Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550–1700

Edited by

ELIZABETHANNE BORAN

Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

and

CRAWFORD GRIBBEN

University of Manchester, UK

ASHGATE

Contents

Acknowledgements vii
Abbreviations ix
Notes on Contributors xi

Introduction 1
Elizabethanne Boran

1 Sir Henry Sidney and the Reformation in Ireland 14
Ciaran Brady and James Murray

2 Printing in Early Seventeenth-Century Dublin: Combating Heresy in Serpentine Times 40
Elizabethanne Boran

3 The Problem of 'Scottish Puritanism', 1590–1638 66
John Coffey

4 'Force and Fear of Punishment': Protestants and Religious Coercion in Ireland, 1603–33 91
Alan Ford

5 The Covenanters and the Scottish Parliament, 1639–51: The Rule of the Godly and the 'Second Scottish Reformation' 131
John R. Young

6 Robert Leighton, Edinburgh Theology and the Collapse of the Presbyterian Consensus 159
Crawford Gribben

7 Godly Order: Enforcing Peace in the Irish Reformation 184
Raymond Gillespie

8 Enforcing the Reformation in Ireland, 1660–1704 202
Toby Barnard

9 Conformity and Security in Scotland and Ireland, 1660–85 228
Richard L. Greaves

Index 251

Introduction

Elizabethanne Boran

'Vade, vade, Satana, pro universo mundo non facerem quod postulas'.[1]

This defiant response of the Roman Catholic Robert Fitzgerald to his interrogators reflects the polarization of Catholicism and Protestantism in later sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Ireland. It likewise points to the difficulties inherent in enforcing reformation in early modern Europe at a time when the various denominations were becoming increasingly intransigent in their doctrinal identities. The ability – or at times inability – of the early modern state to impose reformation continues to fascinate historians, and in recent years the issue of confessionalization had dominated the debate. This collection of essays investigates the related theme of the enforcement of reformation in early modern Ireland and Scotland, in an attempt to identify the motivations, methodologies and ultimate effectiveness of this process. Adopting an international perspective, it seeks to analyse the factors affecting implementation of the Reformation – factors which would eventually determine its success or failure.[2] While conscious of the three-kingdoms dimension, which forms the backdrop to Richard Greaves' comparison of the processes of reformation in Ireland and Scotland, the emphasis is on the latter nations, Ireland, where the protestant Reformation 'failed', and Scotland, where it 'succeeded'.[3]

---

[1] 'Depart, Satan! I would not do what you ask for the whole world', cited in Colm Lennon, 'Taking Sides: The Emergence of Irish Catholic Ideology', in Vincent P. Carey and Ute Lotz-Heumann (eds), *Taking Sides? Colonial and Confessional Mentalités in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), p. 93. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences.

[2] Previous articles on this issue include the celebrated debate between Brendan Bradshaw and Nicholas Canny: Bradshaw's 'Sword, Word and Strategy in the Reformation in Ireland', *Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), pp. 475–502, was quickly followed by Canny's 'Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland: "Une Question Mal Posée"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 30 (1979), pp. 423–50, which in turn drew forth Karl Bottigheimer's 'The Failure of the Reformation in Ireland: "Une question bien posée"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), pp. 196–207.

[3] The necessity of viewing events in Ireland or Scotland in the context of the three kingdoms or four nations of these islands is now such an accepted theme that it forms the bedrock of the majority of recent analyses and has been a spur to the creation of this collection. A number of influential articles have been written exploring the possibilities of

Perhaps the most crucial theme in the collection of essays is the concept of identity, both of the enforcers themselves and their intended targets. This issue lies at the heart of John Coffey's chapter on Scottish Puritanism in the period 1590 to 1638, which seeks to pin down the elusive term 'Puritan' and analyse how it was used by contemporaries, particularly in the turbulent 1630s.[4] Concepts of identity also pervade Elizabethanne Boran's examination of the self-perception of the Dublin élite and its subsequent impact on their ability to enforce reformation. Unlike their Scottish counterparts, the Calvinist reformers based in Ireland lacked cohesion and, by defining themselves solely in negative terms as opponents of the 'other', had little to offer potential converts. For them, as sermonic warnings of a theological 'fifth column' suggest, the real danger lay within the Church of Ireland. One might not be able to enforce conformity among the Roman Catholic population but one could at least try to maintain conformity of belief among the 'godly'.

