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0521837553 - The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland

Edited by Alan Ford and John McCafferty

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1 Living together, living apart: sectarianism in early modern Ireland

Alan Ford

In 1615 Richard Stanihurst gave an account of the torture and death of the Catholic archbishop of Cashel, Dermot O'Hurley at the hands of his Protestant gaolers in 1584:

The officials put the archbishop's bare feet in boots which they filled with oil, tied his legs to the uprights of the stocks, and then lit a fire underneath. The boiling-hot oil worked its way up from his feet to his shins and other parts, torturing him unbearably, so that bits of skin fell away from the flesh, and pieces of flesh from the bare bones. The official in charge of the torture, unaccustomed to such bizarre mutilation, rushed suddenly from the room not wanting to continue looking at such monstrous barbarity, worse than that of wild beasts, nor to hear any longer in his fleeing ears the cries of the innocent archbishop which resounded in the vicinity. The Calvinist torturers feasted for a while on these extraordinary cruelties, but were clearly not satisfied. Accordingly after a few days they took the mangled archbishop early in the morning, almost dying from his continual torture . . . to a field not far away from Dublin Castle . . . and there hanged the innocent man from the gallows with a noose roughly made from brushwood. . .¹

In 1646 Sir William Temple described Catholic atrocities in the 1641 rising:

Others they buried alive, a manner of death they used to severall British in severall places: and at Clownis within the Countie of Fermanagh, there were seventeen persons, having been hanged till they were halfe dead, cast together into a pit, and being covered over with a little earth, lay pittifully, sending out the most lamentable groanes for a good time after. Some were deadly wounded and so hanged up on tenterhooks. Some had ropes put about their necks and so drawn thorow water . . . others were hanged up and taken down and hanged up againe severall tmies . . . Others were hanged up by the armes, and with many slashes and cutts they made the experiment with their swords how many blows an Englishman would endure before he dyed. Some had their bellies ript up, and so left with their guts running about their heels. But this horrid kind of cruelty was principally

¹ Richard Stanihurst, *Brevis praemunitio pro futura concertatione cum Jacobo Usserio* (Douai, 1615), p. 29.

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reserved by these inhumane monsters for women, whose sex they neither pitied nor spared, hanging up severall women, many of them great with childe, whose bellies they ripped up as they hung, and so let the little infants fall out.²

Over 350 years later, the pattern was little different:

On the night of 14 August 1994, Seán Monaghan, a young Catholic man, was abducted in West Belfast by a member of a Loyalist paramilitary organisation, the Ulster Freedom Fighters. He was taken to a house on the Shankill Road and tortured. He managed to escape through a window and appealed for help to a woman in a house across the street. The woman phoned her daughter who came with her boyfriend and took him to her home.

Others then took possession of Mr Monaghan who was bound and gagged with black tape. He was taken out of the house and murdered a short distance away.³

Such stories of sectarian cruelty provide a constant backdrop to Irish history. To the casual observer, the temptation is, simply, to despair, as the hopeless cycle of violence and revenge, begetting still further brutality and bloodshed, is repeated down the centuries. To politicians, concerned with building a more tolerant society, reminders of the sectarian past can be seen as an embarrassment, a negative model for a forward-looking, modern country.⁴ To those of a more scholarly bent, however, stories such as these constitute a standing challenge – to explore this undercurrent of hatred and violence in Irish history, identify its roots and the driving forces behind it, and trace how it has developed and changed over time. Traditionally, answers to these kinds of questions are provided by anthropologists, geographers, historians, sociologists – those academics who are involved in analysing the functioning (and malfunctioning) of societies across the ages. And, indeed, there are a number of such studies, ranging from general historical treatments which begin in the sixteenth century, to detailed sociological studies of sectarianism in Northern Ireland in the latter part of the twentieth century.⁵ Yet, for all

² John Temple, *The Irish rebellion* (London, 1646), pp. 95–6.

³ R. K. McVeigh, 'Cherishing the children of the nation unequally: sectarianism in Ireland', in Patrick Clancy *et al.* (eds.), *Irish Society: sociological perspectives* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1995), p. 620; the final quotation is from *The Irish News*, 27 August 1994.

