deteriorate worse, as well. The Unionists were not the "demon incarnate of anti-Nationalism that some raw Southerners imagine", but if the more compact areas of the Ulster Plantation would be cut off, that would make them enemies of the minority and "arm them with greater powers of mischief" than they had possessed in the 17th century, MacNeill warned. "You would have a recognised Lesser Britain, and a lesser Britain *irredenta* stretching right through the heart of Ulster with kinsmen and sympathisers all over Ireland. What opportunities for a lively time!"⁵²

We now know that the prophecy of continuous Unionist rebellion did not materialise, but "lively times" were, indeed, later created by the "Ireland *irredenta* made fast in midst of the British territory", of which MacNeill had remarked that there were 100 000 Nationalists in Belfast. Economically, MacNeill believed, partition would be senseless, causing extra expenses to Britain and in three years time the "funeral" to Belfast and the surrounding area.⁵³

After these practical considerations MacNeill went through the whole list of arguments that had been presented against one Irish nation. As already seen, he had rejected the racial theory of "Anglo-Saxon" colonists, admitting, however, that the illusion of belonging to a better race in part made Ulstermen pro-British and anti-Irish. Religious division could not prevent one Irish nationality, either, because "Lutheran and Catholic make one nation in Germany, Catholic and Calvinist in Hungary", nor could language do that, because the Ulster accent was "as characteristically Irish as the Cork accent". The latter statement implied that MacNeill accepted English as the "second" national language, although he remarked how it had won only because of its forced dominance in schools and universities and because of its monopoly of "Court and Bar and Business".⁵⁴

Finally MacNeill concluded that nationality was, after all, the original cause for contradiction: "After the Williamite settlement we had in reality two nations, and a century later only one". The statement shows how MacNeill at this stage accepted, at least for propaganda purposes, Grattan's slogan of one nation in the late 18th century, and that the separatist efforts of the United Irishmen indicated

⁵² MacNeill, *Shall Ireland be Divided* (April 2, 1915), preface, pp 4-6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 8, 24.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 10.

common, all-Ireland nationalism. What had happened after that?

In MacNeill's view, the "Protestant nationalists" in Ulster had forgotten the nationalist ideas of the North-American revolution, turning to France whose revolution was fought on more abstract issues. Since then, Ulster Unionism had "confused the rights of Ireland with the 'Rights of Man', a question of nationality with one of abstract or universal politics", he argued. English education and propaganda had made them, as well as some Nationalists, to believe that they were alien "immigrants" in Ireland. But if in other countries one generation was enough for the immigrants to adopt a new nationality - a reference to North America - why should it be different in Ireland, MacNeill asked.⁵⁵

This way of thinking was characteristic of a devoted nationalist historian; the assumed historical forces were ranked either good or bad, according to their effect on the unity within the claimed national territory. The more than 200 hundred years that had elapsed since the Ulster Plantation should have made all Ulstermen Nationalists, but because this had not happened, MacNeill now blamed other historical forces leading in another direction. The result was, MacNeill admitted defensively, that there was a "foreign faction" in Ireland, although "there are not two Irish nations".⁵⁶

Because of his imprisonment, MacNeill had no chance to comment on O'Flanagan's two-nation concept (June 1916), nor the debate about the schools' history teaching which was again re-heated by the Rebellion. Professor Mahaffy, at TCD, gave the Rising an epithet of "Schoolmasters' Rebellion", claiming that school-teachers had deliberately used past events to make the Irish rebels. In contrast, the Nationalists assured in their propaganda that every well-educated Anglo-Irish Unionist was a product of the educational system and therefore "incapable of seeing a nation under his very nose".⁵⁷ The demand that history teaching should consist of teaching plain facts was renewed, but the vague attempts by the ruling administrators to create neutral history were criticized, as

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 6, 12.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 10. MacNeill was, of course, right in his observation that in the New World, immigrants easily adopted new identities, but closer examples from Scotland and Wales seemed to indicate an opposite case: not all English settlers were eager to embrace political separatism.

⁵⁷ Quoted from a Nationalist pamphlet; A. Newman, *Ascendancy While You Wait*. Tracts for the Times n: 5 (Irish Publicity League, Dublin ca. 1915). NLD.

many times before, by both Catholic and Protestant parties.⁵⁸

After his release from prison in June 1917 MacNeill returned to the Ulster question with a purely propagandist vision, in a book on John Mitchel, which was published in Dublin. In the introduction of *An Ulsterman for Ireland* MacNeill warned about the extinction of Ulster, referring to the declining population statistics since 1841, and Mitchel's words that "extermination is creeping northward".⁵⁹ After his second imprisonment in 1920 MacNeill had a plan to write a series of articles on Ulster for a Sinn Fein propaganda journal, *The Red Hand Magazine*, published in Belfast. But the magazine was short-lived, and only the first part of *Ulster History*, which did not reach modern times at all, appeared in September 1920. In this MacNeill argued that ancient Irishmen "did not consider political unity essential to national unity" and that the local autonomy that ancient Ulster as well as other Irish kingdoms were enjoying, was in fact a "national arrangement". Centralised rule had emerged only in times of a foreign threat or in submission to despotic power, MacNeill claimed.⁶⁰ MacNeill had strongly advocated the idea of a "decentralised national unity" in his *Phases of Irish History*. In France and England the capitals had ruthlessly drained the provinces, and with these examples in mind MacNeill hoped that future Ireland would not be "unduly" centralised.⁶¹ Indeed, plans of a federal state were seriously discussed in the Dáil and Government circles, between 1919-1924. Nationalists would have accepted autonomous legislation for the whole of nine-county Ulster, or her local veto against National legislation, if the whole state would have remained formally undivided.

In 1923, when MacNeill accepted that his political career would be sacrificed in the Boundary Commission⁶², partition and the six-county boundary were, however, virtually sealed. Efforts had been made, and were to be made later, to settle the matter between the two Governments, Northern Irish and that of the

⁵⁸ D. Fitzpatrick, pp. 174-5. Professor Mahaffy, Provost of Trinity College, was at the head of organizing the defence of the College against the Easter rebels, at the age of 77.

⁵⁹ *An Ulsterman for Ireland. John Mitchel* (The Candle Press, Dublin 1917), p. vii.

⁶⁰ Eoin MacNeill, "On Ulster History". *The Red Hand Magazine*, Sept. 1920, pp. 37, 40. The editorial of the Magazine declared: "This before God we believe to be true"!

⁶¹ MacNeill, *The Phases...*, p. 302.

⁶² MacNeill expected no good from the Commission, and being 57 years old he thought that the consequences to him might be less unacceptable than to the younger candidate Patrick MacGilligan, Minister of Industry and Commerce. Tierney 1980, p. 342.

Free State, but they all predictably came to nothing. MacNeill's disillusionment is evident in the pamphlet *The Ulster Difficulty* (1923). In its historical section, with propagandist titles such as "Ulster difficulty - made in England" and "Ulster makes no separate claim", MacNeill admitted that opposition against National government in Ulster was genuine, although the Unionist sentiment was caused by "the persistent and unscrupulous policy of English statesmen". In an independent united Ireland there would be no "Ulster difficulty", MacNeill guaranteed.⁶³

The preface, however, which was not written by MacNeill, rather clumsily attempted to turn the Unionist principle of self-determination upside down. It stressed the principles of post World-War state formation and rules of democracy, noting that in most of the new states there were minorities who had opposed the changes desired by the majority in their respective countries, the Germans (35 %) of Bohemia, for example, whereas Ulster Protestants consisted of only 20 % of the whole population. Yet in other cases "the public opinion of the world has decided against the right of a group to dictate a nation". Therefore "the Ulster difficulty is nothing more or less than the opposition of a minority to a change of Government", the preface concluded.⁶⁴

This was principally the same view that Ronald McNeill had presented a year before in his *Ulster's Stand for the Union*, although his minority belonged to the majority, i.e. to the British people. The debate on majority-minority rights was something quite different than abstract theories of one or two Irish nations, but it came too late to make any impact on the partition procedure and the commitment of the British Government to carry it out. The new ideological leaders of the Irish Nationalists, Eoin MacNeill and Pádraig Pearse in the front row, had concentrated their arguments on imaginary visions of a "spiritual nation" and not on the principle of majority will.

The pamphlet *Ulster Difficulty* was probably written for the purposes of the North-Eastern Boundary Bureau which had been in operation since October 1922. The function of this Free State organ was to collect statistical and other material for the Boundary Commission, and to represent the Government opinion as well

⁶³ Ibid., p. 24.

⁶⁴ Eoin MacNeill, *The Ulster Difficulty* (n.p. 1923, not 1918 as in NLD katalog), preface. There is no author's name in the preface.

that of the Nationalists living in the six-county area. It duly followed the instructions of the Government, namely that the Free State represented the whole of Ireland, although the six counties had temporarily, as it was hoped, opted out. The propaganda booklets and pamphlets of the Bureau emphasized that all the "facts and figures" they had collected were "against any form of Partition, and particularly against the form of Partition set up by the Act of 1920". In order to explain the historical roots of the Ulster question the Bureau found it necessary to cling to the religious explanation: "...it is clear that the real cause of division in Ulster was not the difference of race but a difference of religion". But, even if partition could be best defended by religious difference, or perhaps by "mere political expediency", the Bureau saw it utterly indefensible on geographical and economical grounds.⁶⁵

Inside the Bureau it was, however, admitted that Ulstermen were somehow different from other Irishmen: "Ulstermen of both religions have in their subconscious minds a feeling that they have something in common which they do not share with their fellow countrymen in the South... It may go back to the cycle of Chuchulain".⁶⁶

8.5 Provincial or national Ulster history?

The "cycle of Chuchulain" referred to the legendary history of Ulster. Quite expectedly Ulster history had started to awaken special interest after the stormy Home Rule debates of the 1880s. In the 1920s there already existed divergent interpretations and signs of rivalry between Nationalist and Unionist historians; should the glory of Ulster legends benefit national history as a whole, or justify the separation of the six counties?