There were, then, a number of possible targets for the enforcers of reformation. Foremost in both nations were Roman Catholic subjects who, by their allegiance to Rome, not only undermined the spiritual health of the body politic but also posed a distinct political threat. This group forms the focus of Alan Ford's chapter on secular and ecclesiastical attempts to coerce religious unity in Ireland from 1603 to 1633. Writers concentrating on the later period turn their attention to protestant nonconformists: Toby Barnard examines the battles between the hierarchy of the Church of Ireland and protestant dissenters after the Restoration, while Richard Greaves compares the measures taken in Ireland and Scotland over the same period. Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben suggest that we consider a third possible target audience – the godly themselves. After all, enforcement of reformation,

---

the approach since J.G.A. Pocock's 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975), pp. 601–28 initiated the debate: J.G.A. Pocock, 'The New British History in Atlantic Perspective: An Antipodean Commentary', *American Historical Review*, 104 no. 2 (1999), pp. 490–500; Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (eds), *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge, 1998); Glenn Burgess (ed.), *The New British History: Founding a Modern State, 1603–1715* (London, 1999); Michael Perceval-Maxwell, 'Ireland and the Monarchy in the Early Stuart Multiple Kingdom', *Historical Journal*, 34 (1991), pp. 279–95; Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (eds), *Uniting the Kingdom? The making of British History* (London, 1995); Jane Ohlmeyer, 'Seventeenth Century Ireland and the New British and Atlantic Histories', *American History Review*, 104 (April 1999), pp. 446–62; Michael Perceval-Maxwell, 'Ireland and Scotland, 1638–48', in John S. Morrill (ed.), *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context 1638–51* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 193–211. A recent valuable collection of essays has been edited by Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer, *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005).

[4] Coffey's chapter in this collection takes issue with the most recent work on the subject, David Mullan's *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638* (Oxford, 2000).

though it invariably has negative overtones of imposition, need not necessarily suggest forced attendance at service. It was as important to remember the sheep in the sheep-fold as it was to corral any 'lost' sheep in the wilderness. In this context, enforcement meant strengthening the hearts and educating the minds of the favoured few, rather than trying to reclaim the bodily presence of the unregenerate majority.

Alan Ford and Richard Greaves each address the crucial issue of motivation. Ford offers a comprehensive disquisition on the varying motivations governing the actions of the secular and ecclesiastical Dublin élite – religious, political, legal and financial. He reminds the reader that eschatological beliefs, coupled with the polemic of early Christian heresy, were not solely the preserve of Church of Ireland bishops but might also be utilized by lay administrators such as Henry Brouncker in Munster. For Ford, there was no split between lay and ecclesiastical motivations, only a shifting of alliances which eventually led to a crisis in the 1620s when secular lords and Church of Ireland bishops found themselves on opposite sides of the debate about toleration and conformity. Greaves, writing about the later seventeenth century, concentrates on political motivations, in the context of the Anglo-French war. Here, conformity is the corollary of state security.

Many of the contributors examine the agents of enforcement of reformation and the methodology they employed. While Ciaran Brady, James Murray and Richard Greaves concentrate on the actions of secular state officials, Barnard and Ford present an examination of the concerns of the hierarchy of the Church of Ireland. Barnard delineates the impact of appointing English bishops to Irish bishoprics and examines in detail the implications of the career of one influential late seventeenth-century Irish bishop, William King. The role of the individual reformer is a leitmotif throughout the chapters of Brady and Murray (who concentrate on Sir Henry Sidney), Greaves (James Butler, Duke of Ormond) and Gribben, who examines the education and impact of Robert Leighton, a pivotal figure in the perceived mid seventeenth-century challenge to Scotland's covenanted reformation.

Leighton's personal reform is linked to his attempts to consolidate reformation in the University of Edinburgh in the 1650s. The role of the university as an agent of reformation and an indispensable projector of conformity is highlighted both by this chapter and Barnard's exploration of the role played by Trinity College, Dublin, in the creation of the ideology of conformity. Parliament, another essential purveyor of conformity, is examined in its Scottish incarnation by John Young who concentrates on the period 1639 to 1651, Scotland's 'second reformation'. Young examines the role of the élite, both secular and ecclesiastical, in the formation of legislation which would institute a

godly society – how, in effect, Parliament sought to make Scotland 'a pure Covenanting kingdom'.