⁴ McVeigh, 'Sectarianism in Ireland', pp. 623–4; R. F. Foster, 'Remembering 1798', in R. F. Foster, *The Irish story: telling tales and making it up in Ireland* (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. 228–30.

⁵ Joseph Liechty, 'The problem of sectarianism and the Church of Ireland', in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds.), *Principle and pragmatism: towards a history of the Church of Ireland* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), pp. 204–22; Joseph Liechty, *Roots of sectarianism in Ireland: chronology and reflections* (Belfast: Joseph Liechty, 1993); Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, *Moving beyond sectarianism: religion, conflict, and reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001); J. D. Brewer and G. I. Higgins,

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the scholarly activity, there is a certain mismatch between the vast volume of material on modern Irish history and the equally large outpouring of work on the Northern Ireland problem on the one hand, and the rather scant literature on sectarian hatred in Ireland on the other.⁶ Sectarianism is, according to a sociologist, ‘undertheorised’, whereas to a historian it is, more simply, ‘under-researched’.⁷

The purpose of this volume is to make a contribution to tackling that neglect. Not, of course, to cover the full sweep of post-reformation Irish history or offer a comprehensive account of the origins of Irish sectarianism – that would be premature. But rather to examine the emergence of separate structures and attitudes in early modern Ireland, that period when Protestants and Catholics began to live apart and create parallel communities, institutions, cultures and histories. Each chapter constitutes an analysis of a part of this phenomenon. Ute Lotz-Heumann places Ireland in the wider European context of confession building. John McCafferty’s and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin’s twin chapters explore how the rival bishops coped with the difficult relationship between episcopal ideals and the rather more messy and complicated realities which sprang from the existence of two religions in Ireland. David Edwards’ ground-breaking examination of the interaction between Catholicism and plantation reveals the previously unsuspected scale of Catholic settlement in Ireland. Alan Ford, Marc Caball and Mícheál MacCraith each analyse a different aspect of the cultural and ideological developments and readjustments which were required by the development of separate churches. And finally Brian Jackson and Declan Downey look at how Irish Catholics reacted at home and in exile to the identification of Irish nation and Catholic church.

But the purpose of this introduction is not to summarise the later chapters. Rather it seeks to explore some of the wider issues relating to the nature and context of sectarianism in early modern Ireland, such

Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland, 1600–1998: the mote and the beam (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Brian Lambkin, *Opposite religions still? Interpreting Northern Ireland after the conflict* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996); Catherine Hirst, *Religion, politics and violence in nineteenth-century Belfast: the Pound and Sandy Row* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002); E. Cairns, ‘The object of sectarianism: the material reality of sectarianism in Ulster Loyalism’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, new series 6 (2000), 437–52; Sean Farrell, *Rituals and riots: sectarian violence and political culture in Ulster, 1784–1886* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); and see further references in McVeigh, ‘Sectarianism in Ireland’, pp. 622–3.

⁶ A search for ‘sectarian’ or ‘sectarianism’ in April 2004 produced a total of 52 hits from the 5,550 records on the CAIN bibliography of the Northern Ireland conflict: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/bibdbbs/cainbib.htm>.

⁷ McVeigh, ‘Sectarianism in Ireland’, pp. 622–5; Marianne Elliott, *The long road to peace in Northern Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), p. 178.

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as periodisation and terminology, and, in order to assess its grip on Irish society, it analyses the significance of the contrary evidence of coexistence and cooperation.

