ISSN 1753-2396 (Print)
ISSN 2753-328X (Online)

Journal of
Irish and Scottish Studies

Articles

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Volume 3, Issue 1
Pp: 175-192
2009
Published on: 1st Jan 2009

1495
ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY PRESS

A 'Primitive Germ of Discord' in the North Atlantic World: Newfoundland-Irish Roman Catholics in Scottish Cape Breton

Peter Ludlow

Irish and Scottish migrants played an important role in the development of communities in what would later become known as Atlantic Canada, settling land and actively participating in the formation of colonial life. Bundled with their meagre personal possessions came the values and traditions of their native societies which they painstakingly transplanted to these new locales. One component of this 'baggage' has received considerable scholarly consideration, namely sectarianism. Recently, however, more attention has been devoted to conflicts that arose between co-religionists of different national origins, who, despite sharing a common faith, did not always display the same religious habits, or who were unwilling to accept religious leadership from those of ethnic or linguistic backgrounds different to their own.[1]

Taking as its example a chapter from the expansion of Roman Catholicism in Atlantic Canada, this paper explores the intra-communal friction that arose when Irish-Catholic migrants from the British colony of Newfoundland encountered their Scottish co-religionists on Cape Breton Island, part of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, in the period between 1880 and 1914. Through a particular focus on the Catholic press and education, this study will illustrate that although the Ultramontane leadership in Cape Breton welcomed the Newfoundland Irish into the diocese, many Scottish clergy, influenced as they were by Gallican[2] traditions and already in a protracted battle against their leadership, felt threatened by both the conservative ethos of

[1] For examples of studies that examine tensions between co-religionists, see Sheridan Gilley, 'English Catholic Attitudes to Irish Catholics', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 27 (2009), 226–47; Morris J. Macgregor, *The Emergence of a Black Catholic Community: St Augustine's in Washington* (Washington, 1999); Rosalyn Trigger, 'The Geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic Parish in Nineteenth-Century Montreal', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 27(2001), 553–72.

[2] The term Gallican is used here to describe the temperament of Cape Breton's more liberal Scottish Catholics, despite the fact that–during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century–the term was primarily deployed by Ultramontanes such as Bishop John Cameron of Antigonish to discredit those who did not conform with their views.

the Newfoundlanders and the use of Irish issues to foster a more aggressive Catholicism in Cape Breton.

I Roman Catholicism in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland Prior to 1880

Unlike the United States where complaints of the existence of a 'hibernarchy' were heard as early as the 1860s,[3] no single ethnic group came to exert a hegemonic influence over the Catholic agenda in British North America. In Nova Scotia, the Scots and Irish who settled there during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries tended to establish insular communities in relative isolation to one another, allowing dominant ethnic groups to reign supreme at the diocesan level. While Halifax, the capital of the colony, was firmly Irish, in north-eastern Nova Scotia and on Cape Breton Island a 'tartanarchy' of Scottish priests prevailed.[4]

As a result, the history of Roman Catholicism in Nova Scotia in the nineteenth century is a narrative of factionalism and ethnic tension. In the Apostolic Vicariate of Nova Scotia, which had been created in 1817, Irish and Scots clashed over administrative and philosophical issues to such an extent that it became impossible to administer.[5] In an 1844 letter to the Propaganda Fide, Monsignor Antonio De Luca, a special Roman investigator, claimed that the two communities had brought with them 'their divergent characteristics

[3] Paula M. Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900–1920* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994), 4–5.

[4] The term 'tartanarchy' is the author's own. While the French-speaking clergy who ministered to the Acadian population, as well as a few Irish priests, served within the diocese of Antigonish, the overwhelming majority of the clergy was Scottish. Between 1880 and the Great War, there were 179 appointments as pastor in Cape Breton, of which 131 went to those of Scottish origin. In the industrial sector of the island during the same period, twenty-eight of thirty-three appointments went to Scottish clergy. Archives of the Diocese of Antigonish (hereafter ADA), Bishop John Cameron Papers (hereafter BJCP), Diocesan Statistics, 1880–1910; A.A. Johnston, *Antigonish Diocese Priests and Bishops 1786–1925*, edited by Kathleen Mackenzie (Antigonish, 1994).

[5] See Colin Barr, "'Imperium in Imperio": Irish Episcopal Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century', *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 621–5; Terence J. Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics: Gallicanism, Romanism and Canadianism* (Montreal and Kingston, 2002), 60–3; J. Brian Hanington, *Every Popish Person: The Story of Roman Catholicism in Nova Scotia and the Church of Halifax, 1604–1984* (Halifax, 1984), 75–87; A.A. Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*, vol. 2 (Antigonish, 1972), 196–215.

and inclinations and the customs and prejudices of their native lands'. As a result, the Scots and Irish who formed the majority of the colony's population were 'keeping up their inborn mutual hostility'. 'The identity of religion among the Catholics of these two nationalities', De Luca observed, had not 'availed to extirpate this primitive germ of discord in Nova Scotia, for each group is anxious to live as far away as possible from the other'.[6] In 1844 the decision was therefore made to separate Nova Scotia into two dioceses. The Scottish diocese of Arichat (renamed Antigonish in 1886) had charge of the mainland counties of Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough as well as all of Cape Breton Island, while the Irish-dominated diocese of Halifax covered the rest of the colony.[7] Despite the division of the province, tensions between Halifax and Antigonish nevertheless persisted.[8]

While the Irish in Halifax looked to Archbishop Daniel Murray of Dublin for clergy and financial support, in the heavily-Scottish island of Cape Breton the Catholic leadership was determined to create a native-born clergy. This led to the emergence of a 'locally-born but foreign-bred intelligentsia',[9] with the Scots College in Rome becoming the unofficial conduit between the diocese and the Vatican. As Jack Bumsted has argued, Scottish Catholicism in British North America was caught between 'the dominant francophone Catholicism' and the emerging 'anglophone Irish Catholic' community. In this environment, the survival of Scottish Catholicism 'owed far less to ecclesiastical authority from above than to the individual and collective efforts of priests and their congregations'. Consequently, it was the Scottish clergy who 'led the way in the dismemberment of the control of the Quebec Church over the ecclesiastical affairs of the other colonies' of British North America.[10] Catholic migrants

[6] Antonio De Luca, *Report on Nova Scotia*, 15 July 1844, ADA, Angus Anthony Johnston Papers.