University and Parliament are not the only purveyors of reformation which attract attention. Boran argues that the printing press in early seventeenth-century Ireland also deserves more attention than it has previously received as a mirror of reformation. She maintains that by analysing the treatment of heresy in the sermons and treatises published in Ireland we can gain a greater understanding of the methods by which the élite sought to control the debate about heresy and impose conformity. Her examination of the para-textual material of Irish printing in the period 1590 to 1641 indicates, ironically, that marked similarities existed between the strategies adopted by Catholics and protestants to respectively combat or control the enforcement of reform.

This emphasis on the varying motivations of the many agents of enforcement of conformity has a bearing on the current debate concerning the utility of confessionalization as a hermeneutic tool for historians of early modern Ireland and Scotland. The inherent linkage of reformation and state-building, which lies at the heart of the concept of confessionalization, has ensured that as an investigative approach it has much to offer reformation research.[5] The relevance of this overarching explanation of social change in early modern Europe, one which, in the words of Heinz Schilling, 'focuses both on the cultural, intellectual, social, and political functions of religion and confession within the early modern social order', is readily apparent in the chapters of this collection.[6]

This is particularly evident in the close correlation between a number of the key characteristics of confessionalization and the themes developed here. Chief among these is the establishment of dogmatic principles – which gives confessionalization its name. Boran's chapter on the printing press examines its role in the consolidation of dogma and its use as a propagandistic tool of the state; Barnard and Gribben elucidate the role of the university in both the creation of a learned clergy and the development of doctrine; all the chapters focus on the challenges faced by those entrusted with the task of imposing conformity.[7] Barnard's

[5] Heinz Schilling, 'Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich: Religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 246 (1988), pp. 1–45. A summary of his position may be found in Heinz Schilling, 'Confessional Europe', in Thomas A. Brady, Heiko A. Oberman and James D. Tracy (eds), *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600: Later Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, ii: *Visions, Programs and Outcomes* (Leiden, New York and Cologne, 1995), pp. 641–81.

[6] Schilling, 'Confessional Europe', p. 642.

[7] Wolfgang Reinhard, applying the concept of confessionalization to the Catholic reformation, suggests seven key characteristics of the methodology of confessionalization: the establishment of dogmatic principles (hence the term 'confessionalization'); the

chapter, with its emphasis on the centrality of the parish in enforcement of reformation, has much in common with Schilling's focus on the role of the priest/minister as its local purveyor. The latter's late sixteenth-century timescale and two of his three broad themes (the role of the state, the expansion via social disciplining, and the encounter with modernity) provide a historiographical backdrop to a number of chapters, particularly those of Brady and Murray, Ford, Boran and Young.[8]

But these attempts by secular and ecclesiastical advocates of reformation to instil conformity were only one side of the coin. The other side is glimpsed in Raymond Gillespie's chapter, which serves as a counterpoint to the tendency to concentrate on élite political acts and preoccupations. His research, focusing on the local reception of reformation, points to an enduring, conservative, consensus which at times proved more influential than élite dogmatic debates. Here the theories of the academics give way to the social realities of the common man. In the locale, old kinship loyalties might prove more valuable than new ideologies. Maintenance of social peace outweighed everything else – conformity was secondary to custom. If tradition required that a Catholic should be buried in the grave plot of a protestant church, then accommodation could take place. As he reminds us, in certain circumstances 'the reformation could not be enforced but rather negotiated'. At the local level conformity was not ignored but doctrinal considerations were very much secondary to social practice – a fact acknowledged and deplored by both protestant and Catholic reformers. His chapter challenges the reader to reconsider how conformity worked in practice. If it was dependent on supporters in the locale, then the position of a local sheriff might well prove as important as the disquisitions of learned archbishops.

---

implementation of these principles by enforcers; the use of propaganda as a methodology to ensure such enforcement of reformation; the rise of an educated clergy leading to the professionalization of the ministry; the intensification of disciplining the community of believers; the importance of language; and, finally, the use of rites: Wolfgang Reinhard, 'Was ist katholische Konfessionalisierung?' in Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling (eds), *Die katholische Konfessionalisierung* (Gütersloh, 1995), p. 426.