The so called *Ulidian* or *Ultonian* cycle (period) formed a vital part in the Celtic legends, and the warrior Cú Chulain, son of Delectra and an offspring of the mythical Red Branch family, was the most famous of its heroes. Ancient writers had described him as a fearsome and multiform creature, the Hound of Ulster, not

⁶⁵ *Handbook of the Ulster Question*, pp. v-vi.

⁶⁶ *Possible basis of a union*. Unpublished memorandum, probably by the Bureau's secretary E.M. Stephens, 1923? Stephens Papers, Trinity College Library, Dublin.

exclusively a charming personality.⁶⁷ More than any other of the legendary heroes Cú Chulain came, however, to symbolise Ulster's general vitality. But he also symbolised all of Ireland's vitality, which, according to Pádraig Pearse, had been forgotten. Therefore he addressed his schoolboys at St. Enda's that "we must re-create and perpetuate the knightly tradition of Cuchulainn, 'better is short life with honour than long life with dishonour'".⁶⁸

As already noted, popular writers with racist views about Ulster population, such as John Harrison, Ernest Hamilton, Francis Moore, H.S. Morrison and James Logan, paid no interest in earlier than 17th-century Ulster history, because they saw it exclusively as a story of the expansion of the Scottish-English colony. James Logan, for example, argued (1923) that the "Ulster folk" had developed its nationality in three hundred years, committing in that time "as many acts of glory as other races can boast in a millennium".⁶⁹ Professional historians could not, however, neglect earlier periods.

Ulster as a part of Ireland had received a fair treatment in Alexander Richey's *Short History of the Irish People* (1887). Richey pointed out that the legends and medieval chronicles seemed to take the north of Ireland as a separate portion of the country, and he also stressed that Ulster had been practically separated from the southern island by Lough Erne and the hills of Armagh and Down. During the Red Branch reign, the power of the Ulster kings with their centre in the Armagh area reached its apex. Richey suggested that the Red Branch monarchy was the last remnant of a Pictish population in Ireland which, according to annals, was overthrown in the year 331. Thereafter the Picts were gradually absorbed into the Gaelic population, Richey assumed.⁷⁰ Ulster's isolation henceforth diminished, and Richey's theory implied that this was a result of racial and cultural blending of the Gaels and the Picts.

Eoin MacNeill also accepted the theory of the Pretani or Picts (Chruithni in Ogham) as the first Irishmen. In Ulster, according to him, the Pictish population remained dominant till the 8th century AD, although the Picts as well as the

⁶⁷ See, for example, Rolleston, pp. 209-10: "One eye was engulfed deep in his head, the other protruded, his mouth met his ears, foam poured from his jaws like the fleece of a three year old wether."

⁶⁸ Pearse, *The Murder Machine. Political Writings..*, pp. 38-39.

⁶⁹ Logan, pp. 15, 18. Logan had adopted many of his views from Lord Ernest Hamilton.

⁷⁰ Richey, pp. 11, 23-24.

southern populations adopted the Gaelic language.⁷¹ Ulster was physically isolated, perhaps even protected by a man-made land wall, and therefore the Ulster kings could best resist conquerors from all directions, as the Earls did in the late 16th century. MacNeill's intention, however, was not to emphasize the separateness of the Ulster population, but to integrate them into his "national" idea and present the ancient Ulstermen as conscious of their Irishness as the Southerners.

Although MacNeill rejected the story by the Venerable Bede, the English monk and historian (c. 672-735), that the Scots had originally migrated from Ireland, he did not underestimate Ulstermen's invasions in the Hebrides, the western isles of Scotland. It was told in the annals that about 470 AD the sons of Erc, Fergus and his brothers had gone to Scotland; Fergus was known to be the king of Dál Riada, situated in the north-eastern corner of Ireland. To MacNeill the story indicated that there already existed an Irish colony in the Hebrides, and that this connection to Scotland survived till the 13th century, when the Hebridean leaders sent troops, later known in English as "galloglasses", to help Ulster kings against the Normans.⁷²

MacNeill interpreted the invasions of Scotland as national and not provincial enterprises, as the title "Irish Kingdom in Scotland" in his *Phases of Irish History* indicated. The kings of Ulster, as well other Irish kings, were contesting about the sovereignty of the whole island, being therefore as Irish as any. The legendary *Ulidian* sagas were born locally before the "Irish-Scottish kingdom", but they were "armed with a prestige of nobility and antiquity that compelled the respect even of the masters of Ireland", MacNeill stated in *Celtic Ireland* (1921). Besides, in time the Ulster legends ceased to be local and provincial, and were adopted as "the chief part of the national hero-lore", MacNeill explained.⁷³ On the other hand, the importance of the ancient kingdom of *Uladh* should not be exaggerated, MacNeill warned, because at most the Ulster kings ruled only one fifth of the island, and by the first centuries AD their area had shrunk to a small kingdom, the size of the present county Down.⁷⁴ The importance of the ancient Ulster kings and their sagas

⁷¹ MacNeill, *The Phases...*, p. 63.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 194-5, 325-6.

⁷³ MacNeill, *Celtic Ireland*, p. 13.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

was, however, more important than the area that they ruled.

Ulster Protestants had appeared as vital citizens in histories written by British scholars, but before 1920 there hardly existed anything to be called a provincial history of Ulster. The political storm caused by the Unionist movement had since the 1880s created travel accounts, such as Dinah Graik's *An Unknown country* (1887), political pamphlets such as Thomas MacKnight's *Ulster as it is*, and racist ballads praising the virtues of the Ulster-Scots. Although Ronald McNeill's *Ulster's Stand for the Union* was pioneering in its attempt to analyse the Unionist movement, of actual Ulster-born historians only William H. Maxwell (1792-1850), a military historian, was well-known before partition.⁷⁵ John Mitchel, one of the "founding fathers" of the IRB, was born in County Derry, but few people would have associated him merely with history. Dramatist St John Ervine (1883-1971) later became known for his uncritical biographies of Edward Carson (1915) and James Craig (1949). None of these Ulstermen was particularly specialised in provincial Ulster history.

A full-scale Ulster history was started before the First World War, but it was not finished until 1920 by Ramsay Colles, an Anglo-Irish civil servant who was born in India. His *History of Ulster* was, although generally sympathetic to the Unionist cause, cautiously written in order to avoid the political disputes of the previous decades. In terms of nationalism Colles did not present Ulster as historically separate; "events of national importance" occurred sometimes in Ulster, sometimes elsewhere in Ireland, or outside the island, like in the time of the Norman invasion. The writer clearly wished that a unified feeling of Irish nationality would have developed, and even complained that the ancient Irish kings lacked "the national spirit". The union period in the book was, in the words by Colles himself, mainly "a chronicle of the various measures taken in Parliament to benefit the country at large".⁷⁶ The story ended with the First World War, after Colles had stressed that as early as 1913 Winston Churchill, then Cabinet Member, had promised "special consideration to the north-east Ulster" when the Home

⁷⁵ George Fletcher in his early list of "Distinguished Ulstermen" did not mention MacNeill at all. Fletcher, *The Provinces of Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, London 1921), p. 169.

⁷⁶ Ramsay Colles, *The History of Ulster. From the earliest times to the present day*. Vol. I-IV (The Cresham Publishing Co., London 1919-1920). Vol. I, p. 33, vol. IV, pp. 203, 131.

Rule Bill (1912) would come into effect.⁷⁷

In 1927, seven years after the creation of Northern Ireland as an autonomous entity, its Government sponsored a new history which was confidently titled *A History of Northern Ireland*. The author, David A. Chart, was a civil servant in the Ministry of Finance (Northern Ireland), and had earlier compiled *An Economic History of Ireland*. His new history mainly dealt with economic aspects, too, and had almost no reference to political disputes after the Union. Only one chapter introduced "the general outline of political history".

Chart's terminology was adopted from Unionist writers who had claimed that there were two countries in Ireland. In his words, Ulster was "an old country" whose "special story is easier to distinguish than would be that of any other of the great divisions of Ireland", although it had always been closely associated with the "country at large". Ancient Ulstermen had frequently led and sometimes even ruled the island, Chart claimed, and the legendary *Ultonians* "figure prominently in Ireland".⁷⁸

The final partition process by Chart very briefly describes how Britain "was confronted by a refusal of the greater part of the inhabitants of the North to submit to the jurisdiction of an independent or semi-independent state centred in Dublin". The problem was solved by establishing another "state" called Northern Ireland. Chart's vision of Ulster history was based on economical progress, which he gave as the utmost reason for the Protestants' determined turn to support the Union.⁷⁹

By the time of Chart's history Northern Ireland was firmly established, which explains why he was more eager than Colles to note signs of separateness in Ulster history. That was, of course, Chart's given commission, in the same way as the nationalist historians emphasized all signs of unity in Irish history. Both Colles and Chart paid little attention to racialist theories as explanation to

⁷⁷ Ibid. (vol. IV), p. 231. Churchill at that time favoured moderate domestic legislation for Ireland, but he had also inherited from his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, a conviction that Ireland was an indispensable adjunct to British security, and that "loyal" Ulstermen should not be forced under home rule. Lord Churchill had proposed in 1886 the organisation that was to be known as the Unionist Party, and had written the famous unionist slogan "Ulster will fight, Ulster will be right". See, for example, Mary C. Bromage, *Churchill and Ireland* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana 1964), pp. 1-3, 6, 14-17.