[7] The diocese of Arichat was renamed as a result of the transfer of the bishop's seat to Antigonish. To avoid confusion, this study will use the name Antigonish throughout.

[8] For example, in 1879–just as the trickle of migration from Newfoundland was beginning–the proposed merger of St Francis Xavier College in Antigonish and St Mary's College in Halifax into one university was vetoed by a number of Antigonish priests who felt that Irish control of the college from Halifax would lead to a spirit of 'national bigotry'. See James Cameron, *For the People: A History of St Francis Xavier University* (Montreal, 1996), 67.

[9] Daniel W. MacInnes, *Clerics, Fisherman, Farmers and Workers: The Antigonish Movement and Identity in Eastern Nova Scotia, 1928–1939* (Ph.D. thesis, McMaster University, 1978), 40.

[10] J. M. Bumsted, 'Scottish Catholicism in Canada, 1770–1845' in Terrence Murphy and Gerald Stortz (eds.), *Creed and Culture: The Place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750–1930* (Montreal and Kingston, 1993), 80–1.

from the Highlands of Scotland also recognised that they could strengthen their position in Nova Scotia by taking a Gallican approach that emphasised the limits to Rome's jurisdiction in civil matters, and by stressing their loyalty to the British crown.[11]

Perhaps more importantly, in the colonial context of Nova Scotia Catholic and Presbyterian Scots soon became aware that they had greater reason to make common cause than would have been the case in their country of origin. This was especially true of the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders who, despite religious divisions, were united by their language and culture.[12] Although not immune to incidents of sectarianism, Catholics and Seceder Presbyterians routinely collaborated to resist the ascendancy of the Church of England, and to a lesser extent the Church of Scotland.[13] Together, for example, they opposed the government's determination to fund King's College, an Anglican establishment which required students to take an oath assenting to the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England. Although purely symbolic, as early as 1832 a Catholic bishop also sat on the board of trustees of Pictou Academy, the region's most influential Presbyterian college, thus fostering conciliation and 'harmony among good people of other creeds'.[14] In addition, Scottish Catholics were pragmatic enough to recognise the importance of having a

[11] Despite organisational difficulties in the early nineteenth century, due partially to the residue of the British penal laws, the progress of Catholicism in Nova Scotia proceeded apace. In 1820, Laurence Kavanagh, a merchant in St Peter's, Cape Breton, who was the son of an Irish immigrant from Newfoundland, was elected to the Legislative Assembly in Halifax. He took his seat in the assembly in 1823 after taking the oath renouncing all claims of the Pope to temporal power; however, he was exempt from taking an oath against transubstantiation. Thus, Catholic emancipation was effected in Nova Scotia six years before Daniel O'Connell achieved it in Ireland. See Duncan J. Rankin, 'Laurence Kavanagh', *Canadian Catholic Historical Association* (hereafter *CCHA*) *Report*, 8 (1940–1), 51–76.

[12] Similar circumstances existed in Upper Canada where Catholic and Presbyterian Scots jointly resisted English and French 'domination'. See Fay, *A History of Canadian Catholics*, 57.

[13] In 1817 Burghers and Anti-Burghers united to form the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia. They were known as Seceders while the Kirk Presbyterians called themselves the Church of Scotland. See P.B. Waite, *The Lives of Dalhousie University*, vol. 1 (Montreal and Kingston, 1994), 13.

[14] Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 153. For information on the evangelical Presbyterian influence on early Nova Scotia education, see B. Anne Wood, 'The Significance of Evangelical Presbyterian Politics in the Construction of State Schooling: A Case Study of the Pictou District, 1817–1866', *Acadiensis*, 20 (1991), 62–85; Lilias M. Toward, 'The Influence of Scottish Clergy on Early Education in Cape Breton', *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, 29 (1951), 153–77.

voice in the Legislative Assembly, and – unable to elect one of their own as a member in the large and religiously-mixed County of Sydney – they relied on their Presbyterian countrymen instead.[15] Given that a Catholic was unable to secure the seat, Bishop William Fraser of Antigonish felt that a Presbyterian representative, as a 'brither Scot', would best serve the interests of his flock.[16]

Having heard of the level of fraternisation between Catholics and Protestants in Nova Scotia, as well as the intolerable conditions that prevailed amongst some clergy in Newfoundland, in 1870 Irish prelate Paul Cardinal Cullen took steps to bring the Maritime provinces of Canada and the colony of Newfoundland into what Colin Barr describes as the wider 'neo-ultra-montanism' of Hiberno-Romanism.[17] Cullen had received various appalling reports from both locales, including a letter alleging that the bishop's palace in St John's, Newfoundland, had been 'converted into a drinking club.'[18] Using his authority at the Propaganda Fide he ensured that the dioceses of St John's and Antigonish were filled by suitable 'Roman' candidates. Thomas Joseph Power, a former rector of Dublin's Pro-Cathedral, and rector of Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, was appointed as bishop of St John's, while a Scot from rural Nova Scotia, John Cameron, was consecrated as coadjutor for Antigonish. Cameron had a brilliant mind and was considered a prize student while at the Urban College of the Propaganda Fide.[19] In his final year in Rome he was asked to serve as secretary to Alessandro Cardinal Barnabo, secretary to the Propaganda. Although Cameron was qualified for the position, it is likely that the post came as a result of his friendship with Cardinal Cullen, of whom Cameron said he owed more 'than to any other man living or dead'.[20] Soon after receiving their new appointments, Power and Cameron took their seats at the Vatican Council and 'stoutly supported the majority judgement on the question of papal infallibility'.[21]