[8] Randolph C. Head argues that the emphasis on social disciplining and the linkage to modernity demonstrates the Weberian context of the paradigm: 'Catholics and Protestants in Graubünden: Confessional Discipline and Confessional Identities without an Early Modern State', *German History*, 17 (1999), pp. 321–45. For Reinhard's advocacy of the counter reformation as a form of modernization see the latter's 'Gegenreformation als Modernisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 68 (1977), pp. 226–52, and, more generally, his 'Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State. A Reassessment', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 75 (1989), pp. 383–404.

Crucial here is the *experience* of conformity and, more generally, confessionalization. Gillespie's chapter forces us to consider other aspects of popular reformation on the ground. We need to know far more than we do about the experience of enforcement, and the strategies by which it might be combated. How did conformity operate on the local level and how could it be circumvented? It was easier to issue a proclamation about church attendance than to enforce it, and even were force available and applied, one had still to combat not only outright refusal but also more subtle forms of nonconformity. Roman Catholic authors such as John Copinger might urge their readers toward the crown of martyrdom but not everybody was rushing to be first in the queue.[9] Indeed Wright argues that the tendency among confessional historians writing in the early seventeenth century to emphasize the bravery of past ancestors should be seen as an attempt to off-set the contemporary preference for surviving the Reformation.[10]

A number of problems faced the zealous Calvinist preachers of early modern Britain and Ireland. Chief among these was the sometimes bewildering, or at times unscrupulous, reaction of the laity to their efforts at enforcement of reformation. The story of Lady Monteagle, who was happy enough to attend a protestant service before hearing Mass, was disquieting – even though she discontinued this practice once the error of her ways had been pointed out.[11] More common still was the 'church papist', 'who parts religion between his conscience and his purse and comes to church not to serve God but the King … He loves Popery well, but he is loath to lose by it.'[12] Nicodemism as a lay strategy was deplored by both protestant and Roman Catholic clerics, the former fearing the mockery of the conversion process, not to mention the added political threat inherent in a subject who only pretended to be a good protestant (and hence a good subject), the latter fearing that attendance at protestant church services might in truth lead to spiritual as well as bodily acquiescence.[13]

---

[9] John Copinger, *A Mnemosynum to the Afflicted Catholickes of Ireland* (Bordeaux, 1606).

[10] Jonathan Wright, 'Surviving the English Reformation: Commonsense, Conscience and Circumstance', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 29 (1999), pp. 386.

[11] Philip Caraman (ed.), *The Other Face: Catholic Life under Elizabeth I* (London, 1960), p. 62.

[12] Ibid., p. 272.

[13] Gregory Martin and Nicholas Sanders were among a number of Roman Catholic writers to condemn attendance at protestant church services: Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1990), p. 135. Colm Lennon argues that the Roman Catholic Archbishop Richard Creagh was particularly anxious to stem the tide of Catholic attendance at protestant services, a phenomenon which, Lennon notes, continued into the 1570s; 'Taking Sides', p. 80.

Dissimulation, in all its various manifestations, was a problem acknowledged by clerics on both sides of the denominational divide. According to Robert Wolcome, writing in 1612, 'All true christians are appearing christians … But on the contrarie, all appearing christians are not true christians.'[14] But distinguishing the godly from the ungodly was not an easy task. Even the use of attendance at communion services as a marker of conformity, and its worthier but more opaque sister conversion, was problematic. There were too many ways in which it might be circumvented. Some, in order to avoid attending services, would declare themselves temporarily unfit to partake of the sacrament. Others would make sure that they were visiting in another area over Easter, the time when absence from services would most likely be noticed. Those who did attend might avoid communion.[15] To make matters more difficult, such avoidance could not necessarily be taken as a sign of secret Catholic sympathies. Refusal to communicate was not always an indication of antipathy to the sacrament but might, conversely, be an indication of increased reverence for it. The injunction of 1 Corinthians 11:27–9 not to communicate while in an unworthy spiritual state was sometimes taken very seriously indeed. The experience of Dives Downes, Bishop of Cork, in the parishes of Ballymoney and Bandon, county Cork in 1700, where only 20 out of a possible 150 partook of the eucharist, was not unique but it certainly muddied the waters when it came to the identification of true believers.[16]