⁷⁸ D. A. Chart, *A History of Northern Ireland* (The Educational Co., Belfast 1927), preface and p. 7

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

Ulstermen's economical and political strength, neither did they attempt to present theoretical definitions of Irish nationalities.

Because of her large Nationalist minority, the tradition of politically divided history education remained untouched in Northern Ireland to a greater degree than in the Free State. In northern Catholic schools the emphasis was on Irish history, particularly on the Gaelic revival and on the national struggle, whereas in many Protestant schools children were educated as if they lived in England and not in Ireland. Emotional history books were favoured in Catholic schools, and in turn Unionist books displayed, according to Patrick Buckland, "strange blindness" towards the rest of Ireland.⁸⁰ The works of Alice Green, as well as those of Standish O'Grady's, were expectedly sanctioned in Northern Irish schools as literary and not history texts.⁸¹

Later histories of Northern Ireland remain outside of this study, but the continuity of Eoin MacNeill's conviction that signs of heroism in ancient Ulster should be interpreted as expressions of national and not only provincial ambition is worth noting. It was reflected in Irish historiography for half a century, and the opposite tendency was supported in Northern Ireland.⁸² Significantly there was no flow of "national stories" about the six-county "state", as there was in many of the new sovereign states created after the First World War. The obvious reason in Northern Ireland was the problem of how to integrate the Catholic-Nationalist population into the story that would be based on an imaginary "nation". The faith in one "clearly-defined" Ulster race, as declared by Cyril Falls, did not clarify the problem, either.

⁸⁰ Buckland, p. 98.

⁸¹ D.Fitzpatrick, p. 173, 181.

⁸² Professor F. X. Martin (UCD), for example, wrote in the 1960s that "Ireland had as its first hero an Ulsterman, the legendary Cù Chulainn, leader and pride of the Red Branch Knights", whereas Hugh Shearman, in his "official" pictorial history of Northern Ireland's autonomy period, kept Cú Chulainn carefully out of the whole Ireland connection, except through the wars against Southern kings. F.X. Martin, *The Origins of the Irish Rising of 1916*, in D. Williams (ed., 1968), p. 1, and Hugh Shearman, *Northern Ireland 1921-1971* (H.M. Stationary Office, Belfast 1971), p. 9.

8.6 Optimistic visions of united Ireland in the 1920s

The creation of the Irish Free State gave birth to a flow of popular national histories in which the ideology of the spiritual nation and the ancient nation-state, formulated by Eoin MacNeill and Alice Green, appeared deeply rooted and intermingled. Many of the books that were planned for English and American readers as well as for the Irish were moderate in their political opinion, and not all the writers wanted to emphasize the antagonism between Ireland and England. Partition was seen as a regrettable and temporary state of things, although the freedom to choose was not usually denied on principle from the Ulster Unionists.

The Free State government naturally encouraged publications that would defend the dominion position and the Treaty of 1921. Robert Tweedy's *Irish Freedom Explained* (1923) interpreted the new constitution to the "young citizens of Ireland". He admitted that few people wanted the monarchial bond between Ireland and England, but what harm could it do, because the King "is not a person, but a sign... of friendship and protection", although he had no power. On the other hand, Tweedy anticipated the events of the next decade by remarking that it was quite possible to leave the British Commonwealth of Nations, if the majority would vote so.⁸³

Partition was explained by Tweedy as having been born mainly from the fear of religious persecution. The Catholics had that fresh in their memory, and now the Ulster Protestants feared the same, if the Catholics were given power. Overoptimistically Tweedy believed, or wanted to believe, that the constitution of 1922 had removed false fears by guaranteeing the freedom of worship to all classes and religions in Ireland. We do not know whether it was pure propaganda or Tweedy's illusion, but he had solved the question of state and church: "Never more may the State show special favour, by giving money or in other ways, to help any religion."⁸⁴

Francis Hackett (1883-1962), an Irish emigrant in New York with leftist sympathies, published in 1924 the *Story of the Irish Nation* in which he advised the Irish to concentrate solely to the "slow, labourious, rational process of peace and

⁸³ Robert M. Tweedy, *Irish Freedom Explained* (Talbot Press, Dublin 1923), p. 27-28.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 61.

consent", although they were forced by the Treaty into an undesired association with England.⁸⁵ Oddly enough, in this book Hackett paid no attention to the future of Northern Ireland and hardly mentioned its separation, although he clearly sympathized the radical elements of Irish Nationalism. The reason perhaps was that his earlier forecast of Ulster joining the Irish parliament of 1919 went wrong.

In his *Ireland (A Study of Nationalism)*, 1920, Hackett had interpreted the elections of 1918 as a "national plebiscite on self-determination", believing that Ulstermen would come to the Dublin parliament "scowling *noli me tangere*", proceeding, however, to run their own government in Belfast of which "all Irishmen are proud of". Hackett was fascinated by the effects of the Easter Rebellion, although he admitted that the Irish did not support the Rebellion at large. But the "reaction of Britain on the Rebellion fired the will and the imagination of Irishmen and Irishwomen everywhere", giving no other choice but absolute independence. According to Hackett the Irish wanted full recognition as a sovereign, distinct people "without any softening of their meaning or any blinking of the national minorities in Ulster".⁸⁶ But in the *Story of the Irish Nation* Hackett himself had been temporally softened by political realities.

After partition several Nationalist writers openly declared their faith in a united Ireland of the future. The series *Nations of To-Day*, published in London, introduced new European national states. The modern part of the Irish section (1924) was written by Hugh Law, an Irish Nationalist MP in the last Union Parliament. Despite his moderate political approach, Law saw only one nation in Ireland, because a Protestant Ulsterman could not - "however he may reprobate some manifestations of the Irish spirit - forget that he too is an Irishman".

According to Law's rather modern definition, Englishmen and Irishmen were removed from one another by "tradition, historical memory, temperament and social habit". On the other hand the same mingled strains of Celt, Norman, Saxon and "Heaven alone knows what admixture of yet older races" run in the

⁸⁵ Francis H. Hackett, *Story of the Irish Nation* (Talbot Press, Dublin 1924), p. 390.

⁸⁶ Hackett, *Ireland*, preface and pp. ii, xiii, 381-2. Hackett equalised the American and Irish revolutions which had "equal though not similar causes". The Union might still have worked, if England had been able to "show Ireland its better self, as it has shown in Scotland". (iv, 353). In New York Hackett had been the editor of the left-wing *New Republic*. He returned to Ireland in 1927.

veins of both nations, who were also affected by family connections, literature and spoken language: "Not even the most ardent Gael can hope to stem the inflow of English books and English stage-plays and English newspapers." National spirit in Ireland had developed more slowly than in England, because the Irish clans had been too eager to accept foreign help, but now people's minds had been awakened for self-expression which could not be embanked any more. National aspirations were more difficult to satisfy than claims for religious equality or a better standard of living, for example, because the nature of the former was more subtle and complicated. The Irish nation itself was one of the oldest in Europe, but due to her "artificially-retarded" development of her political institutions it was now the youngest European state. Attempting to be mildly critical of the former British rule in Ireland, Law admitted that it had disguised the justified claim for Irish self-government from the British government and from the public. On the other hand, Irish nationalism, which now again was in the place of its birth, still displayed qualities of "self-absorption and crude idealism which are among the notes of adolescence".⁸⁷

The partition of such a little island could never be anything more than barely tolerable, Law believed. Traffic near the border was already restricted, and in the long run the industry of Northern Ireland would severely suffer from the breaking of traditional connections to the South. Although passions were high at the present, with good reasons on both sides, Northern Ireland could not remain permanently hostile or indifferent to the rest of Ireland, Law stated, not only because the island formed one economical unit, but also because the "Northern Protestant feels in his bones that he is as much an Irishman as any Southern Papist". Physical coercion was out of the question - such an attempt would merely repeat England's discarded error - but "some day reunion will be achieved".⁸⁸

Captain Stephen L. Gwynn (1864-1950), Law's parliamentary colleague, published *The History of Ireland* in 1923, its shortened version *Student's History of Ireland* in 1925, and in the same year another popular presentation that was simply titled *Ireland*. As already noted, in 1916 he had insisted on knowing only one

⁸⁷ Murray & Law, p. 254-6. Law's metaphor that Irish Nationalism, born among the Irish Catholics, in the 18th century was in the "fosterage" of the Protestant colonists who after having taught it to speak English abandoned it, established a popular and much quoted interpretation of Irish Nationalism.

