

# The Religions of Ireland

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North of the border are the best Protestants in the world. South of the border there are the best Catholics in the world. There are very few Christians in the whole lot of them.

Frank O'Connor

Well I don't trust the Prots up here much, but I'll tell you one thing: I trust them more than I do them Catholic fockers down below.

Northern Irish Catholic with Republican sympathies.

There is no doubt that Northern Catholicism was a church of the ghetto.

Fionnuala O'Connor

## Introduction

I TAKE IT THAT MY ASSIGNMENT in this chapter is to investigate the possible differences between, or possibly among, the religions of Ireland and ascertain whether there is any convergence taking place in these religions. I further assume that my responsibility, given my training and experience, is to undertake this task through the analysis of existing social survey data sets. I leave it to those who study the same phenomenon from the viewpoint of history or anecdotal comparisons or lived experience—exercises which I do not deprecate—to collect and analyse their own survey data if their impressions seem incompatible with those I find in my data. While I am not unfamiliar with the literature of Irish history, I do not propose to discuss that literature, which is beyond my professional competence, in this paper. I note that Akenson (1993) discusses differences between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, using data from countries to which both groups have migrated and refutes all of the

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hypotheses about Irish Catholic inferiority that have been popular in Irish historiography.<sup>1</sup>

I also note that as I remarked in a recent article (Greeley, 1996) everyone takes surveys. Anyone who generalises about Ireland has listened to people, observed phenomena, analysed the words and observations, and generalises from them. The survey analyst differs from others who offer generalisations only in that he is explicit about his sample, questions, methods, and the limited nature of his generalisations.

I propose to work with three data sets, the 1991 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) study of religion, the 1993 International Social Survey Program study of environmental attitudes and the 1990 European Value Study (EVS). The data have been collected for these three surveys by reputable data collection agencies. In Ireland by the ESRI and in Northern Ireland by SCPR and British Gallup. All samples were probability samples and all interviews were face-to-face.

Because the studies in Ireland and Northern Ireland<sup>2</sup> were different projects, they represent valid samples of both regions but when one combines them they do not represent valid samples of the whole island. One can legitimately compare the two regions but one cannot estimate to the whole island, unless one weights for the relative size of the two populations. Moreover, sample sizes make it impossible to consider any but the three major religions of the island—Southern Catholics, Northern Catholics and Northern Protestants. In Ireland in the 1991 study, for example, there were 67 respondents who were not Catholic—30 Anglicans (Church of Ireland) and 30 with no religious affiliation.

<sup>1</sup> For reasons that escape me Akenson ignores analysis of large data sets pooled from surveys in the United States which explore the continuing differences between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, which in fact reverse the conclusions of many of those who write about religious differences in Ireland. Irish Protestants (equal in number to Irish Catholics) are more likely to be rural and southern and less likely to be economically, socially and educationally successful. Irish Catholics are now the most successful gentile group in the United States. They exceeded the national average of college attendance for those of college age in the first decade of the present century. It is remarkable indeed, is it not, the impact of sea air on the alleged deficiencies of the Irish Catholic character? Akenson is not the only scholar to ignore these findings. So do most US scholars. Economist Thomas Sowell dismisses the findings with the airy comment that no American Protestant would admit to being Irish!

<sup>2</sup> I use these terms without any political connotations. I do note however that the latter governmental unit includes only six of the nine counties of historic Ulster.

The case bases for the three surveys were as follows:

	Southern Catholics	Northern Catholics	Northern Protestants
ISSP 91	935	275	483
ISSP 93	892	225	411
EVS	2,084	160	295

No survey is perfect. Each of the three on which I base this analysis has flaws. The ISSP data are collected in a fifteen-minute module which in each of the participating countries is added to another study. The questions are hammered out at frequently acrimonious yearly meetings. I will not attempt to defend the collective decisions of my colleagues, many of whom are neither interested in nor sensitive to religion.

The EVS data set is based on a large mixtum-gatherum of survey items derived from the collective unconscious of the survey fraternity, especially as this fraternity has been shaped by the various Gallup organisations around the world. The study in both its 1981 and 1990 manifestations is utterly without theoretical orientation other than the assumption that religion is declining. (See Whelan, 1994 for an intelligent use of the EVS data and Ester, Halman, and deMoor, 1993, for a use of the same data which does not inform the reader that the measure of 'secularisation' changed in the second survey). Moreover, unlike the ISSP data which are available for all users as soon as they are archived at Zentralarchiv (ZA) in the University of Cologne, the investigators of the EVS in various countries are notably anal retentive with their data. One does one's best with the data that are at hand. Anyone who insists on better data is welcome to try to raise the money to fund a better project.