Cameron, who became bishop of Antigonish in 1877, was a controversial

[15] It was not until 1847 that a resident Scottish Catholic was elected in the County of Sydney. This was due chiefly to the freehold electoral system. Many Highland Catholics in north-eastern Nova Scotia were tenants and therefore did not have the right to vote. See Brian Cuthbertson, *Johnny Bluenose at the Polls: Epic Nova Scotian Election Battles 1758–1848* (Halifax, 1994), 5–9, 258–72.

[16] Cuthbertson, *Johnny Bluenose at the Polls*, 301–2.

[17] Barr, "'Imperium in Imperio'", 612.

[18] Ibid., 624.

[19] Raymond A. MacLean, *Piety and Politics* (Antigonish, 1991), 16.

[20] Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 414.

[21] Ibid., 416. See also Hans Rollmann, 'Thomas Joseph Power', *Dictionary of Canadian Biography: 1891–1900*, vol. 12 (Toronto, 1990), 860–1.

figure from the beginning. He immediately tried to strengthen his authority in the region and attacked those who opposed him as being infatuated with vanity, 'into which the Gallican bishops had decoyed them'.[22] Catholics in Cape Breton were leery of Cameron's Ultramontanism, not because of conventional theological objections, but because they feared the transfer of parochial authority from local priests to their bishops and from the bishops to Rome. While parish priests were not totally stripped of their authority, they were 'at the mercy of their bishop, and subject, under Rome, to his untrammelled authority.'[23] As much as some prelates objected to their complete subordination to the pope, so too did the laity object to the loss of traditional influence within their own parishes. 'Middle-class laity could still play a role', argues Terrence Murphy, 'but only to the extent that they accepted clerical supervision'.[24] Cameron reacted with disdain to the protracted battle waged against him by Scottish and Acadian farmers, once advising a priest to discontinue the forwarding of petitions from parishioners because 'they would be utterly ineffectual.'[25] Those who stood up to episcopal bullying faced excommunication and censor.[26]

[22] Bishop John Cameron to Patrick Power, 27 August 1870, ADA, BJCP, Fonds 3, Series 2, Sub Series 1, Folder 28.

[23] Colin Barr, '"Imperium in Imperio"', 613.

[24] Terrence Murphy, 'Trusteeism in Atlantic Canada' in Murphy and Stortz (eds.), *Creed and Culture*, 145.

[25] MacLean, *Piety and Politics*, 122. Although autocratic, Bishop John Cameron was an able and important figure. Most of Cameron's fame and notoriety came from his involvement in politics, and in particular his zealous support of the Conservative politician, Sir John S.D. Thompson. Although Thompson's achievements as both the first Roman Catholic Premier of Nova Scotia and Prime Minster of Canada were far-reaching, the bishop's conspicuous meanderings into party politics fostered strong misgivings about the use of his episcopal authority to influence the secular decisions of his flock. The people never grew accustomed to official circulars demanding that Catholics support Thompson, nor to the use of the pulpit to issue personal attacks on Thompson's opponents. See P.B. Waite, *The Man From Halifax: Sir John Thompson, Prime Minister* (Toronto, 1985), 141; D. Hugh Gillis, 'Sir John Thompson and Bishop Cameron', *CCHA Report*, 22 (1955), 87–97; D. Hugh Gillis, 'Sir John Thompson's Elections', *Canadian Historical Review*, 37 (1956), 23–45; P.B. Waite, 'Annie and the Bishop: John S.D Thompson Goes to Ottawa, 1885', *Dalhousie Review*, 57 (1977), 605–16; Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 2, 548–53; MacLean, *Piety and Politics*, 113–30.

[26] During the 1896 Canadian federal election, the male members of the parish of Heatherton, a small rural village in the mainland county of Antigonish, 'stampeded' out of the church instead of listening to a circular from Bishop Cameron telling them to vote for a specific political candidate. The 'stampeders' were denied the sacraments and had to sign a humiliating apology to Cameron. Some 'held out' and travelled to Newfoundland to attempt to receive Holy Communion, but were denied. See Cameron, *For the People*, 107; MacLean, *Piety and Politics*, 156–9.

While Cameron battled with Nova Scotia's Gallicans, the situation was entirely different within the coves and bays of Newfoundland. Although Bishop Thomas Power was the first non-Franciscan to take office in St John's, he encountered little resistance within a diocese that had already been strongly influenced by 'Hiberno-Roman' Catholicism through its close ties with Ireland.[27] Firmly entrenched in a system in which sectarianism was 'stationary, institutionalised and non-violent', Newfoundland Catholics belonged to a church which offered a 'cradle-to-grave, social, cultural and economic framework.' Consequently, they viewed the church as the guardian of 'the state and of their spiritual, cultural and social identity'.[28] Although not as nationalistic or political as his predecessors, Power continued to emphasise Irish authority on the island by engaging the services of the Irish Christian Brothers and fighting to secure political positions for prominent Irish Catholics.[29] Although most Canadian dioceses were influenced at some level by European Catholic institutions, in Newfoundland's intensely sectarian environment the strong influence of Cullenite Ireland led to the forging of an especially powerful fusion of Irish, Roman and Newfoundland identity. It was this insular and aggressive Catholic 'baggage' that the Newfoundland Irish took with them across the Cabot Strait in the 1880s.