Gillespie's socially cohesive laity has parallels elsewhere.[17] In 1565, Adrian de Saravia informed William Cecil, Lord Burghley, of the difficult of enforcing reformation in sixteenth-century Guernsey: the 'people are made of fraud; you cannot believe a word they say and they have no scruple about perjuring themselves: they would unite a thousand

---

[14] Patrick Collinson, 'The Cohabitation of the Faithful with the Unfaithful', in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford, 1991), p. 52.

[15] Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, pp. 134–5.

[16] Raymond Gillespie, 'Differing Devotions: Patterns of Religious Practice in the British Isles, 1500–1700', in S.J. Connolly (ed.), *Kingdoms United? Great Britain and Ireland since 1500: Integration and Diversity* (Dublin, 1999), p. 73.

[17] See, for instance Christopher Marsh's research on the experience of members of the Family of Love in the Cambridgeshire village of Balsham, cited in Collinson, 'The Cohabitation of the Faithful with the Unfaithful', p. 75, and Marsh's *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-century England: Holding their Peace* (Basingstoke, 1998). Hans Hillerbrand makes a similar point about the integration of Anabaptists in early modern Germany in his article 'The "Other" in the Age of the Reformation. Reflections on Social Control and Deviance in the Sixteenth Century', in Max Reinhart (ed.), *Infinite Boundaries: Order, Disorder and Reorder in Early Modern German Culture*, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies (Missouri, 1998), p. 266.

perjuries rather than injure a friend'.[18] Even when the laity attended services one could not always be sure that they did so in the correct spirit. Edwin Sandys, like many others, acknowledged the existence of such 'deep dissemblers, double-hearted, double-tongued, double-faced; speaking them full fair whom them hate full deadly; promising and not performing; shifting off and seeking time'.[19] Conformity and conversion were two very different things and the gap between the two was redolent of fear and distrust. Ultimately, for contemporaries, the success or failure of the Reformation lay in the success or failure of conversion, not conformity.[20]

The tension between Gillespie's focus on the reception of reformation by the common man and a number of papers in the collection which investigate the phenomenon from an élite perspective is symptomatic of recents trends in confessionalization research also. Heinrich Schmidt, in a celebrated debate, has questioned Schilling's reliance on the role of the state and argues that this tendency towards 'etatism' ignores a fundamental process of confessionalization from below.[21] Case study after case study have been produced which apply the state-run model of reformation and find it wanting. Historians such as Head and Forster have argued that in some areas where 'confessionalization' takes place it does so despite the state, rather than because of it.[22]

---

18 Wright, 'Surviving the English Reformation', p. 391.

19 Ibid., p. 385.

20 Karl Bottingheimer and Ute Lotz-Heumann suggest the opposite view in Karl S. Bottigheimer and Ute Lotz-Heumann, 'The Irish Reformation in European Perspective', *Archive for Reformation History*, 89 (1998), p. 270.

21 For this debate see the following articles: Heinz Schilling, 'Disziplinierung oder "Selbstregulierung der Untertanen"? Ein Plädoyer für die Doppelperspektive von Makro- und Mikrohistorie bei der Erforschung der frühmodernen Kirchenzucht', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 264 (1997), pp. 675–91; H.R. Schmidt, 'Socialdisziplinierung? Ein Plädoyer für das Ende des Etatismus in der Konfessionalisierungsforschung', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 265 (1997), pp. 639–82.

22 Head, 'Catholics and Protestants in Graubünden', pp. 321–45. Marc Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560–1720* (Ithaca, New York, 1992). Euan Cameron, while acknowledging the importance of confessionalization as an interpretative tool for historians, exhibits reservations of a different kind, arguing that too rigid an adherence to the framework of confessionalization can lead to historians assuming sharp distinctions between different confessional groups, 'confessional barriers' which are not immediately obvious to historians studying cross denominational co-operation during the Thirty Years War: Euan Cameron, 'One Reformation or many? Protestant Identity in the Later Reformation in Germany', in Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 126. A variety of historians working on the topic in Eastern Europe have also questioned its utility: Bruce Gordon, 'Konfessionalisierung, Stände und Staat in Ostmitteleuropa (1550–1650)', *German History*, 17 (1999), pp. 90–94.