Periodisation

Where do the roots of sectarianism lie? Ireland, it has been suggested, is ‘frozen in the pre-modern’, one of those pardonable exaggerations which point to an essential truth – that the roots of modern Irish problems lie deep in the past.⁸ In the case of sectarianism, this would clearly point to the reformation as the *fons et origo*. After all, on the European mainland it was the reformation that created, almost immediately, the fundamental religious bitterness and those fateful competing claims to religious truth which provided the breeding-ground for sectarianism. Luther called the pope Antichrist (and worse), whilst Johannes Cochlaeus, the chief defender of Catholic orthodoxy, labelled Luther as a child of the devil, fornicator, adulterer and pervert. The mutual hatred translated effortlessly to Ireland. Catholics in Munster were advised in 1592 that worship in the Church of Ireland was ‘the devil’s service, and the professors thereof, devils’; in 1613 the warning was repeated in Ulster – Protestant clergy spoke ‘the devil’s words’; ‘all should be damned that hear them’.⁹ The main duty of Protestant theologians was, according to the professor of theology at Trinity, to ‘love God, and hate the Pope’.¹⁰ The two rival episcopates saw themselves as engaged in a ‘struggle between good and evil or between truth and lies’.¹¹

In 1618 Hugh McCaughwell, who briefly served as Catholic archbishop of Armagh before his death in 1626, published his *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe*, a treatise on the sacrament of penance, designed to defend Catholic doctrine and attack Protestant heresy, which included an attack on ‘Luteir mac Lucifer’, Luther son of Lucifer, largely derived from Cochlaeus.¹² His counterpart, James Ussher, Protestant archbishop of Armagh from 1625, returned the compliment, drawing

⁸ Kieran Flanagan, ‘Sociology and religious difference – limits of understanding anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland’, *Studies* 89 (2000), consulted online: URL: <http://www.jesuit.ie/studies/articles/2000/000907.htm>.

⁹ *CSPI*, 1592–6, p. 15; *CSPI*, 1611–14, p. 429; Brian MacCuarta, ‘Catholicism in the province of Armagh, 1603–1641’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Dublin, 2004, p. 92.

¹⁰ Joshua Hoyle, *A rejoinder to Master Malone’s reply concerning the real presence* (Dublin, 1641), sig (a4v).

¹¹ Below, p. 65.

¹² Aodh Mac Aingil, *Scáthán shacramuinte na haitheidhe* (ed.), Cailleach Ó Maonaigh (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1952); see below, ch. 8, p. 197.

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up with his fellow bishops in 1626 an uncompromising attack upon the Roman Catholic church declaring it to be superstitious, idolatrous, erroneous, heretical and apostatical.¹³

Ireland, then, was bedevilled by sectarian divisions and religious violence from the beginning of the reformation. For centuries that was certainly what many historians and commentators believed. David Rothe and Philip O'Sullivan Beare, two of the leading historians of the early seventeenth century, painted a portrait of an island which, from the beginning, had consistently resisted the efforts of the English to impose Protestantism: Rothe told how the reformation legislation had only been railroaded through Elizabeth's parliament in 1560 by force; whilst that other distinguished historian, Philip O'Sullivan Beare, recounted the slaughter of the Trinitarian order under Henry VIII for resisting royal supremacy.¹⁴ The religious struggle, as Mary Hayden pointed out in 1935, was seen as lasting 'from 1534 to almost our own day'.¹⁵

But the casual assumption that sectarianism began with the reformation and lived unhappily ever after has not stood up to closer historical investigation. Both O'Sullivan and Rothe were reading back into the past the depths of contemporary early seventeenth century sectarian bitterness. Evidence for continuous sectarian strife between Protestant and Catholic is largely missing from the early decades of the Irish reformation and even, arguably, from Elizabeth's first parliament.¹⁶ It is therefore not coincidental that the examples of Irish sectarian hostility cited above come from the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. For this is the period which historians, for various reasons, have begun to focus upon when seeking the origins of sectarianism in Ireland.

Thus discussions about the failure of the reformation and the success of the counter-reformation, which also began initially with quite broad time-frames, have tended to home in upon the period from the 1580s through to the early decades of the seventeenth century. That, it has been suggested, was when rival Catholic and Protestant churches were established, and conflict and controversy became a normal part of religious life. This did not of course preclude the subsequent failure or

¹³ Richard Parr, *The life of . . . James Usher* (London, 1686), p. 28.

¹⁴ Alan Ford, 'Martyrdom, history and memory in early modern Ireland', in Ian McBride (ed.), *History and memory in modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 64–5.; H. A. Jefferies, 'The Irish parliament of 1560: the Anglican reforms authorised', *IHS* 26 (1988), 128–41.