⁸⁸ *Idem.*, p. 254.

nation in Ireland, but now he was willing to introduce opposing ideas, too. But, in Gwynn's opinion, the argument that there was another Irish nation, settled principally in Ulster, was resented by the rest of Ireland as "blasphemy", whereas the one nation principle still carried "an element of historic truth". The position of the Ulster Protestants was not historically different from that of the Southern Protestants, Gwynn argued. Both felt themselves to be Irish and members of the Irish nation, although they rather associated themselves with the idea of the Protestant 18th-century nation. While the Protestant Ascendancy had disappeared in the South, due to the reforms of the 19th century, in the North the Protestant class had maintained their power and had therefore kept to the old idea. The new nationalist idea, however, raised Ireland above the British colonies who were "offshoots", whereas Ireland "is a parent state, one of the mother-nations", Gwynn concluded his *History of Ireland*.⁸⁹

There was some criticism in Gwynn's *History* against the Nationalist interpretation that the Normans had been a bunch of landless adventures. Instead, Gwynn emphasized that the Normans represented "a Great European Power", and, like Alice Green, he did not condemn the centuries following the Norman conquest as gloomy as Eoin MacNeill had seen them.⁹⁰ In the main historical perspective Gwynn perfectly shared MacNeill's and Green's opinion that "Ireland was a State organised and civilised before England or France had begun to take on a shape of unity".⁹¹

As already noted, in Gwynn's historical vision race and nation were one and the same, but in *Ireland* (1925) he admitted that the present division was not properly described as racial. Instead, there was the "interpenetration of two cultures or civilisations, having different outlook, and marked off from each other by ... two types of Christianity". Everywhere in Ireland these two cultures lived side by side, except in the north-eastern counties, where the Protestants predominated in numbers. Yet even those counties had a "distinctively Irish character", Gwynn claimed, because outside the towns Ulster is a country of peasants, and its agricultural soil was mostly in the hands of its cultivators and small holders. The old "English" land system with dual ownership had never been

⁸⁹ Stephen Gwynn, *The History of Ireland* (MacMillan & Co., London 1923), pp. 503-4, 538.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁹¹ S. Gwynn, *Ireland*, p. 11.

strong in Ulster, and the last remnants of it would be soon entirely replaced by "Irish ideas".⁹²

Both in *Ireland* and in *Student's History of Ireland* Gwynn, who was Protestant, examined the possibility of a united Irish state, taking slightly different angles and expressing careful neutrality towards religiously labelled parties. By the time of the publications the pitiful story of the Boundary Commission had not yet ended, and the prospect of the reduction of Northern Ireland's territory was in the air, especially in the Free State. Gwynn, like most of the observers, did not expect that a possible new land boundary would make the uniting of Ireland any more achievable, rather the opposite. Northern Ireland might still join the rest of Ireland on two conditions; firstly, that it would offer some advantage to her present administration and economics, and secondly, that the demands of a republic, i.e. total separation from the Empire, would be given up. Under these circumstances Northern Ireland would ultimately "join with Ireland to be a self-governing member of 'Community of Nations known as the British Empire'", Gwynn believed, assuring his readers that this was the wise policy of those who had accepted the Treaty.⁹³ Gwynn's vision in his textbook was that in the future there could exist both the dominion of the Free State and autonomous Northern Ireland with practically the same status, but with some legislative connection to the Free State. Both would then enjoy the formal recognition of the British sovereign as their "protector".

In *Ireland* Gwynn took a more sophisticated view of the question of national unity. It had already been accomplished in a "distinctive" sense, but the unity of the whole island - which he believed was given to the Nation by the Nature - required an admission of cultural diversity. Sentimental inclinations, such as the Catholics' demand for complete separation and the Protestants's demand for remaining in the Empire, should not be exaggerated by both sides, but, on the other hand, a common state should be able to reconcile divergent ideals. It would still be predominantly a Catholic country, but much less distinctively so than the present Free State, and the Protestant element should be accepted in proportion corresponding to its importance in modern Ireland.⁹⁴

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁹³ Stephen Gwynn, *Student's History of Ireland* (Longman's & Co, London 1925), pp. 308-9.

⁹⁴ S. Gwynn, *Ireland*, p. 13.

Stephen Gwynn's son, Denis Rolleston Gwynn (1893-1971), who later worked in the University College Cork and became known by his *History of Partition* (1950), also saw that it was the Free State's duty to dispense fears of discrimination of the Protestants. In his five-year history of the Free State (1928) Denis Gwynn hoped for a united Ireland "on a basis of mutual respect and mutual concessions". Partition was catastrophic for Ireland, because its wealthiest and most industrialised part had been cut off, effecting an imbalance in agriculture and industry on both sides of the border. Being himself a scholar of ecclesiastic history, Gwynn expectedly regretted that "the national shrines of Armagh, the ecclesiastic metropolis, Downpatrick, the Grave of Patrick, Brigid, and Columcille, and Tullaghoge, the place of inauguration of the O'Neill kings, are cut territorially from the national entity".⁹⁵

Partition was so traumatic for the Free State historians that, despite their one nation faith, none of them was able to include the Ulster separatist movement into the "national story" in any other than regrettable sense. Some of the writers simply omitted the last phases of partition, like James Carty in his *Class-book of Irish History* (1929). Carty summarized the reasons for the growth of Unionism in 19th-century Ulster in two principal developments: the alliance of the Presbyterians and the British Government which benefited economically the Presbyterian churches, and the transformation of the north-east of Ireland into a "rich industrial region".⁹⁶ Carty, as well as Hackett, Tweedy, Law and the Gwynns carefully avoided the name of Northern Ireland, using euphemisms such as Ulster, part of Ulster or North-Eastern Ireland instead of the official name. This was in accordance with the ideological policy of the Free State Government which held that the existence of Northern Ireland was a temporary settlement, due to be settled in the near future.

⁹⁵ Denis Gwynn, *The Irish Free State 1922-1927* (MacMillan & Co., London 1928), pp. 3-6, 18-19. Denis Gwynn, like his father, was Protestant, but his wife converted and their six children were rechristened to Catholicism.

⁹⁶ Carty, p. 104.

9 CONCLUSION

The question of how many nations existed in Ireland in the 19th or 20th century is, of course, irrelevant, on the basis of the adopted frame of reference. Modern research has not developed any universal law behind "national" state-formation, or an all-covering definition for nation, except in the meaning of an already existing state citizenship. Therefore it is justified to point out that if the concept of nation is used in an undefined or mythical sense, it is as justified to accept a one-Ireland conviction as it is to accept a two-nation theory, or in other words, anyone advocating the first should recognize the latter, too. Today it is, however, more preferable to use other terminology offered by modern research, such as cultural and political identities.

Traditional nationalist convictions in Irish historiography have by no means disappeared in the "revisionist" debates. There still exists indictments against the English politicians, particularly David Lloyd George, about their role in the creation of the "two nations theory". Brian Murphy, for example, has accused (1994) Lloyd George for using the theory as an argument in favour of partition. Murphy appealed to Alice Green, assuming that an eye-witness of partition has some authority on the question. Green had wondered what the name of the "other" Irish nationality might be, stating that it was used to weaken the claim of any nation. Murphy also hints that anybody who does not deny the two-nation theory outright, like late professor John Whyte in his *Interpreting Northern Ireland*

(1990), is against the one-nation concept.¹

The question of what created the two-nation theory is not as simple as Murphy suggests, and deserves a general comment. The birth of this “theory”, in fact several theories, conceptions and beliefs, should be seen in the whole context of British and Irish 19th-century philosophy and political terminology. Thomas Macaulay and William Lecky, as historians and politicians, were more important two-nation theorists than Lloyd George, but the former certainly neither expected nor desired Irish division along geographical lines. The dramatic transformation of Lecky’s intellectual boundary between Irishmen into geographical boundary between northern and southern Ireland was a major argument in favour of two Irish nations, especially after the Unionist rebellion in Ulster had weakened Macaulay’s idea that Protestant Ulstermen were British in the first place. There could have been no physical boundary between Lecky’s loyal Irishmen and those who were not loyal, but in Ulster the demographic distribution of the population made alternative boundary lines conceivable.

Ultimately the two-nation concept was an inevitable outcome, firstly, of the historical struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism for *political* power, secondly, of the adoption of nationalist rhetoric in British (and Irish) historiography and politics, and finally of the political development in Unionist Ulster. Most of all, the two nation theory resulted retrospectively from the latter, although the Ulster Unionists did not cling to the theory themselves but rather stressed principles of self-determination. Lloyd George indeed was the key person in the practical plans that ultimately executed partition, but he had no need to invent arguments in favour of two Irish nations; there were plenty enough available. It should also be noted that in his crucial speech on the partition act (December 22, 1919) he did not use the term *nation* at all, but instead referred to qualities that were standard arguments in 19th-century debate on nationalities; race, religion, sympathy, tradition and outlook. His summary of the divisive elements among the Irish reflected observable facts and common beliefs that were shared by most of the scholars, politicians and public of the time, not only in England, but in Ireland also.

Alice Green’s value as a “witness” of one Irish nation is, unfortunately,

¹ Brian Murphy, *The Canon of Irish Cultural History: Some Questions concerning Roy Foster's Modern Ireland*. In Brady (ed.) 1994, pp. 230, 232.

feeble. She was by no means a neutral observer of the Irish partition. Without criticism she had adopted Eoin MacNeill's faith in an ancient Irish state. Their dogma contained that "consciousness of nationality" had created an Irish national state already in the first millennium AD, with an obvious propagandist aim to prove that Ireland had once been governed by one authority and should, therefore, not be partitioned in any circumstances.

Eoin MacNeill and Pádraig Pearse claimed that historical forces were re-creating the Irish nation, although they disagreed on the issue of how far from history the authority for this theory should be derived. They both pretended to be by-standers, especially MacNeill, of this process that would ultimately swallow up, not only the hesitating southern Irishmen, but the Ulster Unionists, too. However, MacNeill himself was a historical force, as influential as Pearse, whether he accepted it or not. The efforts of them both were concentrated on the creation of the state, and less in the politics of conciliation which might have been more fruitful from the point of unity. The few attempts by MacNeill to explain the Unionist resistance against a common state as historically invalid were surprisingly vague, because at the same time he demanded Irish sovereignty on historical grounds. Eventually he was forced to admit that the Unionists formed a "foreign faction" in Ulster, thus criticizing his own one-nation vision.