At the time of writing (1996/97) the EVS data is six years old, the ISSP data five and four years old. It is doubtful that the kind of attitudes with which my analysis is concerned have changed much in recent years. If one wants fresh data, then one may do one's own survey, though the lag behind data collection and report writing in international studies is usually between two and three years.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, I have no way of connecting the religious attitudes and behaviours which I will report with political unrest in Ireland. Civil unrest and violence is so rare in the countries studied in both the ISSP and the EVS that no thought has been given to concentrating on that subject.

<sup>3</sup> I am aware of the remarkable drop in the Irish birth rate in the five years from 1991 to 1996, but I do not see how that affects the present project. The rejection of Catholic birth control teaching is hardly new in Ireland.

Moreover, it does not require many people to launch a riot or a pogrom and not many more to support a secret army. The Irish are not, however, a people who are given to demonstrations in numbers higher than in most other countries. Seventeen per cent of Southern Catholics, 24 per cent of Northern Catholics, and 27 per cent of Northern Protestants have participated in demonstrations as compared to a 23 per cent average in the Values Study. Short of much more elaborate research one can only speculate about the relationship between the findings I will report and possibilities of peace in Ireland. The political surveys indicate that members of all three communities overwhelmingly supported the peace process. There are no data which would enable us to judge whether religion has any impact on the 'hard men' (and the 'hard women').

There are two issues to be faced in this analysis: what are the religions of Ireland and are the differences between or among the religions diminishing. It would seem at first consideration that there are patently two religions, Catholicism and Protestantism. Catholics in the North and South are led by a single hierarchy, ministered to by priests taught at the same seminaries, taught by the same kinds of religious orders of brothers and nuns and engage in the same kinds of religious devotions. But there is a possibility that after years of repression (either seventy-five or three hundred, depending on when one wants to start counting) Northern Irish Catholicism might have diverged somewhat from its Southern counterpart. In fact the data suggest strongly that the latter is the case: there are three religions in Ireland. In O'Connor's (1993) words 'Segregated, shut-in Belfast is a hundred miles and a world away from the fizz and frivol of Dublin pub talk . . . A minority faith behaves differently.'

In the absence of time series data<sup>4</sup> one must approach the issue of the diminution of differences by comparing the young and the university educated in the three populations to see if the differences among them are less than the differences among the total populations. In fact, there is little evidence of a decline in religious differences among the three religions of Ireland, as much as a good secularist might hope that such a decline (which they take to be inevitable) might contribute to the peace process.

Survey research often proves that what everyone knows to be true is not true at all. Survey research on Ireland sometimes goes further than that: it suggests that what everyone knows cannot possibly be true is in fact true. Thus for example Ward and Greeley (1990) have demonstrated in an analysis of the EVS data, that the Irish (Ireland in the sense used in this paper) are the most tolerant of the English-speaking peoples of diversity

<sup>4</sup> The ISSP was due to repeat its religion study in 1998.

among neighbours and the most likely to approve of homosexual marriage ceremonies. The tolerance of diversity can be explained when one takes into account religion. In England, Ireland and Northern Ireland, Catholics are more tolerant. Holding religion constant, there is no difference in tolerance among the three countries. One should approach the study of Irish religion with a readiness to be surprised.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

For reasons I have explained elsewhere (Greeley, 1995) I do not consider the 'secularisation' model of religion to be useful. It is, in my judgment reductionist and weak in its explanatory power. It reduces religion to a dependent variable and pays little attention to its role as a predictor variable. Indeed the secularisation theory does not seem to be useful in understanding religious behaviour anywhere in Europe (Jagodzinski and Greeley, 1997). More to the point in the present instance, in the case of Ireland as Whelan and his colleagues have demonstrated, it does not provide all that many insights. My own approach focuses on the 'story' role of religion: a religion is a story (or a series of interconnected stories) which purport to explain the meaning and purpose of life. Religion is experience before it is reflection, poetry before doctrine, story before it is anything else and story after it is everything else. Religions will vary not only in their basic orientations but in how these orientations adapt to different sets of circumstances.

This approach led me to expect that there would be three religious stories in Ireland—an expectation which nothing in the 'secularisation' model could have anticipated. It seemed to me that the different social and political environments in which Northern and Southern Catholics found themselves would produce quite different stories, stories which would account at some level for the situation in which both groups found themselves and perhaps strengthen the existing differences. I did not expect that either age or education would lead to convergence of these two different religious stories, both Catholic, but Catholic in very different environments. Nor did I expect that there would be any convergence in the different Catholic and Protestant stories in Ireland.