II The Migration of the Newfoundland Irish to Cape Breton

In the midst of the turmoil within Antigonish caused by Cameron's Hiberno-Romanism, thousands of Newfoundland-Irish Catholics poured into the industrial towns of Cape Breton. There was a long history of Irish migration

[27] Most of the Newfoundland Irish could trace their ancestry to within a forty kilometre radius of the city of Waterford, Ireland. See E.T Kelly, 'A Bridge of Fish: The Irish Connection with Newfoundland 1500–1630', *Eire-Ireland*, 4 (1969), 37–51; Michael Staveley, 'Population Dynamics in Newfoundland: The Regional Patterns' in John J. Mannion (ed.), *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography* (Toronto, 1977); John J. Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Adaptation* (Toronto, 1974).

[28] John Fitzgerald, '"The True Father of Confederation?": Archbishop E.P. Roche, Term 17, and Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada', *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 14 (1998), 190. See also S.J.R. Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland* (Toronto, 1971), 24.

[29] Rollmann, 'Thomas Joseph Power', 860–1. For information on Power's relationship with Paul Cardinal Cullen, see Peadar MacSuibhne (ed.), *Paul Cullen and his Contemporaries: With Their Letters from 1820–1902* (5 vols, Dublin, 1961–77), III, 161; IV, 160; V, 100, 111–2, 116.

from Newfoundland to Nova Scotia, with John Wentworth, the governor of the colony, rather curtly complaining in 1806 of the 'useless Irishmen who pass annually from Newfoundland through the province'.[30] However, the level of migration after 1880 was unprecedented. During this period, a decline in the price of salt cod and the failure of the Conception Bay seal fishery led thousands of migrants from Newfoundland to cross the Cabot Strait in search of employment in Cape Breton's rapidly developing coal and steel industries.[31] Large numbers of Irish Catholics swelled the ranks of parishes staffed mainly by Scottish priests, reawakening as they did so the 'primitive germ of discord' that had helped to bring about the separation of Nova Scotia into two dioceses in the first place.[32]

Given the history of antagonism between Nova Scotia's Scottish and Irish communities, it is perhaps not surprising that negative stereotypes of Irish immigrants were prevalent in Cape Breton society. Even Protestant communities made a clear distinction between Scottish and Irish Catholics. One correspondent to the *Presbyterian Guardian* emphasised that 'it wasn't Catholics he feared, so much as Irish Catholics'. The French, Scottish and English Catholics were acceptable, he argued, but, 'from dear-bought experience, let us ask to be delivered from the bullying, boisterous, agitating Irish ecclesiastics.'[33] Despite the fact that the cramped living conditions and the exigent economic reality of the colliery towns challenged order and sobriety amongst all communities, contrasting perceptions of the moderate Scot and the intemperate Irishmen were widely popular. 'If it comes to a comparison,'

[30] John Wentworth to Lord Castlereagh, 3 February 1806, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, Governor Wentworth's Nova Scotia Letter Books, RG 1, volume 54, 146.

[31] By 1921, over 50 per cent of Newfoundlanders living in Canada were residents of the province of Nova Scotia. Ron Crawley, 'Off to Sydney: Newfoundlanders Emigrate to Industrial Cape Breton, 1890–1914', *Acadiensis*, 17 (1988), 31.

[32] In 1871 the diocese of Arichat (Antigonish) had a population of nearly 105,000. According to James D. Cameron, largely Gaelic-speaking Scots comprised 66.7 per cent of the diocese's population in 1871, while the Acadians made up 10.7 per cent, the Irish 10.6 per cent, the English 8.4 per cent and the natives (First Nations) 0.5 per cent. He also states that 'Catholics composed 44.7 per cent of the population and formed majorities in Antigonish, Inverness, Richmond, and Cape Breton counties.' See '"Erasing forever the brand of social inferiority": Saint Francis Xavier University and the Highland Catholics of Eastern Nova Scotia', *CCHA Historical Studies*, 59 (1992), 53.

[33] A.J.B. Johnston, 'Nativism in Nova Scotia: Anti-Irish Ideology in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Colony' in Thomas Power (ed.), *The Irish in Atlantic Canada, 1780–1900* (Fredericton, 1991), 25.

wrote Fr Donald MacAdam of Sydney's Sacred Heart Parish, 'between the work done for the Church and for Catholic education by the sons of the Scottish farmers of the diocese of Antigonish and that done by the sons of the Irish rumsellers of Halifax, we have little to fear'.[34] The denigration of the Irish as 'rumsellers' by some clergy was a reaction not only to the perceived loss of influence which accompanied foreign migration into Cape Breton, but also to the threat that 'Irishness' posed to their Gallican traditions.

Between 1908 and the Great War the question of national parishes dominated ecclesiastical discussions in Cape Breton. Separate parishes were given to Italian, Polish and Lebanese communities, but not to the Newfoundland Irish. There were a number of reasons for this. First, spread out among the various parishes in the industrial sector, Newfoundlanders were not concentrated in one area, and thus lacked the critical mass necessary to establish parishes with a predominantly Irish character. Secondly, they were ineligible to form national parishes because they did not share the language barriers of other migrants, nor did they pose a 'schismatical' threat to the diocese.[35] But most importantly, Bishop Cameron and his successor Bishop James Morrison coveted the type of aggressive Catholicism which the Newfoundlanders often displayed, and believed that it might counter the liberal nature of some of the Scottish Catholics as well as the liberalism brewing within labour circles.[36] Thus, despite the fact that the number of parishes within the industrial sector of Cape Breton increased from three in 1879 to thirteen by 1914, the Newfoundland Irish built no churches of their own and had no parishes to serve as focal points for their community.