How applicable these finding are in the context of early modern Ireland and Scotland remains to be seen. The chapters in the present volume clearly have more points of contact with the original conceptualization of confessionalization than these later modifications. Despite a recent brave attempt to apply the concept of double confessionalization – incorporating both élite and popular – to early modern Ireland, much work remains to be done in the area of Roman Catholic evangelism before we can definitively argue for a binary confessionalization in an Irish context.[23]

The transplantation of themes in Continental Reformation research to the context of early modern Ireland and Scotland may not always be an easy one but it is one which is worth attempting. Serious questions remain to be addressed, not least being an unravelling of the thorny relationship between 'popular reformation' and the term 'confessionalization from below'. Early modern Ireland, with its unusual combination of a Roman Catholic majority ruled by a protestant minority, is a useful, if problematic, test case for such an appraisal.

As Colm Lennon has argued, some decades before the imposition of resident Catholic bishops, one finds a resurgent Catholicism in the Pale and beyond.[24] This rise of recusancy, so apparent in the Pale from the

---

23 Ute Lotz-Heumann, *Die Doppelte Konfessionalisierung: Konflikt und Koexistenz im 16. und der erster hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 2000). She balances a failed protestant confessionalization led by state authorities on the one hand, and a triumphant Catholic confessionalization emerging from the common man on the other. For a comprehensive review of this see Helga Robinson-Hammerstein, 'The confessionalisation of Ireland? Assessment of a Paradigm', *Irish Historical Studies*, 32 no. 128 (2001), pp. 567–78. A synopsis of Lotz-Heumann's position may be found in her article 'Social Control and Church Discipline in Ireland in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', in Heinz Schilling (ed.), *Institutionen, Instrumente und Akteure sozialer Kontrolle und Disziplinierung im frühneuzeitlichen Europa/Institutions, Instruments and Agents of Social Control and Discipline in Early Modern Europe* (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), pp. 275–304.

24 Colm Lennon, in a series of articles, has placed the Old English laity at the forefront of recusancy from the 1570s onwards: see, for example, his aforementioned 'Taking Sides', pp. 78–93, and his seminal 'The Rise of Recusancy among the Dublin Patricians, 1580–1613,' in W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds), *The Churches, Ireland and the Irish*, Studies in Church History 25 (Oxford, 1989), pp. 123–32. Tadgh Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Reformation in Ireland. The Mission of Rinuccini, 1645–1649* (Oxford, 2002) investigates the unenviable state of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Ireland prior to Rinuccini's arrival and demonstrates how the implementation of church discipline might be undermined by clergy who were more willing to denounce their bishops to the state authorities than follow their orders (pp. 42–54). He points out that the early seventeenth-century Catholic episcopal drive to reform parishes might sometimes lead to more heat than light since the imposition of diocesan clergy inevitably meant a diminuition in the position of the regular clergy who had a greater role in the local cure of souls prior to this (p. 53).

1570s onwards, is a testament to the communal identity of the Catholic laity, which held control of the patronage systems of the Catholic Church. This lay resurgence, with its characteristics of lay control of church property, continued identification with Roman Catholic loci and refusal to attend protestant church services, is reminiscent of some trends in popular reformation elsewhere.[25] More work needs to be done on the explication of lay engagement with Catholic reformation but it is clear that the role of the Old English and Gaelic Irish laity in upholding traditional Catholic values is a fruitful area of investigation.[26]

But did the Irish Catholic laity play a role in the construction of doctrine?[27] This is a crucial question if we are to equate 'the rise of recusancy' and 'confessionalization from below'. If confessionalization is first and foremost about enforcement of dogma – and not just a conservative reaction to state imposition of conformity – we may have to look elsewhere for the doctrinal stimulus. One can argue for a popular Catholic resurgence in late sixteenth-century Ireland but the evidence for an accompanying catechetical revolution is not readily apparent. To judge by the frequency of provincial and diocesan synods in the seventeenth century, whatever was emerging from below was not in total accord with Tridentine practices. Certainly the proliferation of Roman Catholic catechisms, both in Irish and Latin and sometimes both languages, reflect an ecclesiastical uneasiness about the dogmatic purity of their flock. The catechisms produced by the Irish Franciscans at Louvain in the first half of the seventeenth century not only sought to inculcate the norms of the Catholic Reformation to the populace but were an indication that this had not already happened, despite the rise of recusancy in the later sixteenth century.[28] Theobald Stapleton, the author of a 1639 bilingual catechism, produced his catechism precisely because he felt that the common man was being ignored in the doctrinal flourishes of his colleagues, and so was reduced to merely parroting