### **ISSP 91: World View, Faith and Devotion**

The first two variables in Table 1, which are drawn from the 1991 International Social Survey Program study of religion, are based on a series of questions about fundamental world views:

**Table 1.** Religions of Ireland (ISSP) (% Different from Southern Catholic<sup>1</sup>).

	All		Higher Education		Under 35	
	North Catholic	North Protestant	North Catholic	North Protestant	North Protestant	North Catholic
Pelagian	-8	-15	-8	-15	-8	-19
Calvinist	11	12	22	29	28	22
Faith	19	14	22	19	19	18
Devotion	4*	-31**	11	-29	7	35
Superstition	12	8	4	10	21	9
Sexual Morality	4*	-8**	-11	-14	-4	-15
Tough on Crime	-15*	21**	0	-13	-18	-19
Cheat	8	-12**	10	-10	7	-16
Feminism	0*	-10**	0	-8	3	-11
% Very Happy	-7	0*	3	5	9	-4
Hrs Work	-15	-13	-6	-4	7	7
Church-State	0*	-12**	9	11	7	18

*Key* \* Not significantly different from Southern Catholics

\*\* Significantly different from both Northern and Southern Catholics

*Note:* 1. In proportion above mean on factor scale.

There is very little people can do to change the course of their lives.

The course of our life is decided by God.

Life is meaningful only because God exists.

Life is meaningful only if you provide meaning yourself.

We each make our own fate.

Four variables constitute the SUPERSTITION factor:

Good luck charms sometimes do bring good luck.

Some fortune tellers really can foresee the future.

Some faith healers really do have God-given healing powers.

A person's star sign at birth or horoscope, can affect the course of their future.

Two variables serve as a short hand measure for FEMINISM in ISSP 91:

A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after home and family.

Family life suffers when a woman has a full time job.

Finally a series of items attempted to measure attitudes towards Church-State relationships:

Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office.

It would be better if people with strong religious beliefs held public office.

Do you think that churches and religious leaders in this country have too much power?

The first three variables cluster on a factor I call CALVIN<sup>5,6</sup> because it seems to indicate a sense of predetermination or predestination. The fourth and fifth variable cluster on a factor which I name after PELAGIUS, a monk who did battle with Saint Augustine on the issue of whether humans could do good without God's help. Pelagius, who was Irish, held that they could. Southerners are significantly<sup>7</sup> more likely to be PELAGIANS, Northerners more likely to be CALVINISTS. There are no significant differences between the two Northern communities. Among those who have attended university and those under thirty-five, the differences persist. The old battle line between the Irish monk and the African bishop continues in the modern world, most notably, it would seem, along the boundary which separates the six counties from the twenty-six.

Factor scores were computed for a wide variety of variables in the three studies. Then the scores were dichotomised and the proportions above the means for the three religious groups were calculated. Thus Northern Catholics were eleven percentage points more above the mean on the CALVIN scale than were Southern Catholics, and Northern Protestants were twelve percentage points more above the mean than Southern Catholics. Both differences are statistically significant. Thus one concludes that on this scale Northerners, whether Catholic or Protestant, are more inclined to CALVINISM than are the Southerners, but that Catholics and Protestants in the North do not differ significantly with one another.<sup>8</sup>

Then the populations are divided into those who have had university education and those who have not. Far from diminishing the differences

<sup>5</sup> Calvin, like most of the Protestant leaders was in fact an Augustinian. Augustine in his later life took a profoundly pessimistic view of human nature. Humankind could do nothing by itself. It was utterly dependent on God's mercy. He sharply divided nature and grace, saying that God owed humans nothing. Pelagius saw a much smoother development of nature into grace and was far more optimistic about humankind. The Greeks defended Pelagius (and have never considered Augustine a saint). Thomas Aquinas leaned more in the Pelagian direction than in the Augustinian. It is fascinating that, insofar as our scales measure the two strains of the Western Catholic heritage, Ireland is divided between the Augustinian North and the Pelagian South. As we shall see, the old debate between the North African and the Irishman continues to be live in Ireland today, with the border between the six and the twenty-six counties also marking the border between the two theologies. In fact, the Irish score higher on the PELAGIAN scale than any other population in the ISSP.

<sup>6</sup> Factor names are in caps to remind the reader that they are nothing more than labels for a cluster of intercorrelations.

<sup>7</sup> The convention is followed in the tables of using an \* to indicate the absence of statistical significance between either of the two Northern groups and Southern Catholics. Two \*\* indicates a *significant* difference between Northern Protestants and both Catholic groups.

<sup>8</sup> The factor scores were first computed for the entire sample and for the three communities. There were no basic differences in the various calculations. PELAGIUS and CALVIN did not correlate and hence could not be combined into one scale.

between North and South on CALVIN, a university education seems to exacerbate them because such an education leads to a more notable decline in CALVINISM among Southerners than among Northerners.