Yet, while some members of the Scottish clergy welcomed the influx of a group of migrants whose allegiance to their church was equalled only by that

[34] Donald M. MacAdam to Bishop James Morrison, 29 March 1921, ADA, Bishop Morrison Papers (hereafter BMP), incoming letter no. 8070.

[35] Roderick MacInnis to Bishop James Morrison, 21 January 1913, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 161. In other Canadian dioceses misinformation about ethnic populations and unpopular immigrant clergy frequently caused tension within immigrant communities and sometimes led to schism and abandonment of the church. Speaking of Polish immigrants, Morrison wrote, 'From what I know of these people, the end of this agitation will be that they will open their own church, if not in the regular way, then some schismatical manner'. See Bishop James Morrison to Roderick MacInnis, 16 January 1913, ADA, BMP, letter no. 173.

[36] Although some Newfoundlanders were involved with radical politics as part of the Cape Breton working class, the Antigonish hierarchy remained firm in its mistaken belief that eastern Europeans, and especially 'polish interpreters', were responsible for 'misleading their fellow workers'. Bishop James Morrison to D.H. MacDougall, 8 July 1914, ADA, BMP, letter no. 1255.

of their French Canadian counterparts in Quebec,[37] other Scottish Catholics remained fearful that their own religious traditions would be undermined by the newcomers. The Irish may not have secured parishes of their own, but – as the remainder of this article will demonstrate – this did not prevent them from finding other ways of exerting an influence within the diocese of Antigonish, nor from clashing with Scottish Catholics as they did so.

III The Catholic Press

By the 1890s, there was evidence in Cape Breton of growing interest in Ireland's social and political issues. In an 1889 letter to the *Freeman's Journal* in Dublin, Bishop Cameron wrote of those in his diocese who had been 'stirred to indignation by the proceedings of the past three years in Ireland', referring to the treatment of Irish political prisoners.[38] Despite being of Scottish origin, Cameron's strong Hiberno-Roman sympathies meant that Ireland's causes were as dear to him as to any Irish prelate. One of the chief ways in which he attempted to raise awareness of both Irish and Catholic causes amongst the laity was through the pages of *The Casket*, Nova Scotia's most important Catholic newspaper. Launched in Antigonish in 1852 by John Boyd, the son of a Scottish émigré, *The Casket* had traditionally served as a distributor of local news in both English and Scottish Gaelic, and as a mouthpiece for the Scottish clergy.[39] Despite operating under the watchful eye of Catholic authorities, the paper maintained a reputation for taking pride in its 'respect for the other man's point of view'.[40] In Cameron's inflexible mind, however, there was no room for dissenting opinion.

In 1890, Michael Donovan, the son of Irish immigrants and a native of St John, New Brunswick, took over the management of the newspaper. Cameron expected that under Donovan's ownership the paper would become a 'Catholic and Conservative journal'.[41] The deference exhibited by *The Casket* towards the bishop's office, coupled with the rising numbers of Irish in the

[37] Donald M. MacAdam to Bishop James Morrison, 13 February 1913, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 241.

[38] *The Freeman's Journal*, 12 June 1889.

[39] Raymond MacLean, *The Casket: From Gutenberg to Internet: The Story of a Small-Town Weekly* (Antigonish, 1992), 69.

[40] Ibid., 132.

[41] Bishop John Cameron to John Thompson, 31 December 1889, ADA, BJCP, letter no. 11356.

industrial sector, made some Scottish priests very uneasy.[42] Moreover, within a short period, there was a noticeable transformation of the paper's coverage. The most discernible change was an increase in reporting of the events and politics of Ireland. Enormous space was given to stories of Irish interest from both sides of the Atlantic. In the spring of 1905, the paper described the Irish services at Westminster Cathedral in London, celebrating the fact that it 'was the first time in the history of the new Cathedral that an Irish bishop preached in Irish to an Irish congregation'.[43] An increasingly anti-British agenda was also evident, particularly in the paper's editorials which, for example, criticised the coronation oath of King Edward VII as a 'relic of religious barbarism'.[44]

Although by the early twentieth century *The Casket* had developed a national reputation and its articles were reprinted in a number of Canadian Catholic newspapers, not everyone was pleased with its progress.[45] The loss of the Gaelic paper *Mac-Talla* in 1904 (which had been published in Sydney), and the rise in attention given to Irish issues in *The Casket*, quickly induced some of the Scottish clergy to complain, although many others waited until after Cameron's death in 1910 to do so. When Cameron's successor, Bishop James Morrison, arrived in Antigonish in 1912, he was soon facing protests that *The Casket* was spending too much of its space defending the 'cause of Irish Nationalism'. One correspondent had grown weary of reading editorials which were devoted to 'Home Rule'. According to others, the paper was publishing too many articles on 'the history of hatred and Orangeism', which were inflammatory and threatened the generally good relations between Scottish Catholics and their Protestant neighbours. Another subscriber who had migrated to Boston years before wrote: 'Scotch men from Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia, whom I meet abroad, appear to look upon *The Casket* as their bible … I am sorry that *The Casket* is so pro-Irish'.[46]

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[42] Cameron wanted *The Casket* to support his Conservative politics and to come to his defence when he was publicly attacked, something which one editor, the Reverend Dr Neil McNeil, refused to do. Consequently, Cameron had McNeil, the future archbishop of Toronto, transferred to a remote Cape Breton parish in 1891. Cameron dismissed McNeil's supporters, who wished the *The Casket* to remain non-partisan and moderate, as 'amateur theologians' who would soon annoy the paper's readers. MacLean, *The Casket*, 60.