¹⁵ R. D. Edwards, *Church and state in Tudor Ireland: a history of the penal laws against Irish Catholics 1534–1603* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1935), p. vii.

¹⁶ Jefferies, 'Irish parliament of 1560', pp. 128–41; there are in fact remarkably few martyrdoms in Ireland during the 1530s and 1540s: see the graph in Ford, 'Martyrdom, history and memory', p. 54.

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success of the counter-reformation or reformation: the future is not immutably fixed by the past. But this period did see the construction of some of the fundamental building blocks for the creation of what turned out to be decidedly persistent separate communities.¹⁷

This focus on the decades after the 1580s has gained further support from an unexpected quarter. Whereas traditionally historians have tended to compare Irish developments with those in England, in recent decades research on the German reformation and counter-reformation has produced a new explanatory framework – the process of confessionalisation, a movement identified in Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist territories alike, which saw the creation of distinct denominational ideologies, identities and structures during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Ute Lotz-Heumann and Karl Bottigheimer in particular have sought to broaden the geographic (not to mention linguistic) scope of Irish historians by pointing to the experience of Germany and using some of the models and techniques derived from the study of confessionalisation to analyse what was happening in Ireland.¹⁸ Far from being unique, as is often fondly imagined, Ireland is rather to be seen as part of broader European trends. The result of this approach is the most comprehensive treatment yet of the development of two separate denominations which identifies the period after 1580 as the crucial one in the double confessionalisation of Ireland.¹⁹

Terminology

If we are agreed that the seminal period in the growth of distinct Irish religious denominations is the latter part of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, what terms are we going to use to describe that process of differentiation? We have, so far, used the words sectarianism and confessionalisation as if they were self-explanatory. But of course there are fundamental philosophical questions about how universal

¹⁷ B. I. Bradshaw, 'Sword, word and strategy in the reformation in Ireland', *Historical Journal* 21 (1978), 475–502; N. P. Canny, 'Why the reformation failed in Ireland: *une question mal posée*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 30 (1979), 423–50; K. S. Bottigheimer, 'The failure of the reformation in Ireland: *une question bien posée*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), 196–207; Aidan Clarke, 'Varieties of uniformity: the first century of the Church of Ireland', in W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood (eds.), *The churches, Ireland and the Irish*, Studies in Church History 25 (1985), pp. 105–22.

¹⁸ K. S. Bottigheimer and Ute Lotz-Heumann, 'Ireland & the European Reformation', *History Ireland* 6 (1998), 13–16; K. S. Bottigheimer and Ute Lotz-Heumann, 'The Irish Reformation in European perspective', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 89 (1998), 268–309.

¹⁹ Ute Lotz-Heumann, *Die doppelte Konfessionalisierung in Irland: Konflikt und Koexistenz in 16. und in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

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terms relate to the particular entities they supposedly describe, and there are further historiographical issues about the assumptions which lurk behind such 'isms', and the way in which the very process of labelling can impose an artificial or inappropriate model on disparate data. It is possible that the three examples of sectarian brutality with which we opened have very little in common in terms of motivation and are, in fact, just three disjointed, unrelated events in Irish history. The process of labelling, in short, is not neutral or 'purely' descriptive: it also involves judgements about the existence, nature and similarity of what is being described.

There are, as a result, drawbacks as well as advantages to using terms such as confessionalisation and sectarianism. The former is useful because it offers historians a heuristic tool, which helpfully links the processes of change between Catholic and Protestant denominations, and offers a model for the process of parallel church-building in early modern Ireland. It also seeks to break down the compartmentalisation between religious and secular forces by linking religious change to state-building, arguably an asset in the early modern period. Equally, however, it is not without its disadvantages. There is the obvious query about how a concept which is derived from the distinctive experience of early modern Germany can usefully provide an interpretative framework for other countries. Historians have explored its usefulness in the Netherlands, France, eastern Europe and Italy and the results have not always been positive.²⁰ The concern to establish common patterns and structures, and to apply them across European early modern history can be constraining as well as enlightening, and may result in the distinctive experience of individual countries being shoehorned into an overly prescriptive and not particularly helpful model. It has, in addition, a teleological thrust, seeking to trace the development of the modern state out of the confessional territories of early modern Germany, which may not be wholly appropriate for Ireland. A further limitation of confessionalisation as a concept is that its focus is primarily on the early modern period, especially the hundred years before the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. This can, of course, be seen as a helpful way of offsetting the Irish obsession with lengthy time-frames; on the other hand, it also distracts