Tables 1, 3 and 4 in this chapter summarise the differences among the three religions of Ireland. The first two columns of each table present the differences in comparison of Northern Catholics and Northern Protestants with Southern Catholics.<sup>9</sup> The second two columns depict the differences among those who have attended universities. The third two columns represent the differences among those who are less than thirty-five years old.<sup>10</sup>

Thus CALVIN wins in the North (and presumably St Augustine) and the Irish monk wins in the South. Insofar as our measures tap fundamental world views, Northern Catholics are as pessimistic as their Protestant neighbours, perhaps because the culture of the six-county majority has been absorbed by the minority community.<sup>11</sup> The 'story' of the meaning of life which Northern Catholics tell is more like that of the Northern Protestants than that of the Southern Catholics.

On matters of religious FAITH (God, heaven, hell, life after death, bible) Northerners are also substantially more faithful than Southerners. Neither youthfulness nor higher education diminishes these differences. However, Catholics in both regions have higher levels of DEVOTION (prayer and church attendance) than their Protestant counterparts, differences which again are immune to youthfulness and higher education.<sup>12</sup> Protestants are significantly lower than both Catholic groups in their devotions.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The percentages are the B statistic in dummy variable multiple regression analysis in which Protestants and Northern Catholics are compared with Southern Catholics. Statistical significance is generated by the regression equation.

<sup>10</sup> Numbers representing the 'left hand' bars are omitted for the sake of making an already complicated chart less confusing than it might be. The issue is not differences among the older and the less educated, but among the younger and the more educated.

<sup>11</sup> Table 2 enables the reader to compare the three Irish communities in the context of percentage responses to individual questions in other countries; Britain and the United States. Thus the Southern Irish would seem to be the most Pelagian and the Northerners the most Calvinist not only in Ireland but in all three countries.

<sup>12</sup> This does not mean that younger Catholics are more faithful or devout than their elders, but only that the differences persist even among the young and educated, though in all three groups their levels of faithfulness persist even though the absolute levels may have declined. Younger Catholics are somewhat less likely to go to church regularly than older Catholics, but they remain more likely to attend than younger Protestants and at the same level of difference.

<sup>13</sup> Table 2 shows that in the five communities being considered Irish Catholics are more likely to attend Church regularly than Irish Protestants and than Americans and British. Nine out of ten in Ireland and the United States believe in God as opposed to seven out of ten in Britain, Far from being the result of faith, magic seems incompatible with it.



Thus, while Northern Catholics are similar to Northern Protestants in their world view, they are similar to Southern Catholics in both their faith and their devotion, perhaps this '*via media*' is what one would expect from a group which is pulled by two different cultures.

### **ISSP 91: Superstition and Morality**

There were four questions in the 1991 ISSP project which measured attitudes towards superstition and magic—astrology, good luck charms, fortune tellers and faith healers. Greeley and Jagodinski have both analysed these items and the factors which they form and report that rates of magic are lowest in countries where religious faith is strong (Ireland) and in countries where it is weakest (East Germany). In countries which are in between (Britain and West Germany) magic seems to have the strongest appeal.

The Northern Irish, both Catholic and Protestant, are significantly higher on the magic scale than the Southern Catholics and are not significantly different from one another. Among the university-educated Catholics, the difference between Northerners and Southerners disappears, though not among the young. The difference between Southerners and Northern Protestants is not affected either by youthfulness or education.<sup>14</sup>

The results of my analysis so far suggest that a key question in this project is on what variables Northern Catholics will be more like their Protestant neighbours and on what variables they will be more like their Southern co-religionists.

On the matter of sexual morality (premarital, extramarital, same sex sexuality) they are more like their Southern co-religionists; indeed, they are more orthodox than the Southerners and than their Northern neighbours. A group under pressure might well elect to emphasise those aspects of a religious culture that the leaders have most strongly proposed as essential. The Vatican is more likely to be concerned about abortion than about fortune tellers.<sup>15</sup>

The Irish Catholics however, have one of the highest rates of opposition

<sup>14</sup> Britons are, as previous research would lead us to expect, more likely (Table 2) to believe in fortune tellers than any of the three Irish communities.