Eoin MacNeill can be discredited for the loose and propagandist use of terminology, but, on the other hand, many of his historical observations are still valid. Modern research confirms that there really was a tendency towards lesser number of small kingdoms by the 9th century, and a sense of unity to be recorded in the vernacular laws which spoke about the "island of Ireland", and a contest, aided by clerical propagandists, for the kingship of the whole island.² On the other hand, as Hugh Kearney has remarked, if 99 % of the inhabitants saw themselves in terms of local feudal, tribal or social identities, it makes little historical sense to speak of "national consciousness".³ Yet for a modern reader there is much to learn from MacNeill's observations about legends and racial beliefs, especially about the so called Celts, who again, in the mass media, are presented as having been a unified race and culture, hence creating "Celtic nations".

² See, for example, Donnchadh O'Corráin, "Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland", in R.F. Foster (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ireland* (The Oxford University Press 1992), pp. 24-27.

³ Kearney, in Brady (ed.), p. 250.

MacNeill and Pearse hardly believed that religion was an essential provision for the anti-English national identity, but since religion had grown important in people's minds anyway, it should be treated as such in the political campaign. Theological issues and rhetoric were used in street-level propaganda and in the propaganda by the Irish revolutionaries, but from the political declarations of both the Irish Nationalists and Unionists it was easy to perceive the regular European pattern: religion was subjugated to the national cause and material well-being. Consequently, Divinity was introduced as a loyal supporter of "our movement" - not the other way round. However, religious slogans were so familiar in all Irish contexts that many observers, although they did not believe in the theological dimensions of the dispute themselves, often added religious vocabulary into their texts in order to make sure that the readers could associate their ideas with familiar concepts - whether it made any sense at all. Similarly others used religious terms for the sake of convenience and to avoid tautology.

The assumption of religion as the ultimate reason for the Anglo-Irish conflict and racist theories existed side by side till the First World War, after which Anglo-Saxon race consciousness, a more delicate form of the classic "Teutonic theory", temporarily revived and created a new racist theory of a separate "Ulster nationality" in the writings of Arthur Keith. This theory substituted the contradictory beliefs in two Irish races, both of which supposedly were Celtic in origin. The racist perception of southern Anglo-Irish and Celtic-Irish relations lost its political impact, because the former remained in the Irish state.

Eoin MacNeill's defensive arguments of how the Ulster Unionists should have adopted, during their three hundred years of history, the common national spirit, were ambiguous, because they revealed the propagandist and man-made nature of national history. A critical reader might ask, for example, why historical forces forming a nationality should be recognised in southern Ireland, but not in Ulster. MacNeill presumably understood that this was a matter of rival history education: professional nationalist Irish history had emerged too late to make an impact on northern Unionists, most of all to make them believe in the dogma of a common historical nation-state. Conversely, during the 19th century the Northerners had been educated to be proud of their own colonial story as part of the British history whether it had created a distinct nationality or not. The hopelessness of persuading the northern Unionists into the Irish state became clear during the negotiations 1912-14, and especially after the Easter Rising.

Despite the propaganda efforts, the one nation ideology lost credibility inside the Nationalists' own ranks, as well.

The historical visions of those who defended the position of the Ulster Unionists often were short-sighted, but their demand for self-determination was more successful. The Nationalist theory of a thousand-year-old nation, or the dogma that a common nation was born through the philosophy of Wolfe Tone or Thomas Davis were, in fact, defenceless against the Unionist arguments, although it is only in hindsight that we can say that concentration on the majority principle might have been more effective from the Nationalist point of view.

CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS

- 1801 Parliamentary Union between Ireland and England enacted; Ireland becomes part of the United Kingdom
- 1868 Liberals win British general elections - Gladstone's first Cabinet
- 1874 General elections - Conservatives again to power
- 1885 Liberals and Home Rulers form the majority of MPs in Westminster
- 1886 Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill - Proposes a two-house Irish parliament
- Defeat of Gladstone's political alliance in the House of Commons
- 1893 Second Home Rule Bill
- 1905 Ulster Unionists set up a provincial government (Ulster Unionist Council)
- 1910 General elections - Liberals and the Home Rulers win
- 1912 Third Home Rule Bill; to be implemented in 1914
- 1914 Unionist mutiny in Ulster - Threat of civil war - Negotiations of a six county exclusion from all-Ireland autonomy - Home Rule postponed
- 1916 Nationalist rebellion in Dublin - Leaders declare the whole of Ireland independent as a Republic
- 1918 General elections - Sinn Féin's landslide victory
- 1919 Sinn Féin MPs set up the first Dáil (virtually a national parliament) in Dublin - Start of the "Anglo-Irish War"
- 1920 Government of Ireland Act sets up two self-governing parliaments for Ireland
- 1921 Government of Ireland Act enacted in six northern counties only
- Treaty between Irish Nationalists and the British Government; establishes a semi-independent dominion for the 26 counties.
- 1924 Boundary Commission nominated in accordance with the Treaty of 1921 to "delimit" Northern Ireland
- 1925 Boundary Commission completes its work, but all three Governments in concern agree not to implement revisions in the land boundary
- 1931 Statutes of Westminster - with an active participation of the Irish delegates the British Commonwealth is transformed into a free association of autonomous states
- 1932 Fianna Fáil, the new opposition party led by Éamon De Valera, wins elections in the Free State and declares republican policy and the removal of last constitutional ties between Ireland and England

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Abbreviations: NLD = National Library, Dublin, IHS = Irish Historical Studies, SHS = Suomen historiallinen seura

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FINNISH SUMMARY - YHTEENVETO

ROTU, USKONTO JA HISTORIA IRLANNIN JAKO- JA YHTENÄISYYSKIISTAN ARGUMENTTEINA 1833-1932

Tutkimus, joka on luonteeltaan aatehistoriallinen ja historiagraafinen, käsittelee irlantilaisista esitettyjä kansallisuus- ja rotuteorioita Irlannin jakoa edeltävinä vuosikymmeninä sekä 1920-luvulla. Jaon puolesta sekä sitä vastaan esitettyjä väitteitä lähestytään irlantilaisten sekä englantilaisten historioitsijoiden ja poliittisten kirjoittajien pääteosten kautta. Tutkimuksessa osoitetaan, kuinka heidän esittämillään teorioilla ja käsityksillä puolustettiin paitsi uskomusta, että Irlannissa on vain yksi kansa, myös kahden irlantilaisen kansan oletusta. Vailla merkitystä, varsinkaan "tavallisen" lukevan yleisön silmin, eivät olleet myöskään uskomukset kelttiläisistä ja germaanisista "roduista", joiden ajateltiin törmänneen toisiinsa Irlannissa. Propagandaväitteet katolisen tai protestanttisen uskonnon merkityksestä kansallisen kehityksen kannalta kytkeytyivät historiallisiin ja rodullisiin argumentteihin, vaikkakin jo 1800-luvun lopulla monet irlantilaisen separatismien tarkkailijat alkoivat epäillä uskonnollisen leimaamisen järkevyyttä pyrkiessään ymmärtämään nationalistien ja unionistien vastakkaisia tavoitteita.

Historiankirjoituksen ja nationalismien yhteyksiä valotetaan aluksi teoreettisessa jaksossa, jonka lähtökohtana on kansa-käsitteen aukottoman määrittelyn mahdottomuus, muussa kuin valtion kansalaisuuden merkityksessä (joka sekään ei tietysti ole täysin aukoton). Yksiselitteisen määrittelyn vaikeus aiheutuu siitä, että jo 1800-luvulla, ennen nykyaikaisen tieteen läpimurtoa, kansalle oli eurooppalaisessa ajattelussa vakiintunut myyttinen merkitys. Sen mukaan kansat, tai niiden "kansallishenget", joko olivat jumalallista alkuperää tai muuten vain olivat olleet olemassa jonkinlaisina alkioina jo aikojen alusta asti, ainakin satoja vuosia. Vain harvat 1800-luvun tiedemiehet pystyivät kyseenalaistamaan tämän lähtökohdan, jota rotuteoriat näyttivät vahvistavan. Nykyajan tutkijoiden yritykset soveltaa erilaisia kansan määritelmiä Irlannin tapaukseen joko jaon puolustamiseksi tai kumoamiseksi, mitä tapahtui vielä 1980-luvulla, näyttävät tässä valossa epäloogisina kehäselityksinä. Pelkästä kansan käsitteestä ei olekaan juuri hyötyä yritettäessä ymmärtää Irlannin jakoa, taikka esimerkiksi nykyisen Pohjois-Irlannin vähemmistö-enemmistö-ongelmia. Vaikka Irlannin jaon aikalaiset eivät tunteneet moderneja käsitteitä kulttuuri- tai etnisistä identiteeteistä, historiallisen väittelyn kiinnostavuus on kirjoittajien haparoivissa yrityksissä nähdä Irlannin jakoon päätyneet konfliktit ja näkemyserot "reaalisessa" valossa, sekä myös heidän tavassaan ja taidoissaan käyttää myyttisiä käsityksiä propagandistisiin tarkoituksiin.

Kieli, jota nykyisinkin yleensä pidetään kansallisuuden merkittävimpana kriteerinä, jää tässä tutkimuksessa sivurooliin yhtäältä itsestään selvyytensä vuoksi, toisaalta siksi, ettei kielipolitiikka käytännössä anglo-irlantilaisen unionin loppuaikoina (vielä) ollut irlantilaisia nationalistejä ja unionisteja erottava tekijä. Huomattakoon silti, ettei kielten alkuperästä ja niiden vuorovaikutuksesta ollut

tänä aikana sen objektiivisempaa kuvaa kuin roduistakaan.