[43] *The Casket*, 18 May 1905.

[44] *The Casket*, 13 March 1902.

[45] Mark G. McGowan, 'The Maritimes Region and the Building of a Canadian Church: The Case of the Diocese of Antigonish after Confederation', *CCHA Historical Studies*, 70 (2004), 57.

[46] All quotations in this paragraph come from MacLean, *The Casket*, 124.

By the start of World War I, the Irish influence on *The Casket* inspired some priests to consider starting a rival Scottish journal. One of the principal promoters of this idea was the influential Harvard-educated Sydney priest, Fr Donald MacAdam. In resigning his place on *The Casket*'s Board of Directors, he complained to Bishop Morrison that the paper's pro-Irish position had rendered it inadequate for the Scottish community. The rise in Irish influence had, he argued, begun to threaten the very identity of the Scottish majority:

> Since seeing your lordship I have been talking to a few of our Scottish priests and layman, and they all recognize the urgent necessity of having a Scottish Catholic paper if we are to preserve our identity as a distinct race. In the province of Nova Scotia we have a greater percentage of Scottish Catholics then in any part of the world, and yet we have not a single senator, whilst the Irish have four and the French one … With our well-earned reputation for loyalty a Scottish Catholic paper would have more influence than either an Irish or a French paper.[47]

Moreover, MacAdam reasoned that a Scottish paper would improve relations with Presbyterians by providing Catholics with a means of defending themselves against bigotry. The introduction of a Gaelic column, he argued, could be used to attract Presbyterian subscribers as 'hundreds of them read Gaelic and are intensely interested in the language … there would be great possibilities for good in this fact alone.'[48]

Bishop Morrison, while Conservative and Ultramontane, did not share his predecessor's 'Hiberno-Romanism'. Heeding MacAdam's warning, he forced Michael Donovan to sell his shares to the diocese and took control of *The Casket* in 1919, providing editorials which read more like Sunday sermons as opposed to aggressive stories highlighting Catholic grievances in other countries.

IV Catholic Education

As was the case in England after heavy Irish migration in the nineteenth century, a Roman Catholic renaissance occurred in Cape Breton which

[47] Donald MacAdam to Bishop James Morrison, 25 June 1917, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 4343.

[48] Ibid.

culminated in the building of chapels, churches and Catholic schools.[49] Although the Newfoundland Irish were unable to assert their ethnic distinctiveness within the Catholic parishes of Nova Scotia, their importance to the economic well-being of the diocese and the province is without question.[50] Bishop Cameron used these growing financial resources to construct convent schools, which were instrumental in achieving his Ultramontane goals. In 1864, Nova Scotia had passed the Free Schools Act which centralised the administrative system and promoted the principle of free public education. Although officially non-sectarian, schools in heavily-Catholic areas were allowed to operate with a Catholic ethos so long as they observed the regulations and followed the required course of study, while religious minorities in these locales had the option of applying for funding to establish their own 'separate' schools.[51] However, Cameron believed that this did not go far enough in protecting Catholics from 'godless education' and in the 1880s he invited the Sisters of Charity of Halifax and the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre Dame of Montreal into the diocese to construct convent schools 'with the least possible delay'.[52] Convent schools were particularly contentious, as public funds were used to rent their facilities, financing both separate Catholic education and the presence of the congregation in the community.

While there was widespread support for the existing system of unofficial denominational education, many of the Scottish Catholic clergy feared that an increase in convent schools would damage relations with Protestants and lead to a rise in sectarianism.[53] Moreover, they believed that the hierarchy's

[49] Don MacRaild, *The Irish in Britain, 1800–1914* (Dundalk, 2006), 61.

[50] One significant means of raising funds involved a 'check-off' system agreed to by the Provincial Workman's Association, and later the United Mine Workers of America, with the Dominion Coal Company, which ensured that a portion of each labourer's wage went directly to the respective church to which the employee belonged to pay for the social infrastructure. 'Statement of Funds Received from Parishes', 1 January to 31 December 1915, ADA, BMP. See Cameron, *For the People*, 135.

[51] Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid, *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History* (Toronto, 1994), 373. As an example, in 1872 Protestants in the overwhelmingly Catholic town of Antigonish petitioned for a 'separate' school for their children. They were successful and a small four-room school house was constructed for them. See H.M. MacDonald, *Memorable Years* (Antigonish, 1964), 60–1. Catholics living in heavily-Protestant communities also had the opportunity to establish their own 'separate' schools.

[52] Bishop John Cameron to John Thompson, 13 February 1882, ADA, BJCP, letter no. 2435.