<sup>15</sup> Table 2 shows that barely half of Southern Catholics support abortion in the case of a defective child as opposed to 43 per cent of Northern Catholics, almost seven-eighths of Northern Protestants. In Britain the rate is 92 per cent and in the US (in this survey) 83 per cent. In the US Catholic attitudes towards abortion are indistinguishable from the national average. Attitudes towards premarital sex in Ireland are a ten year cohort behind those in the United States—the rate of approval among Irish in their thirties, is the same as that of Americans in their forties.

to the death penalty of any country in the world and the Northern Irish are even more likely to oppose it than their Southern neighbours, perhaps because they see some of their young men as potential targets for the death penalty or perhaps because they have less confidence in the legitimacy of the criminal justice system (Table 2). Thus on a factor which combines support for the death penalty and for harsh sentences for criminals, Irish in the North are significantly more tolerant than Irish in the South and Protestants are significantly less tolerant than are Catholics in either community. Among university-educated Catholics, there is no significant difference between Catholics and Protestants. Ireland, incidentally has one of the lowest murder rates in Europe and Northern Ireland has the lowest rate of non-political crimes in the United Kingdom.

However, Irish Catholics in both regions are more likely to approve of cheating on taxes and government compensation forms and Northern Catholics are also significantly more likely to think it is all right to cheat the government than do Northern Protestants. Professor Liam Ryan explains this lack of scruple as a survival of the old feudal sense of community which distrusts the modern state. It is also possible that the consoling Catholic doctrine that tax laws are 'purely penal' (bind in conscience only to accept punishment if one is caught) plays a part in this relaxed attitude. Well trained in casuistry that they are (especially by their Jesuit teachers) the Irish can be depended on to know about 'purely penal' laws.

**Table 2.** Ireland Compared to Other Countries (%).

	South Catholics	North Catholics	Protestants	Britain	USA
Own Fate	71	59	59	60	63
Predetermined	53	55	62	21	40
Fortune Tellers	26	30	32	41	—
Family Suffer (Disagree)	45	44	38	43	48
Tax Cheat (Not Wrong)	34	38	21	26	17
Abortion OK Defect	52	43	86	92	83
Pro Death Penalty	37	19	64	33	50
Attend Weekly	71	90	26	17	44
Church too much Power	36	32	33	28	23
% Very Happy	40	33	39	33	37
Job satisfaction	52	48	35	19	31
God	97	98	95	94	71
Obedient Children	35	58	51	32	39
Nuclear Threat	44	37	23	21	25

Two variables serve as a short-hand measure for FEMINISM in ISSP 91:

A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after home and family.

Family life suffers when a woman has a full-time job.

On the FEMINISM scale Irish Catholics in both regions are more likely to take a feminist position than are Northern Protestants who are significantly lower in their support for FEMINISM than are Catholics. Indeed (Table 2) there is no difference between Irish Catholics and Britons or Americans on this issue.<sup>16</sup> Neither youthfulness nor education have an impact on these differences.

### **ISSP 91: Happiness, Work, Church and State**

Although it was claimed recently in *Society* magazine that Scandinavians report the highest levels of psychological well-being as measured by the 'happiness' item; in fact the Irish of whatever religious persuasion have the highest score, though it is lower among Catholics in Northern Ireland than in the South. As Table 2 demonstrates, however, Northern Irish Catholics are slightly higher than Americans, and significantly higher on this measure than Britons.

Despite their happiness (or perhaps because of it) the Southern Irish work longer hours than members of the other two communities, almost forty-four hours a week as opposed to slightly under forty for the Northerners. If number of hours worked is a sign of the Protestant Ethic, then Irish Catholics are the last Protestants in Europe. These differences disappear among the young and the well educated, one of the rare times in the present analysis that we discover that youthfulness and education do lead to a convergence in behaviour.

Finally a series of items attempted to measure attitudes towards Church-State relationships:

Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office.

It would be better if people with strong religious beliefs held public office.

Do you think that churches and religious leaders in this country have too much power?

<sup>16</sup> Many years ago, British Gallup did a study of attitudes towards the role of women in the then nine Common Market countries. On the more than thirty variables, the Irish and the Danes were in either first or second place on every one. It does not follow, I hasten to add, that Irish feminists have no just grounds for complaint. It only follows that matters were worse in other countries.

Catholics are more likely than Protestants to think that Church leaders have too much power. Neither education nor youthfulness diminish this cross-border difference. Moreover (Table 2), on the third item Southern Catholics are more likely than Britons or Americans to think the Churches have too much power—arguably because they do.

### **A Fourth Irish Religion?**

In the above analysis I combined all Christians who were not Catholic in the North into one category as a preliminary strategy. The question remains, however, whether there might be a fourth Irish religion, Northern Church of Ireland. Therefore, I compared Presbyterians (217) and Anglicans (167) on the variables in Table 1. On two of them was there a statistically significant difference: Presbyterians were fifteen percentage points higher on the DEVOTIONAL scale and, not surprisingly, eleven points higher on the CALVINIST scale. If one compares Northern Anglicans with Southern Catholics<sup>17</sup> one will find inevitably, given the previous analysis, that the two groups differ significantly on many of the measures available in the ISSP data. Catholics are more DEVOUT, less MORAL, more satisfied with the relationship between CHURCH and state, more PELAGIAN, more tolerant of CRIME and of those who CHEAT.