²⁰ J. I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: its rise, greatness and fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), ch. 11; R. Po-chia Hsia, *Social discipline in the reformation: central Europe, 1550–1750* (London: Routledge, 1989); Bruce Gordon, 'Konfessionalisierung, Stände und Staat in Ostmitteleuropa (1550–1650)', *German History* 17 (1999), 90–4; cf. further references in Philip Benedict, 'Confessionalisation in France?' Critical reflections and new evidence', in R. A. Mentzer and Andrew Spicer, *Society and culture in the Huguenot world, 1559–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 44.

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from the *longue durée* which, as our opening stories suggest, remains an important part of the study of sectarianism.²¹ There is ultimately here a difference in historical styles and methodologies; more pragmatic Irish historians may not always view ‘the undeniable inventiveness of German historians in forging ideal-typical interpretative constructs, as well as their high degree of theoretical self-consciousness’ as entirely an asset.²²

What, then, of the alternative term? Sectarianism has certain advantages over confessionalisation. It shifts the focus away from the horizontal, pan-European comparative perspective, confined within the narrow time-frame of the early modern period, towards a more vertical and largely Irish historical development, stretching from the early modern period to the present day. The term itself has two meanings. The founding fathers of religious sociology, Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, first used it to describe a particular form of church polity. In contrast to the large-scale, universalist-minded church type organisation which sought an alliance with the state and which included all citizens, the sect saw itself as a small group of dedicated Christians, converts to the one truth, separate from society.²³ Developed by sociologists of religion into a sophisticated tool to analyse church types, this approach has occasionally been applied to Ireland.²⁴ Much more influential, though, is the older, more negative seventeenth-century use of the word sectarian to describe narrow-minded and bigoted members of fringe religious groups. The study of sectarianism in the Irish context is, as a result, less concerned with the first approach, delineating the ways in which sects, strictly defined, have developed, or their relation to churches and denominations, but rather looks at the ways in which religious groups in Ireland have adopted some of the more negative attributes of sectarian behaviour.

This, then, is the concept which has been applied by a number of disciplines to the study of Irish history and society. The definitions of the

²¹ See H. H. W. Robinson-Hammerstein, ‘The confessionalisation of Ireland? Assessment of a paradigm’, *IHS* 32 (2001), 567–78; and other reviews of Lotz-Heuman, *Doppelte Konfessionalisierung*, by Steven Ellis in *JEH* 53 (2002), 607–8 and Ole Grell in *EHR* 118 (2003), 782–3.

²² Benedict, ‘Confessionalisation in France?’ p. 45.

²³ Some pointers to a vast literature: H. R. Niebuhr, *The social sources of denominationalism* (New York: New American Library, 1975); B. R. Wilson, *The social dimensions of sectarianism: sects and new religious movements in contemporary society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); Roland Robertson, *The sociological interpretation of religion* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970).

²⁴ Steve Bruce, *God save Ulster: the religion and politics of Paisleyism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 184ff.; and see below, ch. 9.

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term vary, with the main division arising over the way in which religion is viewed, some seeing it as a primary motivating force, others more reductively as part of a 'symbolic labelling process', or 'boundary marker', which really reflects more fundamental social, political or ethnic divisions.²⁵ All are agreed, however, on its usefulness as a means of explaining and analysing the twentieth-century Northern Irish problem. But less attention has been paid to its roots. Only two extended treatments have been produced. A sociologist, John Brewer, has examined one side of the sectarian coin, anti-Catholicism, and traced it back to the early seventeenth century, whilst an historian, Joseph Liechty, has offered a broad sketch of the development of sectarianism in Ireland from the reformation, as a preliminary to a broader analysis of modern Irish sectarianism.²⁶