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Kansan ja valtion käsite alkoi samaistua brittiläisissä tietokirjoissa, poliittisissa puheissa ja kirjoituksissa 1800-luvun puoliväliin mennessä. Irlantilaisia kutsuttiin kansaksi, vaikka protestanttijohtoisen itsehallintokauden (1782-1800) jälkeen Englannin Irlannin-politiikka keskittyikin separatististen aatteiden ja liikkeiden tukahduttamiseen. Anglo-irlantilaisen unionin (1801-1921) tarkoituksena oli rauhoittaa irlantilaiset ja sulauttaa heidät imperiumiin, jota varten heidän toivottiin omaksuvan englannin kieli, englantilaiset lait ja poliittiset hyveet. Imperialistisen ajattelutavan ja propagandan kannalta ei ollut tarvetta väheksyä Irlannin kansallisuutta taikka vanhaa kielikuvaa erillisestä Irlannin kuningaskunnasta sinänsä, koska Englannilla ja Irlannilla oli - peruuttamattomasti, kuten Englannissa ajateltiin - yhteinen kuningas ja parlamentti. Irlannin kapinoista sekä protestanttien ja katolilaisten valtataisteluista oli tosin katkeria muistoja, mutta englantilaiset poliitikot uskoivat, että "lojaalisuus" lopulta voitaisi kaikkien yhteiskuntaluokkien parissa, kunhan irlantilaisten poliittisia oikeuksia ja elintasoja kasvatetaan. Viktoriaanista aikaa edeltävistä historioitsijoista esimerkiksi Robert Martin (1803?-1868) ja Thomas Wright (1810-1877) rohkaisivat uskoa Irlannin rauhalliseen kehitykseen. Tämä suuri poliittinen visio ei edellyttänyt Irlannin sisäisten ristiriitojen korostamista, olivatpa ne sitten poliittisia, taloudellisia tai uskonnollisia. Lopulta Irlanti olisi, kuten Skotlanti ja Wales jo näyttivät olevan, eräs niistä onnellisista kansoista, jotka muodostivat imperiumin kansojen perheen.

Imperiumin onnellinen tulevaisuudenkuva alkoi säröillä, kun Ranskan suuressa vallankumouksessa muotoutuneet kansan ja kansallisuuden uudet romanttiset ja poliittiset merkitykset juurtuivat Irlantiin 1840-luvulla. Nuori Irlanti -liike julisti, että Irlannin kansan ydin olikin sen katolisessa enemmistössä, joka oli osoittanut poliittista yksimielisyyttä Daniel O'Connell'in (1775-1847) johtamassa massaliikkeessä. Englannin poliittisessa elämässä mannermaalta leviäviin kansallisuusaatteisiin suhtauduttiin epäluuloisesti, koska Britannia oli omaksunut Ranskan vallankumouksen ja erityisesti sen kirkkovihamielisten aatteiden vastustajan roolin. Esimerkiksi John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) myönsi, että lukumääräisesti irlantilaiset saattaisivat muodostaa "kunnioitettavan" kansallisuuden, mutta oletti irlantilaisen nationalismin hiipyvän, kunhan kehnon unionihallinnon aiheuttamat epäkohdat Irlannissa saataisiin poistettua. Kuitenkin historia näytti antavan nationalistisille liikkeille vahvan argumentin irtautua hallitsevasta valtiosta, vaikka sitä pidettäisiinkin - kuten Britanniaa - varsin liberaalina hallitustavaltaan. Toisaalta historia näytti osoittavan, että pienet kansat olivat sulautumassa suurempiin imperiumeihin, saaden taloudellista ja sivistyksellistä hyötyä integroitumisesta.

Väittely Irlannin kansallisuuksista alkoi kulminoitua Ulsteriin vasta 1880-luvulta alkaen, kun maakunnan unionistit ryhtyivät järjestäytymään vastustaakseen Englannin parlamentissa etenevää, Irlannin itsehallintoon tähtäävää lainsäädäntöä. Kun *Home Rule* -laki vihdoin vuonna 1912 läpäisi alahuoneen, olivat englantilaiset puolueet ja hallitus jo menettämässä otettaan Irlannista. Niiden

näkökulmasta saaren jako näytti jäävän ainoaksi ratkaisuksi, joka estäisi poliittisen kaaoksen ja mahdollisen sisällissodan, joka ei olisi rajoittunut vain Irlantiin. Toisin kuin nationalistisesti orientoituneet irlantilaiset historiankirjoittajat myöhemmin esittivät, ei Irlannin jako (1920), joka aluksi oli tarkoitettu vain erottamaan kahta itsehallintoaluetta, ollut Englannin hallitukselle teoreettinen kysymys kansallisuuksista, vaan lähinnä käytännöllinen ongelma. Brittiläisen valtiomiestaidon kannalta Irlannin kansojen lukumäärä oli "akateeminen" kysymys, joka voitiin jättää irlantilaisten itsensä selvitettäväksi, kuten Englannin hallitus usein selitti yrittäessään passiivisesti ratkaista jaon synnyttämiä kriisejä. Toisaalta maarajan vetäminen sinällään vahvasti oletuksia "toisesta" irlantilaisesta kansasta.

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Moderni historiantutkimus on perinpohjin selvittänyt ne historialliset tekijät, jotka kytkevät katolisuuden ja protestantismin Irlannin kansallisuuskiistaan. Yleinen brittiläinen kansalaisuus sai alkunsa ja juridisen luonteensa Mainiosta vallankumouksesta (The Glorious Revolution, 1689), joka merkitsi katolisen valtiomahdin lopullista tappiota Brittein saarilla. Koska katoliset vallantavoittelijat olivat saaneet merkittävää tukea Irlannista, ei kysymys poliittisten oikeuksien myöntämisestä Irlannin katolilaisille vielä 1800-luvullakaan automaattisesti sisältynyt brittiläisten vapauksien periaatteisiin. Englannin suuri "sisäpoliittinen" kysymys oli, tyytyisivätkö Irlannin katolilaiset kasvamaan imperiumin kuuliaisiksi kansalaisiksi. "Katolisen" nationalismin nousu ylläpiti ja herätti epäilyksiä, että he eivät tyytyisi. Tästä syystä Irlannin rauhattomuuksia ja itsehallinnon palautussuunnitelmien aiheuttamaa sisäistä konfliktia yleisesti selitettiin Englannissa yhteiskuntaluokkien "uskonnollisella jakautumisella". Selitykselle saatiin erinomaista tukea irlantilaisilta itseltään, erityisesti Ulsterista, jossa protestanttiset alakulttuurit olivat Ranskan vallankumouksen päivistä lähtien kehittäneet tavan tulkita ja profetoida poliittisia tapahtumia uskonnollisin termein ja kielikuvin. Poliittisessa propagandassa, jolla vastustettiin Irlannin itsehallintoa ja sen taustalla väijyvää tasavaltalaisliikkeen vaatimaa itsenäisyyttä, Ulsterin teollista kehityneisyyttä selitettiin protestanttisella uskolla, ja vastaavasti eteläisen Irlannin väitettyä takapajuisuutta "paavinuskolla". Niissä ratkaisevissa vaaleissa, joissa yleinen äänioikeus askel askeleelta ulotettiin kaikkialle Brittein saarille, sekä Irlannin protestanttisten kirkkojen että katolisen kirkon papit olivat vahvasti mukana, mikä antoi lisää oikeutusta kutsua jännitteitä poliittisen sijasta "uskonnollisiksi".

Englantilaisten liberaalien ajattelussa, joka vähitellen kypsyi hyväksymään periaatteen, että Irlanti sekä tarvitsi että ansaitsi autonomian, Irlannin ongelmien uskonnollinen selitys menetti tehoaan 1800-luvun jälkipuoliskolla. Liberaalit katsoivat, että Irlannin anglikaanisen valtiokirkon purkamisen (1871) jälkeen mitään vakavaa uskontopoliittista ongelmaa ei pitäisi enää olla. Ulsterin protestanttien vaalima väite heihin kohdistuvasta uskonnollisesta vainosta - siinä tapauksessa että koko Irlannin itsehallinto toteutuisi - alkoi ulkopuolisten silmin näyttää auttamattomasti vanhentuneelta, semminkin kun Englannissa käytiin

vilkasta keskustelua uusista valtio-ideoista; liittovaltion mahdollisuudesta ja uudesta kansalaisuuden käsitteestä, jonka tuli perustua yhtäläisiin kansalaisoikeuksiin uskonnosta riippumatta. Irlannin itsehallintoa koskevan väittelyn tarkkailijat pyrkivätkin löytämään Irlannin sisäisille erimielisyyksille jonkin "rationaalisen" selityksen, sen sijaan että olisi vedottu uskontoon tai sentimentaaliseen nationalismiin. Poliittiset realiteetit - ensisijaisesti Ulsterin unionistien ponteva esiintyminen - joka tapauksessa vaikuttivat niin, että brittiläisten poliitikkojen ja yleisön silmissä Irlanti ei enää 1800-luvun lopulla näyttäytynyt vain yhtenä onnellisena imperiumin kansana. Irlannin nationalistien samaan aikaan esittämä väite Irlannin ykseydestä historiallis-kulttuurisessa merkityksessä ei myöskään vakuuttanut brittiläisiä tarkkailijoita, ja kahden kansan ajatus alkoi saada poliittista uskottavuutta.

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Kun rotua tai uskontoa korostettiin yleisen brittiläisen kansallisuuden perustana, ei irlantilaisten enemmistöä heidän uskontonsa ja oletetun kelttiläisyytensä vuoksi voinut loogisesti lukea briteiksi. Yleinen väite 1800-luvun ja 1900-luvun alkupuolen imperialistisessa propagandassa oli, että protestantit olivat kaikkialle maailmassa muodostaneet "kehittyneempiä" kansallisuuksia kuin katolilaiset. Perustelu oli rodullinen; ensiksi mainittujen katsottiin omaksuneen anglosaksisen rotutietoisuuden, mannermaisen teutoniteorian brittiläisen version, katolilaisia paremmin. Länsi-Euroopan katolisten kansojen, kuten espanjalaisten, portugali- laisten ja irlantilaisten, oletettiin pääväestöltään kuuluvan "kelttiläis-iberialaiseen" rotuun, joka heikomman rotutietoisuutensa takia ei ollut pystynyt rakentamaan valtioita Pohjois- tai Etelä-Amerikassa.