On the measures used in this project therefore there does not appear to be a fourth religion in Ireland.<sup>18</sup> Yet devotion and world view might be considered the most important of the religious measures in Table 1. On both measures Northern Anglicans are different from both Southern Catholics and Northern Protestants, less devout than either Catholics or Presbyterians, less Pelagian than Southern Catholics and less Calvinist than Presbyterians. If devotion and world view are defining characteristics of religion, then Ireland indeed has a fourth religion—Northern Anglican.

Finally I compared Northern Anglicans and Southern Anglicans and found only one significant difference: Southern Anglicans are significantly more likely to have high scores on the FEMINISM scale than are Northern Anglicans—58 per cent versus 33 per cent.

<sup>17</sup> One cannot add the thirty Southern Anglicans to the Northern Anglicans because, as explained earlier, they would not represent a valid sample of all the Anglicans in Ireland, save if a complicated weighting process were used. Such a process, given the small number of southern Anglicans, would be at best precarious.

<sup>18</sup> I excluded the 30 Anglicans in the South so as to hold 'country' constant in the analysis described in this paragraph.

## ISSP 91: Summary

Protestants in the North differ systematically from Catholics in the South on all items except personal happiness. Clearly then, as these indicators measure religious differences, there are two different religions on the island, not completely different, but different enough. Southern Catholics are more PELAGIAN, less CALVINIST, more faithful, more devout, less superstitious, more sympathetic to criminals, more likely to cheat the government, more likely to be strict on sexual morality, more feminist, more likely to work longer and more opposed to the power of the Church. They do not however differ from Protestants in the proportion who are very happy. Only in hours of work do education and age seem to diminish the difference.

Northern Catholics are somewhere between the two. In world view, faith, superstition and hours of work, they are more like their Protestant neighbours. However, they are stricter morally and more 'faithful' than the Southern Catholics and even more sympathetic to criminals. They do not differ from Southerners in their devotion, their propensity to cheat the government, their feminism and their views on Church and State.

There does not appear to be a fourth religion in Ireland because Presbyterians and Anglicans in the North differ from one another only in their levels of religious devotion and in adherence to a Calvinist world view.

Tentatively we may conclude that this 'third' Irish religion is the result of tension between the culture in which they live as a hated minority and the religious culture they are taught in their churches and schools. Does this greater similarity with Northern Protestants suggest they might be more open to accommodation? Or is it more probable that the culture conflict might increase their hostility?

The data do not enable us to make a choice. If I were forced to speculate I would lean to the latter alternative.

## EVS 1990

In the Value Study many scales were administered to respondents which might be interpreted as linked somewhat to religion. The most obvious is the FAITH scale which replicates the finding reported about the FAITH scale in the ISSP study: Northerners are more FAITHFUL than Southerners.

The EVS however, presented a different measure of moral absolutism:

Here are two statements which people sometimes make when discussing good and evil. Which one comes closest to your point of view?

There are absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. These always apply to everyone, whatever the circumstances.

There can never be absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. What is good and evil depends entirely upon the circumstance at the time.

Southern Catholics are not different from Northern Catholics in their moral absolutism as measured by this item. However, Northern Protestants are more absolutist than Southern Catholics on this measure.

Northerners of both religions are more likely to want children who are obedient and hard working than are Southern Catholics. In fact as Table 2 shows Southern Catholics are similar in this respect to Americans and Britons while Northerners, both Catholic and Protestant, are very different. This seems to be a case of the minority group absorbing the values of the majority group through psychological processes of emulation mixed with dislike. Catholics in the South are under no pressure to do the same thing.

There are more protests (petitions, lawful and unlawful demonstrations, boycotts, occupation of buildings) in Northern Ireland than in the Republic, a finding which is hardly surprising. Moreover, when demonstrations are considered separately, they are also more likely to be found in the two Northern communities. As noted earlier, protests and demonstrations are more frequent in the North than the EVS average and less frequent in the South.