[53] During the Canadian federal election of 1896, Cameron attempted to convince

resolve to open more convent schools within the industrial sector, in the face of stiff Protestant opposition, illustrated the unremitting determination of Ultramontanism. Some clergy, such as Fr John Fraser of New Aberdeen in Glace Bay, supported denominational education but openly resisted the introduction of convent schools into their parishes. Fraser's arguments were two-fold. First, he believed that such an institution would harm relations between the Catholics and Protestants in his community. But more pragmatically, he was opposed to the importation of the teaching services of the sisters on the grounds that it took employment away from the young girls who were working as instructors.[54]

While priests such as Fraser attempted to obstruct the diocese's efforts at founding convent schools, Newfoundland migrants were keen supporters of such institutions. Newfoundland had an extensive history of religious teaching orders. As a young curate in Ireland in the 1820s, Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming of St John's had witnessed the dramatic educational impact of a school established by the Christian Brothers, an experience that led him to recruit the Presentation Sisters of Galway to come to Newfoundland in 1833.[55] When Thomas Power was appointed to Newfoundland, one of his first acts was to bring over the Irish Christian Brothers. John FitzGerald maintains that 'the influence of the Irish Christian Brothers upon Roman Catholic education, and the impact this had upon Newfoundland society cannot be underestimated'.[56] Moreover, as Daire Keogh has argued, the Irish Christian Brothers were 'the Jesuits of Ireland's counter-revolution', of which the ultramontane Cameron and Power were a part.[57] Consequently, teaching orders were integral to the connection between Catholicism and Newfoundland-Irish self-determination.

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his flock that they should vote for the Conservative party in an effort to secure the rights of minority Catholics in Manitoba to operate Catholic schools. Despite Cameron assuming a national profile on this issue, most of his Scottish flock voted against the Conservatives. In the heavily-Scottish rural ridings of Antigonish and in Inverness, Cape Breton, Liberal Candidates were victorious; however, in the ridings encompassing industrial Cape Breton, Conservatives were returned. See MacLean, *Piety and Politics*, 150–60.

[54] Congregation of the Sister's of Charity to Bishop James Morrison, n.d. 1915, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 2054.

[55] J.B. Darcy, *Fire Upon the Earth: The Life and Times of Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming, O.S.F.* (St John's, 2003), 34–5.

[56] John Edward FitzGerald, 'The Irish Christian Brothers in Nineteenth-century Newfoundland', http://www.heritage.nf.ca/society/irish_christian_brothers.html, accessed 15 November 2009.

[57] Daire Keogh, 'The Christian Brothers and the Second Reformation in Ireland', *Eire-Ireland*, 40 (2005), 58.

By 1914, as Newfoundlanders again debated the merits of union with Canada, the Catholic leadership on that island highlighted the preservation of Catholic education, and by extension the Christian Brothers schools, as a rallying point against confederation. In 1915 the newly appointed archbishop of St John's, Edward Patrick Roche, used his inaugural address to equate confederation with the loss of such institutions. 'Unless our educational terms are acceded to', he said, 'we will be forced to give it our most pronounced and uncompromising opposition'.[58] Although Roche was chiefly concerned with the Catholics of Newfoundland, the Irish residing in Cape Breton, many of whom were seasonal residents of both islands, took such warnings seriously and wholeheartedly supported convent schools in their Cape Breton parishes.

By the Great War, the Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre Dame were assuming more and more of the Catholic teaching load in Cape Breton. Distressing to some of the native Scottish-Canadian clergy was the growing opposition within Protestant circles, as well as the more overtly sectarian language being deployed by Antigonish's Roman Catholic hierarchy. Bishop Morrison commenced a campaign of circulars and public announcements alluding to aggressive sectarian malice on the part of Protestants in the industrial sector. A veteran of sectarian warfare on Prince Edward Island, Morrison echoed Cameron's educational philosophy and believed that the Newfoundland Irish might aid in the creation of more convent schools.[59] In a letter to the Glace Bay School Board he blamed the opposition to denominational and, more specifically, convent schooling, some of which came from his own clergy, on 'rank Orangemen'.[60] Such language was intended to appeal especially to Newfoundlanders who, to a greater extent

[58] 'Address to the Clergy of the Province given to the annual priests' retreat in 1916' (St John's, 1916), 9–10, Archives of the Archdiocese of St John's (hereafter AADSJ), Archbishop Roche Papers (hereafter ABRP).

[59] Morrison was born in Savage Harbour, Prince Edward Island, and was educated at the Urban College of the Propaganda Fide. He was strongly influenced by Bishop Peter McIntyre and Bishop James Charles MacDonald, both of whom fought protracted battles on that island for denominational schools. See Peter Ludlow, *Cautious But Willing: Archbishop James Morrison, Fourth Bishop of Antigonish* (M.A. thesis, Saint Mary's University, 2004); Peter Ludlow, 'Fostering Social Awakening "along safe and sane lines": Archbishop James Morrison and the Antigonish Movement, *CCHA Historical Studies*, 72 (2006), 29–53.

[60] Bishop James Morrison to John Fraser, 31 March 1916, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 3086. In this letter, Morrison quotes extensively from his earlier letter to the Glace Bay School Board.

than their Nova Scotia counterparts, had a history of sectarian clashes with that organisation on their native island.[61]

As the rhetoric on both sides of the debate took on a more hostile tone, Fr Fraser lamented that Catholic and Protestant hard-liners had infiltrated various levels of government, including school boards throughout the industrial sector, making a solution to the education issue more difficult.[62] The Orange Lodges were not without influence; in fact, Orange representatives from Cape Breton were granted a formal meeting with the provincial government in 1914 to protest the amount of government monies spent on Catholic education. Likewise, in the weeks leading up to the 1917 municipal election in the city of Sydney, the Orange Lodge 'lit the fires of sectarian strife' when it released a document calling on members to ensure that 'the silent vote of the Orangeman' would have a hand in deciding the education issue.[63]

Convent schools in industrial Cape Breton ultimately survived because the voters, many of them 'fair minded Protestants', supported denominational schooling, and thus by extension convent schools, in successive municipal elections in the industrial sector during the Great War. The votes of Newfoundland migrants, both Catholic and Protestant, were also instrumental in upholding the existing system of education. Such support from the Newfoundland community 'set at rest any uncertainty' as to the status of the convent schools, wrote Bishop Morrison, 'until such time when the rest of the Catholic community would regard convent schools as their best educational asset'.[64]

The festering concern of some influential Scottish priests over the decline in their influence, the influx of Irish Catholics, and the advent of a more

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[61] For information on clashes between Irish Catholics and the Loyal Orange Order in Newfoundland, see Sean Cadigan, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A History* (Toronto, 2009), 143; Willeen Keough, 'Contested Terrains: Ethnic and Gendered Spaces in the Harbour Grace Affray', *Canadian Historical Review*, 90 (2009), 29–70; Kevin Major, *As Near to Heaven By Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Toronto, 2001), 256–7.