Vaikka tiedemiesten havainnot oletetusta kelttiläisestä rodusta 1800-luvun jälkipuoliskolla olivat hyvin ristiriitaisia, pidettiin irlantilaisessa kansanperinteessä kelttejä itsestään selvinä "alkuirlantilaisina". Irlannin nationalistinen liike kytki kelttilegendat taitavasti historialliseen propagandakuvaansa, jossa nämä energiset purjehtijat nähtiin sekä muinaisen että nykyisen Irlannin kansan perustana, puolustaen siten ajatusta, että irlantilaiset rodullisesti olivat Euroopan vanhin kansa. Tällaiset väitteet olivat tarpeen, koska englantilaiset historioitsijat, esimerkiksi John R. Green (1837-1883), olivat esittäneet Englannin kansan alkaneen muodostua jo 800-luvulla. Irlannin nationalistien kannalta ymmärrettävästi ei ollut syytä huoleen, vaikka kelttiläiseltä "rodulta" puuttuikin brittiläistä rotutietoisuutta. Uuden vuosisadan alussa johtavien länsieurooppalaisten tiedemiesten johtopäätökset rodusta kuitenkin heikensivät myyttiä "kelttiläisistä kansoista". Professori Eoin MacNeill (1867-1945), eräs Irlannin kansallisen liikkeen johtavista ideologeista, omaksui rotukysymyksessä hyvin nykyaikaisen käsityksen, yhtyen niihin eurooppalaisiin antropologeihin, joiden mielestä kelttiläisyydestä voitiin puhua vain lingvistikossa, ei fyysis-rodullisessa merkityksessä.

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Jo v. 1843 edellä mainittu ulsterilaissyntyinen siirtomaahistorioitsija Robert Martin ennusti, että protestanttiset ulsterilaiset unionin purkautuessa nousisivat

välittömästi kapinaan, koska he eivät haluaisi millään hinnalla luopua Britannian kansalaisuudestaan. Protestanttisen Ulsterin ja etelä-Irlannin välistä vastakohtaisuutta alettiin selittää nationalistisin käsittein vuosisadan puolivälissä. Englantilaiset Thomas Macaulay (1800-1859), kuuluisa historioitsija, sekä poliitikko-filosofi Charles Dilke (1843-1911) kehittivät erittäin populaarin, rodulle ja uskonnolle perustuvan brittiläisen kansallisuuskuvan, jota voitiin soveltaa myös anglo-irlantilaisiin suhteisiin. Macaulayn kielikuvan mukaan brittiläisyys oli itse asiassa syntynyt Londonderryn piirityksessä (1689), jolloin viha "irlantilaisuutta" ja "paavinuskoa" kohtaan oli yhdistänyt skotit, presbyteerit ja englantilaiset. Kuuluisa anglo-irlantilainen historioitsija William Lecky (1838-1903), vastustaessaan Macaulayn ja hänen seuraajiensa Anthony Frouden (1818-1894) ja Edward Freemanin (1823-1892) irlantilaisvihamielistä asennetta, selitti kuitenkin, että Irlantiin oli kehittynyt maantieteellisistä rajoista riippumaton "lojaali" irlantilainen kansallisuus, joka ei halunnut erota Britanniasta. Leckylle lojaalisuus merkitsi kansallisuuden arvokkainta ominaisuutta, joten "epälojaalit" ainekset väistämättä olivat alemmalla kansallisella kehitystasolla. Ulsterin unionistit omaksuivat Leckyn argumentit, antaen kuvan, että lojaalisuus oli keskittynyt koillis-Irlantiin.

Vaikkakin tiedemiesten todistelu Brittein saarten rotujen sekoittuneisuudesta levisi vähitellen yleiseen tietoisuuteen, niin ajatus anglosaksisesta rotutietoisuudesta, jonka oletettiin levittävän ylivertaista germaanisiperäistä kulttuuria, säilyi ja nousi uuteen kukoistukseen 1. maailmansodan jälkiarvioinneissa. Tunnettu englantilainen antropologi Arthur Keith (1866-1955) vakuutti heti sodan jälkeen, että Ulsterin "spontaani" kolonisaatio oli luonut uuden anglosaksisen kansallisuuden, joka oli verrattavissa Pohjois-Amerikan siirtokunnan synnyttämään mahtavaan kansakuntaan. Tällaisilla väitteillä luonnollisesti pyrittiin jälkikäteen perustelemaan Irlannin jakoa.

Tiedemiesten luopuminen ajatuksesta, että oli olemassa ulkonäöltään erottuva anglo-saksinen tai kelttiläinen rotutyyppejä, käänsi monet brittinationalistit ylistämään, kuten Rudyard Kipling teki, brittiläisen rotusekoituksen erinomaisuutta. Tämä ei estänyt eräitä populaarikirjoittajia kehittämästä teorioita erityisesti ulsterilaisesta rodusta, joka skottilaiselta perustalta oli jalostunut ja "parantunut" alkurotuun verrattuna. Jaon jälkeen yritettiin myös Pohjois-Irlannin katolilaisia selittää tämän uuden rodun jäseniksi, jotta alueen väestö näyttäisi poliittisesti homogeenisemmalta kuin mitä se todellisuudessa oli.

Radikaali ajatus, että mikä tahansa väestöryhmä voisi omalla päätöksellään julistaa edustavansa kansan "henkistä periaatetta", sai jalansijaa 1800-luvun lopun eurooppalaisessa filosofiassa. Ranskalaisen Ernest Renanin kuuluisa luento v. 1882, jossa hän edellytti "kansalta" periaatteessa päivittäistä kansanäänestystä, antoi uuden argumentin sekä Irlannin nationalisteille että koillis-Irlannin unionisteille. Parhaiten se soveltui vähemmistöaseman puolustamiseen, minkä ulsterilainen poliitikko Ronald McNeill (1861-1934) oivalsi kirjassaan *Ulster's Stand for the Union* (1922). Yrittämättä määritellä taustayhteisöään kansana, McNeill keskittyi itsemääräämisoikeuden periaatteeseen väittäen, että etelän nationalistit - samalla kun he vaativat itsenäisyyttä - kielsivät saman periaatteen Ulsterin unionisteilta. McNeillin argumentti jätti huomiotta kuuden kreivikunnan sisällä olevan

nationalistisen vähemmistön itsemääräämisoikeuden, sekä sen seikan, että nationalistit olisivat olleet valmiita myöntämään koko Ulsterille hyvin laajan itsehallinnon, mikäli Irlanti olisi itsenäistynyt muodollisesti yhtenäisenä alueena.

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Kiista Irlannin kansallisesta historiasta ja sen opettamisesta heijastui 1800-luvulta alkaen kaikkiin kasvatusinstituutioihin, ja niiden ulkopuolella kansanrunoudessa ja kodeissa. Nationalismin organisoituminen massaliikkeeksi 1830-luvulta alkaen, vaatimuksenaan kansallinen itsehallinto, sekä toisaalta valtiovallan yritykset hillitä unionin vastaista propagandaa, tekivät kaikesta Irlantiin liittyvästä historianopetuksesta poliittisen asean. Niinpä ei ollut ihme, että oman maan historiakuva sai pitkään rakentua kuvitteellisille legendoille, pyhimystarinoille ja nationalistisille propagandajulkaisuille. Viimeksi mainituista kuuluisimmaksi nousi John Mitchellin (1815-1875) radikaali *Jail Journal* (1854), joka kylvi tulkintaa, että englantilainen sorto oli viimeisen 800 vuoden ajan hidastanut kansallista kehitystä ja että unioni ei ollut tuonut eikä tulisi koskaan tuomaan Irlannille mitään todellisia etuja. Lukuun ottamatta kansanrunouden keruuta ja arkeologisten löytöjen luettelointia, ei merkittävää kotimaan historian tutkimusta juuri ollut ennen kansallisen yliopiston muodostamista 1900-luvun alussa. Historian kouluopetuksen taso 1800-luvun Irlannissa oli myös alhainen tai puuttui kokonaan, osittain siksi, että protestanttiset kouluviranomaiset eivät onnistuneet levittämään poliittisesti neutraaleja oppikirjoja. Vasta 1900-luvun ensi vuosina Irlannin historiaa vaivihkaa saatiin lisättyä opetussuunnitelmiin, mikä johtavien nationalistien mielestä tapahtui liian myöhään ja sekin vähä brittiläisittäin suodatettuna.