**Table 3.** Religions of Ireland (EVS) (% Different from Southern Catholic).

	All		Higher Education		Under 35	
	North Catholic	North Protestant	North Catholic	North Protestant	North Protestant	North Catholic
Faith	17	7	14	7	22	7
Moral Absolutism	4*	6	0	6	0	5
Docile Children	21	24	27	26	23	27
Protests	9	5	7	8	3	9
Demonstrate	11	9	7	12	9	16
Tolerance	-5	-7	-6	-7	-5	-9
Civil Laws	13	0*	20	0	10	4
Challenge	-8	2*	4	-4	-11	4
Security	10	5*	15	8	-15	11*
Must Work	11	5*	13	0	15	6
Like Work	-10	5*	-13	0	-15	6

Key: \* Not significantly different from Southern Catholics

The EVS provides a twelve-item list of people a respondent would not like to have as neighbours:

- People with a criminal record
- People of a different race
- Left-wing extremists
- Heavy drinkers
- Right-wing extremists
- People with large families
- Emotionally unstable people
- Muslims
- Immigrants/foreign workers
- People who have AIDS
- Drug addicts
- Jews
- Hindus

Southern Catholics are more TOLERANT than both Northern Catholics and Protestants. There is no difference between the two Northern groups on this tolerance measure. Irish Catholics (in the South) continued to be the most tolerant people in the English-speaking world, as Ward and I reported of the 1981 EVS study (Ward and Greeley, 1990), and Northern Irish among the most intolerant, whether Catholic or Protestant.

There were three 'morality' factors to be found in the EVS data set. On only one were there differences among the three Irish communities, a factor I call CIVIC VIRTUE:

Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between:

- Taking and driving away a car that belongs to someone else
- Taking the drug marijuana or hashish
- Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties
- Buying something you knew was stolen
- Sex under the legal age of consent

Northern Catholics are more likely to reject approval of these activities (as represented by the factor score) than are Southern Catholics, though there is no difference between Northern Protestants and Southern Catholics. It is possible that this is a phenomenon which represents an over-adjustment of the minority group to the perceived norms of the majority.

One item in the long morality battery may have special implications for an island in which civil unrest seems endemic, a question which asks whether political assassination is ever moral. Nineteen per cent of Southern Catholics think that it may on occasion be moral as opposed

to 11 per cent of the Northerners of both denominations. In Britain 30 per cent think it may be moral as do 23 per cent of Americans. The average support for assassination in the EVS is 22 per cent. If this item be taken as a measure of support for political violence, the Southern Catholic percentage is not particularly high, but the Northern percentage, for both Catholics and Protestants, is exceptionally low—perhaps because both communities have had the chance to see the impact of political assassination. The gunmen patently do not speak for the people.

The final four items in Table 3 are based on responses to questions about work. The first two deal with what makes a job attractive, the second two with why one works. The questions which create the first two factors are:

Which one of the following do you personally think are important in a job:

- Pay
- Security
- Interesting
- Opportunity for promotion
- Useful
- Responsibility
- Respect

The first two cluster on a factor that is called SECURITY and the remaining five on a factor called CHALLENGE.

Irish Protestants do not differ on these factors from Southern Catholics, but Northern Catholics are more likely to reject challenge and opt for security. As is perhaps not untypical of a minority, they want to take no chances.

Finally, a number of items seek to determine why people work:

- The more I get paid the more I do.
- Working for a living is a necessity.
- I will always do the best I can regardless of pay
- I enjoy my work.

The first two items form a cluster called MUST WORK; The second two constitute LIKE WORK.

As we would now come to expect with regard to the EVS data, Northern Catholics are higher than the other two communities on the MUST WORK factor and low on the LIKE WORK factor; and there are no differences between Southern Catholics and Northern Protestants.

The pattern in the Value Study data seems to be that the Northern Catholics are either more like the Northern Protestants than Southern Catholics or at least tend to be unlike Southern Catholics. Only on moral ABSOLUTISM are they not significantly different from Southern Catholics. Moreover, on most variables they are significantly different from



Southern Catholics even when Northern Protestants are not significantly different from Southern Catholics. This pattern strongly suggests a values system which has been heavily influenced by minority status, by the experience of a group which has been 'on the bottom' for a long time as opposed to a group which has been 'on the top' for a long time. One might argue that these variables are graphic proof of the impact of the Northern Ireland polity and culture on its Catholic citizens. Since virtually none of the variables are affected by either age or education, the data do not present a very hopeful picture for the future. Contrary to the dictum of the character in Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments*, the 'Negroes of Europe' are not those who live on the North Side of Dublin, but rather Catholics who live in the North.

### ISSP 94: The Environment

Attitudes towards the environment may be an important effect of religions because they may represent a stance towards life and its purpose. A series of fifteen questions about the threat of chemical pollution, industry, water pollution and nuclear energy and the dangers of these to one's family generated four factors of which three differentiated among the three Irish communities: CHEMICALS, TEMPERATURE and NUCLEAR.