[62] John Fraser to Bishop James Morrison, n.d. March 1916, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 3080.

[63] J. Murray Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia, Volume Two 1896–1988* (Tantallon, 1988), 65; 'A Letter from the Executive Committee of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, to the Orangemen of Nova Scotia: A Pamphlet on the Present Conditions of Public Schools in the Province of Nova Scotia', n.d. October 1918, ADA, BMP, letter no. 3407.

[64] Bishop James Morrison to John H. Nicholson, 4 February 1914, ADA, BMP, letter no. 1029.

aggressive Catholicism was nevertheless partly responsible for the establishment of one of the most influential Catholic organisations in Canada.[65] The Scottish Catholic Society (SCS) was formed on 1 July 1919 at a meeting of Scottish clergy in Iona, Cape Breton. Organised under the motto 'Gloir Dhe Agus Math Ar Cinnidh' (The Glory of God and the Good of Our Race), the society proclaimed four main goals: the preservation of the Catholic faith amongst Catholic Scots; the propagation of a more accurate knowledge of the history of Scotland; the advancement educationally, morally and socially of peoples of the Scottish race; and the preservation and study of the Gaelic language and literature.[66] Holding a high view of its own calling, the SCS considered itself to be a guardian of the Scottish and Gallican traditions of Nova Scotia. It had councils in almost every parish of the diocese of Antigonish, and counted most of the influential clergy within its ranks, including two future Canadian bishops.[67]

Scholars of the region, such as Anne Alexander, have argued that the SCS was primarily an anti-modern reaction to the rapid urbanisation of what had previously been a largely rural diocese.[68] While this partially explains the basis of the organisation, one cannot help but point out the obvious exclusion of the second largest Catholic ethnic group from such an important corridor of power. The Irish priests of the diocese, some holding key academic appointments at St Francis Xavier College, were not blind to the obvious ethnic overtones of the society. Being denied access to an organisation that wielded such influence within the diocese created obvious discomfort. One of the most prominent of these men, Fr James J. Tompkins, a native of Cape Breton and of Irish descent, often cited ethnicity as the determining factor in the insular attitude he felt many in the diocese possessed.[69] For

[65] By the early twentieth century there was also a marked increase in Irish societies such as the Ancient Order of Hibernations. The A.O.H. was organised in Sydney in 1902 and in New Aberdeen in 1905 and was a constant reminder of the Irish presence in the colliery towns. See [Anon.], *St John the Baptist Glace Bay, 1903–1993: Remembering and Giving Thanks* (Glace Bay, 1993), 47; A.A. MacKenzie, *The Irish in Cape Breton* (Halifax, n.d.), 100–1.

[66] 'The Scottish Catholic Society of Canada', St Francis Xavier University Archives, Scottish Catholic Society Fonds, RG 13/SC/F1.

[67] Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald (Victoria, 1934–6; Edmonton, 1938–64) and Bishop John R. MacDonald (Peterborough, 1943–5; Antigonish, 1950–9).

[68] Anne Alexander, *The Antigonish Movement: Moses Coady and Adult Education Today* (Toronto, 1997), 72.

[69] James Tompkins to Archbishop Edward P. Roche, 24 October 1922, AADSJ, ABRP, 107/21/3.

many Scottish priests, such as Donald MacAdam, wounding the pride of some esteemed priests was a small price to pay for the reassertion of Scottish influence in Antigonish.

V Conclusion

Although the Newfoundland Irish who settled within the colliery towns of Cape Breton between 1880 and the First World War could simply be seen as having 'bridged the Cabot Strait', their migration also involved crossing a frontier which took them into a foreign and often hostile Catholic community.[70] They constituted the largest Irish assemblage within a Scottish diocese that owed its very existence to ethnic tensions between Irish and Scottish immigrants. Moreover, they arrived during a period of great turmoil, as Scottish clergy, firmly entrenched in their Gallican traditions, fought against the Ultramontane tendencies of their Hiberno-Roman bishop, who was keen to use Ireland and her political causes as fodder for the pursuit of an aggressive Catholicism in his diocese. The Newfoundlanders' presence as due-paying Catholics was welcomed, but their support for contentious issues such as convent schools put them at odds with Cape Breton clergy who wanted to preserve moderate and amicable relations with their Protestant neighbours. The insular characteristics of the Newfoundland migrants, honed within the sectarian confines of that colony, worried the large segment of native Scottish-Canadian clergy that had little sympathy either for the struggles in Ireland or for Hiberno-Roman philosophies. The reaction of many Scots to the arrival of the Newfoundland Irish illustrates not only the variety of philosophies amongst Catholics in the North Atlantic World, but also the enormous impact that religion and ethnicity had along Canada's Atlantic seaboard years after the initial migration from Europe had ceased.

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[70] Studies on the relationship between Newfoundland and Canada have been written as a response to a challenge by David Alexander to 'bridge the Cabot Strait' in order to better understand Newfoundland's position within a North American context. See David Alexander, 'Economic Growth in the Atlantic Region 1880 to 1940', *Acadiensis*, 7 (1978), 47.