25 The esssentially conservative nature of the response of the laity is, however, slightly at odds with some elements of popular reformation in the rest of Europe.

26 Ó hAnnracháin suggests that the role of the Old Irish bishops should no longer be ignored: ibid., p. 61. See a recent valuable thesis by Brian Mac Cuarta on the subject: 'Catholicism in the Province of Armagh, 1603–1641', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dublin, 2004.

27 Gillespie argues there were 'two types of cultural communities' within Catholic Ireland – a conservative laity and a progressive, confessionalizing, clergy: Raymond Gillespie, 'Differing Devotions: Patterns of Religious Practice in the British Isles, 1500–1700', in S.J. Connolly (ed.), *Kingdoms United? Great Britain and Ireland since 1500: Integration and Diversity* (Dublin, 1999), p. 71.

28 See, for example, the catechism of Bonaventure Ó hEodhasa, *An Teagasg Criosdaidhe* (Antwerp, 1611); On this theme see Bernadette Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn* and the Catholic Reformation in Ireland' in Sheils and Wood (eds), *The Churches, Ireland and the Irish*, pp. 137–43.

prayers without knowing their true meaning.[29] The continentally-trained clergy who returned to Ireland did their best to spread the doctrines of the Council of Trent, to confessionalize their co-religionists, but it was a long process and, though supported by Irish Catholics, the doctrinal and educational impetus necessarily came from outside.

We need to be able to apply questions, similar to those offered in the chapters of this collection, to the growth of the Catholic reform movement before we can truly understand the enforcers and mechanisms of the late sixteenth century Catholic Reformation in Ireland. Yet despite these reservations it is clear that confessionalization as a model cannot be ignored by historians of early modern Ireland and Scotland. Above all, the application of the norms of confessionalization, problematic though they may sometimes be as an investigative tool for researches in early modern Britain and Ireland, reminds us of the richness of material available with which we may compare the process of enforcement of reformation in Ireland and Scotland. Bodo Nischan's work on the second reformation in Brandenburg, an essentially élitist movement limited to court circles, provides one model, while the work of Auke Jelsma on the problems faced by the imposition of reformed Protestantism in the northern Netherlands in the second half of the sixteenth century, likewise suggest useful parallels for those historians interested in the enforcement of reformation in the islands to the north west of the European continent.[30] The aim of the present volume has been to encourage comparison between Ireland and Scotland, but the process cannot stop there and should, eventually, incorporate European paradigms and transatlantic models.

The problems faced by the enforcers of reformation in early modern Ireland and Scotland were immense – and were not helped, at least in the Irish case, by an uncertainty of purpose.[31] The Scottish Covenanters might attempt to impose a godly reformation of society but such a process was unthinkable in early modern Ireland. The best that could be hoped for there was a semblance of conformity – with all its attendant internal contradictions – but which, theoretically, might lead, eventually,

---

29 Ibid., pp. 138–9.

30 Nischan has a number of interesting articles on John Sigismund's 'second reformation' in Brandenburg in his collection of papers: *Lutherans and Calvinists in the Age of Confessionalism* (Aldershot, 1999). For the case of northern Netherlands see Auke Jelsma, 'The attack of Reformed Protestantism on society's mentality in the northern Netherlands during the second half of the sixteenth century' in Auke Jelsma, *Frontiers of the Reformation: Dissidence and Orthodoxy in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 110–32.