For Brewer, sectarianism is 'the determination of actions, attitudes and practices by beliefs about religious difference, which results in their being invoked as the boundary marker to represent social stratification and conflict'.²⁷ Brewer does, though, allow for religion to be more than 'merely' a marker. Anti-Catholicism, one of the 'tap roots' of sectarianism, occurs at three levels: ideas, the individual and social structures.²⁸ Theology is clearly an important source for such views, and here Brewer argues that there is considerable historical continuity, with many of the objections to the Roman Catholic church first raised by the reformers echoing down the ages to the present day. But sectarianism also has distinct socio-economic and political elements, which can fuse with the theological objections to Catholicism in such a way that the latter are almost forgotten, leaving us with religion as a boundary-marker.²⁹ Ultimately, Brewer sees sectarianism as a sociological process, used as means of defending Protestant interests by creating and maintaining social and political divisions.³⁰ There is thus a balance to be struck between the role played by religion and the impact of other forces in dividing Irish society.³¹

²⁵ For other definitions of sectarianism: Report of Church of Ireland General Synod Standing Committee, Sub Committee on Sectarianism, April 1999, URL: <http://www.ireland.anglican.org/archives/issues/issarchive/subcomsect.html>; John Sugden and Alan Bairner, *Sport, sectarianism and society in a divided Ireland* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), p. 15; Paul Connolly, *Sectarianism, children and community relations in Northern Ireland* (Coleraine: University of Ulster, Centre for the Study of Conflict, 1999), p. 7.

²⁶ Liechty, *Roots of sectarianism*; Brewer and Higgins, *Anti-Catholicism*.

²⁷ J. D. Brewer, 'Sectarianism and racism, and their parallels and differences', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15 (1992), 358–9.

²⁸ Brewer and Higgins, *Anti-Catholicism*, p. 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

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Liechty's definition of sectarianism is similarly nuanced:

a series of attitudes, actions, beliefs and structures, at personal communal and institutional levels, which always involves religion, and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics . . . which arises as a distorted expression of positive human needs, especially for belonging, identity and the free expression of difference . . . and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating: hardening the boundaries between groups; overlooking others; belittling, dehumanising, or demonising others; justifying or collaborating in the domination of others; physically intimidating or attacking others.³²

Though shorter, Liechty's historical accounts of sectarianism are in one sense more comprehensive, since they sketch both sides of the process. Sectarianism in Northern Ireland he sees as not a product of recent events, such as partition, or the Troubles, rather it dates back to the early modern period, or even beyond to the Anglo-Norman invasion.³³ He identifies three fatal religious principles as underpinning its growth: that of *nulla salus extra ecclesia* (no salvation outside the church), which leads to an exclusive sense of righteousness; the fateful Augustinian dictum that error has no right, which throughout history has been used to persecute and punish religious opponents; and finally the sense of divine providence – the belief that God operates in and through history – which, when combined with the first two principles can produce a heady sectarian cocktail which offers the firm assurance that God is on your side and that the punishments and disasters suffered by one's opponents are both just and heaven-sent. These definitions and analyses of sectarianism provide a useful starting point for our inquiry into its early modern manifestations, alerting us in particular to the interaction between social, political and religious divisions, and the question of whether religion is a primary or merely a secondary motivating force.

But the concept of sectarianism is not without its problems. There is also an element of moral judgement involved in the use of the term. Those who use it in relation to Northern Ireland see it as essentially destructive, an evil akin to racism or anti-Semitism, which has to be combated and condemned as well as analysed. The best general treatment of the topic derives from a project which sought to help people in Northern Ireland transcend religious differences and 'move beyond' sectarianism.³⁴ Whilst not denying the destructive capacity of sectarianism in Irish history, it is not *necessarily* a negative phenomenon – at one

³² Liechty and Clegg, *Moving beyond sectarianism*, pp. 102–3.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 63–7; Liechty, *Roots of sectarianism*, pp. 2–3.

³⁴ Liechty and Clegg, *Moving beyond sectarianism*.