Kiista kansallisesta historiakuvasta kulminoitui myös vaatimattoman katolisen yliopiston (per. 1854) pohjalta kasvaneen Irlannin kansallisen yliopiston ja Dublinin Trinity Collegen (TCD) välisessä kilpailussa ja vastakohtassa. Kansallista yliopistoa edusti Dublinissa University College (UCD), jonka historiantutkimusta 1900-luvun alussa dominoi edellä mainittu Eoin MacNeill, UCD:n ensimmäinen kotimaan varhais historian professori. Huolimatta avoimesta sitoutuneisuudestaan politiikkaan MacNeill pyrki nostamaan kansallisen historiantutkimuksen tieteelliselle tasolle ja puhdistamaan sen legendoista ja rotu-uskomuksista. Tiedemiehenä hän oli sekä historiantutkija että lingvisti, joka suuntasi tarmonsa gaelin (iirin) kielen standardointiin ja sen palauttamiseen puhekieleksi. Kehottaessaan kansallismielisiä ulsterilaisten tavoin aseistautumaan hän tavallaan käynnisti Pääsiäiskapinaan johtaneen kehityksen, vaikka hän henkilökohtaisesti vastustikin kapinaa tilanteessa, jossa sillä ei ollut yhtenäistä kansallista mielipidettä takanaan eikä sotilaallisia edellytyksiä. Vapaavaltion opetusministerinä MacNeill yritti muuttaa ala-asteen historian opetuksen iirin kieliseksi, mutta operaatio osoittautui ylivoimaiseksi.

Unionihenkisessä Trinity Collegessa ei tavallisella opiskelijalla juuri ollut mahdollisuuksia oppia gaelilaista iirinkieltä, saati Irlannin historiaa kansallisesta näkökulmasta. Silti monet TCD:n tutkijat, esimerkiksi Alexander Richey (1830-1883) ja Thomas W. Rolleston (1857-1920) olivat aidosti kiinnostuneita Irlannin

menneisyydestä. Toisaalta monet TCD:n historiantutkijat pysyttäytyivät maailmanlaajuisissa aiheisissa tai perinteisen brittihistorian teemoissa. Lecky-professoriin nimitetty englantilainen Walter Phillips (1864-1950) kuitenkin kirjoitti 1920-luvulla realistisen analyysin vallankumousvuosista. Aikakauden kuvaan Trinity Collegesta vaikutti huomattavasti pitkäaikainen rehtori (Provost) John Mahaffy (1839-1919), joka pyrki kitkemään kaiken gaelilaisaineksen kouluopetuksesta ja syytti kasvattajia Pääsiäiskapinasta.

Eoin MacNeill ei pyrkinyt kirjoittamaan Irlannin historian kokonaisuutena, mutta hänen ajatuksiaan levitti tehokkaasti Alice Stopford Green (1847-1929), nuorena kuolleen historioitsija John R. Greenin irlantilainen vaimo, joka kirjoitti useita Irlannin populaarihistorioita vuosina 1908-25. MacNeill ja Alice Green hyökkäsivät kiihkaasti niitä englantilaisia historioitsijoita vastaan, jotka heidän mielestään tietoisesti etsivät Irlannin menneisyydestä pelkästään väkivaltaa ja epäjärjestystä, ylistäen vain brittisiirtolaisten hyveitä ja laiminlyöden kaikki kansallisen kehityksen merkit. MacNeill ja Alice Green väittivät, että "tietoinen kansallisuus" näkyi Irlannin kirjallisuudessa jo varhaiskristillisenä kautena. Tämä vanha kansallisuus oli jo melkein kadonnut irlantilaisten alettua matkia englantilaisia heidän tavoissaan, ja ennen kaikkea kielessä. Ilman omaa kieltä Irlannilla voitiin MacNeillin mielestä tarkoittaa vain "maantieteellistä ilmaisua".

Eoin MacNeillin kritiikki rotuintoilijoita ja legendojen kirjaimellisia tulkitsemiä kohtaan ei ulottunut dogmiin irlantilaisesta muinaisvaltiosta. Jo Thomas Davis (1814-1845), kuuluisa Nuoren Irlannin runoilija, oli ollut vakuuttunut Irlannin muinaisesta sivilisaatiosta. MacNeill meni vielä pidemmälle väittäen, että Irlanti viimeistään 11. vuosisadalla jKr. ymmärrettiin yhdeksi poliittiseksi kokonaisuudeksi. Tätä hän ei epäröinyt kutsua Rooman tasavallan poliittiseen järjestelmään rinnastettavaksi valtioksi. Alice Green myötäili ja antoi viimeiselle kirjalleen nimen *A History of the Irish State to 1014* (1925), vaikka hän aiemmin olikin korostanut muinais-irlantilaisten "henkistä unionia" englantilaisen korostuneesti poliittisen ajattelun vastapainona. Useat Greenin kirjoista, ja erityisesti MacNeillin *Phases of Irish History* (1919) oli laadittu vastineeksi niille englantilaisille kirjoittajille, kuten Goddard Orpenille, jotka olivat huomauttaneet keskushallinnon ja muiden valtion tunnusmerkkien puutteesta normannivaltausta edeltävässä irlantilaisessa yhteisössä.

Eoin MacNeill nimitti Irlannin esinormannilaista kulttuuriyhteyttä valtioksi, vaikka hän toisaalta arvosteli tasavaltalaisia liittolaisiaan, jotka halusivat perustaa uuden valtion niin pian kuin mahdollista ja millä hinnalla hyvänsä. MacNeillin kanta oli, että Irlannin kieli ja kulttuuri pitäisi ensin elvyttää, sillä ilman niitä irlantilaiset olisivat edelleen puoleksi brittejä. Kohtalokas kansallisen liikkeen jakautuminen, joka johti sisällissotaan, vahvisti MacNeillin pettymystä "valtion palvojia" kohtaan. Kuitenkin hän itse oli nousevan valtiomahdin palveluksessa, antaen sille erään sen vahvimista ja populaareimmista perusteista; että kyse ei ollut uudesta valtiosta, vaan vanhan valtion legitimoinnista ja tavallaan sen palauttamisesta valtaan. Kaikki kansallisen liikkeen johtohahmot, kuten esimerkiksi Arthur Griffith (1872-1922), James Connolly (1868-1916) ja Pádraig Pearse (1879-1916), eivät suinkaan tarvinneet tällaisia perusteluja, vaan vetosivat moder-

nimpeän ajatteluun. Yhteinen kansallinen tavoite kuitenkin kätki erimielisyydet teoreettisista kysymyksistä, vaikka Pearse tunnetusti arvosteli MacNeillin "lingvististä" näkökulmaa. Irlannin ensimmäisen kansallisen eduskunnan (Dáil) julistuksissa näkyy sekä MacNeillin muinaisvaltion idea että Pearsen uudempi tasavaltalainen oppi, jonka mukaan kaikki Irlannissa asuvat yksinkertaisesti kuuluvat Irlannin kansaan - sanoivatpa he itse mitä tahansa.

Ulsterin unionistit olivat kaukonäköisesti ennustaneet, että yritykset antaa Irlannille itsehallinto lopulta johtaisivat sen eroamiseen brittivaltiota - kuten tapahtuikin. Teoriat muinaisesta kulttuuriyhteydestä, jonka pitäisi sitoa yhteen kaikki nykyajan irlantilaiset, taikka ideat moniuskontoisesta tasavallasta eivät houkutelleet unionisteja yhtymään kansalliseen liikkeeseen. Muinaisuuteen vetoaminen oli heikoin argumentti, koska Ulsterin 1600-luvun brittisiirtolaisilla ymmärrettävästi oli hyvin vähän tekemistä "tuhatvuotisen kansakunnan" perustamisen kanssa. Eoin MacNeill esitti eräässä propagandajulkaisussa (1923), että Ulsterin siirtoasutuksen jälkeisten vuosisatojen olisi oikeastaan pitänyt tehdä kaikista ulsterilaisista nationalisteja, samalla tavoin kuin Yhdysvaltojen siirtolaisista, mutta hän myönsi, ettei näin ollut käynyt, minkä seurauksena unionistit nyt muodostivat Irlannin "ulkomaalaisen" elementin.

* * *

Irlannin itsehallinto toteutui lopulta vain saaren kuudessa koillisimmassa kreivikunnassa, joissa noin kolmasosa väestöstä vastusti tehtyä jakoa. Näin syntyneen Pohjois-Irlannin ensimmäisissä historian yleisesityksissä, joiden kirjoittajina olivat Ramsay Colles (1920) ja David Chart (1927), vältettiin teoreettisia kannanottoja kansallisuuksista tai roduista. Kuusi kreivikuntaa käytännössä muodostivat eräänlaisen valtion valtiossa, mutta merkittävää sinänsä oli, ettei sen uudesta "kansasta" synnytetty legendaarisia luomiskertomuksia, jotka olivat yleisiä 1. maailmansodan seurauksena itsenäistyneissä valtioissa. Ilmeinen syy oli siinä, että alueen alkuasukkaita ja heidän jälkeläisiään oli vaikea liittää kertomukseen, joka alkoi vasta 1600-luvulta. Toinen syy oli se, että historiaperinteen poliittinen jakautuneisuus säilyi Pohjois-Irlannissa pidempään kuin Vapaavaltiossa, jossa nationalistinen näkemys sai vahvaa tukea poliittisilta päättäjiltä. Myöskään koulujärjestelmä ei yhtenäistynyt Pohjois-Irlannissa, sillä katolilaiset halusivat ja saivat ylläpitää omat koulunsa. Vähitellen kuitenkin Pohjois-Irlannin "virallinen" historiankirjoitus pyrki tulkitsemaan maakunnan historiaa siten, että jo muinaisuudessa olisi ollut selviä merkkejä Ulsterin itsenäisyydestä ja erillisyydestä suhteessa muuhun Irlantiin. Irlannin Vapaavaltiossa sen sijaan useat 1920-luvun populaarihistorioitsijat valittelivat jakoa ja katsoivat sen olevan ristiriidassa irlantilaisuuden todellisen olemuksen kanssa. He myös uskoivat Irlannin ennen pitkää väistämättä yhdistyvän, seuraten näin hallituksensa virallista politiikka, jonka mukaan Pohjois-Irlannin olemassaolo oli vain väliaikainen, lähitulevaisuudessa raukeava järjestely.

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