31 See Aidan Clarke's seminal 'Varieties of Uniformity: The First Century of the Church of Ireland', in Sheils and Wood (eds), *The Churches, Ireland and the Irish*, pp. 105–22.

to reformation.[32] The reformers of late sixteenth and seventeenth-century Ireland provided the ideological apparatus for this imposition of conformity. The anti-Catholic polemic emanating from the Dublin and London presses identified the vast majority of the population of early modern Ireland as agents of the Antichrist. This hardening of the confessional battle lines might engender a feeling of insecurity among the protestant élite, but it was, crucially, one they might all share. The very homogeneity of the Church of Ireland during a time when its sister church in England had been undergoing massive upheavals was a testament not so much to internal cohesion as to external threat. There was far less internal church polemic precisely because the external enemy of Roman Catholicism was so prominent.

Conformity, then, was as much about the enforcer as it was about their targets – be they Catholics or Presbyterians. As Patrick Collinson has argued for sixteenth-century England, 'the irreligious were needed' because they provided the foil against which the godly protestant might locate his own identity.[33] This was, of course, part of a larger process of societal re-fashioning taking place in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hillerbrand's examination of this 'construction of a new Other' in the repressive legislation targeting various 'deviant' groups, such as witches, prostitutes and Jews, in early modern German society, finds echoes in this collection.[34] The late sixteenth-century attempt to define and confine the 'other' in religious terms should be seen in this wider social context.

Ironically the enforcement of conformity led precisely to what it was meant to avoid – a rise of recusancy in the case of Irish Roman Catholicism, and the development of Scottish Presbyterianism in Ulster as an unconquerable challenge to the Church of Ireland in the later seventeenth century. Colm Lennon argues that the rising recusant identity of the Roman Catholics of the Pale, far from being submerged by early seventeenth-century attempts at imposition of conformity by force, was, in fact, nurtured by such an approach. As Lord Deputy Chichester ruefully related, the executions of bishops like Conor O'Devany served not to cow the Catholic population but instead

[32] Not least among the internal contradictions of the policy on conformity was the fact that the imposition of recusancy fines might well become an end in themselves, valuable as they were (potentially at least) to the royal coffers. Brady and Murray likewise point to the unacceptable effects a full conversion of Roman Catholics in early modern Ireland would have had on the socio-political hegemony of the colonial élite.

[33] Collinson, 'The Cohabitation of the Faithful with the Unfaithful', p. 56.

[34] In particular, John Young's discussion of the reforming programme of the Scottish Covenanters, where a host of social ills were targeted alongside more obviously 'religious' legislation, reminds us that religious and moral panics were symbiotically interconnected.

provided providential martyrs for a renewed Catholicism.[35] Lennon is right when he says that the sporadic attempts at enforcement led to a consolidation of the 'confessional integrity' of Irish Roman Catholics but we should also be aware that the very act of enforcing conformity might have a similar impact on the identity of the enforcer.[36] To paraphrase Hillerbrand, by making the recusant 'visible' they might also render themselves visible.[37]

What could not be made visible was the conversion process. The difficulty for contemporaries was that there really was no way by which they could make windows into men's souls. One could never really know whether conversion had been successful whereas conformity was such a very visible phenomenon – either people were in church or they were not. Perhaps for the same reason, historians of the period have concentrated on the slightly more accessible theme of conformity as an indicator of 'success' and 'failure' of reformation, since it is seemingly so much more quantifiable.[38] But this may be another illusion. Just as 'confessionalization' as a term initially appears amorphous but in reality may be too rigid, so 'conformity', a seemingly rigid term, may eventually prove to be too amorphous a conceptual term to address the many layers of reformation in early modern Ireland and Scotland. And yet, though the task of mapping the course of the Reformation in Ireland and Scotland may well appear daunting, this collection demonstrates that some headway may be made in this craggy intellectual terrain.

---

35 PRO, SP 63/232/8.

36 For a seventeenth-century viewpoint on this see George Downham's comment on p. 65 of this collection. Lennon, 'Taking sides', p. 93. In their chapter Brady and Murray argue that the effect on the enforcer might be to shatter communal identities.

37 Hillerbrand, 'The "Other" in the Age of the Reformation', p. 264.

38 Geoffrey Parker questions the reliability of visitation records in his 'Success and Failure during the First Century of the Reformation', *Past and Present* 136 (1992), pp. 43–82; Callum G. Brown revisits secularization theory with this kind of statistical scepticism in *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800–2000* (London, 2001), *passim*.