On all three factors (Table 4) Southern Catholics are substantially more concerned than Northern Protestants, and on CHEMICALS Southern Catholics are also more concerned than Northern Catholics. Northern Catholics are also more concerned than their Protestant neighbours about the dangers of nuclear energy. Table 2 establishes that concern about the nuclear threat among Irish Catholics (of North and South) is notably greater than not only of the Protestant community but also of the citizens of the United States and Great Britain. Indeed the concern of Irish Catholics about nuclear power is the highest in the world<sup>19</sup>—and this in a country where there are no such stations.

It may be that the liberal wing of the Irish Church has scored points with its people by insisting on the danger of nuclear energy, an insistence which is cost-free in a country that does not have any nuclear energy—just like attacks on the policies of the United States in Latin America are cost free. Moreover, the Catholic respect for nature as sacramental may account in part for the Irish horror of meddling with the power of the atom. Finally a well-publicised nuclear incident in Britain and fear of what would happen if there were an incident across the Irish Sea in Wales, may

<sup>19</sup> At least in the twenty-three nation world studied by the ISSP.

**Table 4.** Environmental Concerns (ISSP 93) (%).

	All		Higher Education		Young	
	North Catholic	North Protestant	North Catholic	North Protestant	North Catholic	North Protestant
Chemicals	-22	-29	-6	-8	-12	-13
Temperature	-1*	-10	-9	-19	-6	-10
Nuclear	0*	-22**	9	-31	9	-31

Key: \* Not significantly different from Southern Catholics

\*\* Significantly different from both Northern and Southern Catholics

be of considerable importance in explaining the intensity of Irish feelings on the subject.

One should also note that in the South both education and youthfulness predict greater differences than they do in the North. In the more relaxed and open society of the South (in recent years very open indeed and becoming more so) the usual demographic variables have a substantially greater impact than they do in the more constrained society of the North.

## Summary and Conclusion

There can be little doubt that there are two different religions on the island of Ireland. Northern Protestantism and Southern Catholicism are not completely different. They are both Christian, European, Western and English speaking. Yet of the twenty-six variables we used in trying to trace out rough outlines of religion and religiously related culture, only on the 'happiness' measure is there no significant difference between the two communities. One supposes that this finding surprises no one, though it might be deemed worth while to have documented it. Moreover, there is no indication that the differences are diminishing among the university trained and those under the age of thirty-five.

The third religion of Ireland presents a more complex and intricate picture. It is Catholic (in the sense of being like Southern Catholicism) in its faith, devotion, morality and some of its attitudes (feminism, sympathy for criminals, tolerance for cheating, two attitudes towards the environment), but it is not like Southern Catholicism in its world views or much of anything else. It is significantly different from Southern Catholicism on twenty of the twenty-six variables. It is significantly different from Northern Protestantism on DEVOTION, CRIME attitudes, FEMINISM and CHEATING. On the various work values it is different from the Catholicism of the South in matters on which the Northern Protestants are not

different from Southern Catholics. The religion of Northern Catholics fits nicely into the model of a (repressed) minority group torn between its traditional heritage and the cultural environment in which it finds itself. To test this thesis I compared Catholics in the North with Catholics in the counties which border the North, which includes the three counties of historic Ulster which are not part of the North. There is no decline in the differences between Catholics in the North and Catholics in the South when one limits the comparison to the border counties. Whatever the reason for the difference between the two Catholic religions in Ireland it is limited to the six counties and the experiences within their border.

Finally one might argue that Northern Anglicans constitute yet a fourth Irish religion, different from their Presbyterian neighbours and Southern Catholics in that they are less DEVOUT and in that they are less PELAGIAN than the Catholics and less CALVINIST than the Presbyterians.

In terms of the theory that religion is a story (or a collection of stories) which explain the meaning and purpose of life there are four important conclusions to this chapter:

1 There are three (or perhaps four) religions in Ireland, all of them Christian, which have rather different stories.

2 Two of these religions are Catholic. Thus it is clear that the raw religious materials of a religion, especially one as luxuriant in its metaphors as Catholicism, can be shaped into rather different stories, depending on the circumstances in which groups of Catholics might find themselves.

3 Apparently the experience of being a minority religion, and one that is, to state the matter mildly, under cross pressures, accounts for the different Catholic story in Northern Ireland.

4 There is no evidence that the differences among the religions of Ireland are being substantially affected by either age or educational attainment.

One can deny reality indefinitely of course, especially in Ireland. One can pretend that there is not a third religion on the island, a religion of a repressed minority and be none the worse for such a pretence. But then one ought not to be surprised that peace efforts are less than successful.

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