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**AMITY AND ENMITY: VARIETY IN ULSTER
PROTESTANT CULTURE**

Anthony D Buckley

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ABSTRACT

AMITY AND ENMITY: VARIETY IN ULSTER PROTESTANT CULTURE

Ulster Protestant attitudes to, for example, history, religion or territory, have been portrayed by scholars as full of animosity towards Catholics. In fact, Protestant culture, like any other, is *enabling*, giving people the ability to act in whatever manner seems appropriate. This paper explores the fact that, throughout Ulster's Troubles, there has been cooperation as well as conflict between the ethnic groups and that this flexibility reflects itself in the culture available to Protestants.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Dr Anthony D Buckley has published, on Northern Ireland, *A Gentle People, Symbols in Northern Ireland* and (with Mary Catherine Kenney) *Negotiating Identity*. His PhD thesis, published as *Yoruba Medicine*, won the Amaury Talbot Prize for African Anthropology. As a curator at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, he has published on ethnicity, religion, folk-medicine, Freemasonry, the Orange Order, friendly societies, folk-drama and latterly sport. Now retired, he has an honorary Senior Research Fellowship in Anthropology at Queen's University Belfast.

AMITY AND ENMITY: VARIETY IN ULSTER PROTESTANT CULTURE

Anthony D Buckley

INTRODUCTION

Ulster Protestants have had rather a bad press. Since the advent of the Troubles, Ulster Protestant culture has been widely portrayed as divisive and full of enmity. Some of the anthropology published in the early years of the Troubles contained a more nuanced approach, explaining how social division could coexist with social harmony. Nevertheless, in the face of apparently unremitting violence, it often seemed simpler to concentrate on the idea that Ulster's culture—especially Protestant culture—was merely divisive.

It is of interest, however, that, in the midst of the Great War two important thinkers, Georg Simmel (1915) and Sigmund Freud (1915), both pointed out that enmity was not just a simple matter. Enmity, they argued, often coexists with amity. Sometimes the one predominates, sometimes the other, and very frequently the two uneasily occurred together. Rarely, indeed, did enmity exist without a modicum of cooperation; and rarely was a loving relationship entirely free of hearty dislike. Freud coined the useful term “ambivalence” and spoke of the “love-hate” that existed in the human heart and in human relationships (see also Darby, 1995).

My approach here is to regard the culture of a people not as something that sets people in cement, but rather as *enabling*, as a source of human creativity. Just as a language enables a person endlessly to create new and entirely original sentences, so too do historical understanding, religion and concepts of territory provide a cultural basis for many diverse kinds of social action. Culture can occasionally seem confining, but it is better seen as liberating, as a resource that allows people to respond to ever-changing circumstances. Don Akenson showed that Irish Catholics and Protestants cease to conform to stereotypes as soon as they leave the immediate social circumstances of Ireland (Akenson, 1991). His book has the hidden implication that the most important and universal feature of human nature is its malleability.

I do not want to minimise the Troubles, nor its violence, pain and general disruption. Since the late 1960s, Catholics and Protestants in Ulster have frequently engaged in different kinds of aggression, both verbal and physical. During this same period, groups on both sides have often withdrawn from each other into a ghetto-like mentality. Real ghettos have even been formed and pre-existing ghettos became even more introspective and ghetto-like, both through aggressive “ethnic cleansing” and through the defensive erection of “peace-lines”.

Nevertheless, during this same period, enmity was never the only feature of the relations between Catholics and Protestants. Catholics and Protestants have often worked alongside each other. They have sometimes continued to share neighbour-

hoods and have even come together to form new “mixed” areas. Nor has this been mere juxtaposition or coexistence. On the contrary, people on both sides have worked together positively for mutual benefit. Most surprisingly of all, the representatives of the two sides have even managed to create cease-fires, and then negotiate peace settlements based on power-sharing. All of this has been because both the culture found on both sides was sufficiently flexible to allow the expression of amity as well as enmity.

The focus for the present article is Protestant attitudes to territory, history and religion. I do not want to make an over-simple point that the two sides are mirror-images of each other.¹ Nevertheless, I should make clear that many of the general points to be made about Protestant or unionist culture can also be said about nationalist or Catholic culture.

Conflict in Northern Ireland is rooted not so much in what people *think*, so much as in how they *act and interact*, in short, in the choices that they make. Fredrik Barth said that ethnicity was constituted by the actions that *maintained social boundaries* (1998, *passim*). Important in a Northern Irish context, therefore, are divisive patterns in such things as recreation, residence, church and school attendance etc., all of which restrict social interaction and also the *possibility* of such interaction. Most important here is the rule of endogamy. A long-standing, tightly imposed prohibition on intermarriage has had the consequence of dividing society into blocks of people unrelated by kinship or the possibility of kinship. Such endogamous blocks are liable almost inevitably to grow apart, with their members cultivating different and incompatible political goals, leading eventually to conflict.²

The culture which Protestants share sets the framework for action and decision-making. This culture however is flexible enough to allow Protestants come together with Catholics as well as draw apart, to embrace amity as well as enmity. My claim is that this is not a mere possibility, for during the entire period of the Troubles, this amity has continued to exist. My article will therefore explore some of this complexity in attitudes to locality or territory, to religion and to history.

LOCALITY AND TERRITORY

Processions and territory

Much of the writing about Protestant attitudes to locality or territory has been about conflict. Especially, there have been studies explaining how processions of the so-called loyal orders (Orange, Black, Apprentice Boys) are an attempt to define territory as Protestant or Catholic (see, particularly Bryan and Jarman, 1996, 1997, 1999; Jarman, 1997, 2002; also Buckley and Kenney, 1995: Ch 10) and a similar

¹ See, however, Loftus (1990); Loftus and Atkinson (1994).

² Note the famous remark “Again and again in the world’s history, savage tribes must have had plainly before their minds the simple, practical alternative between marrying out and being killed out” (Tylor, 1888, 268); see also Lévi-Strauss (1963).

perspective has fallen on murals and graffiti (Bryan and Gillespie, 2005; Jarman, 1998; Rolston, 1991). It is interesting, however, to question this somewhat single-minded view.

First, however, one should note that processions do not, inherently, mark out or threaten the definition of territory. Historically, very many processions taking place in Ulster as elsewhere were (and still remain) totally unrelated to either to sectarianism or to territorial claims. Up to the Second World War, and sometimes up to the present day, all kinds of organization have held processions, most of them unthreatening and peaceful. These included the processions of friendly societies, trade unions, temperance groups, women's groups, boy scouts, Sunday Schools, the British Legion and others (see Anderson and Buckley, 1988; Jarman, 1999; Loftus, 1978).

For example, on a Sunday in 1985, I attended a church parade of the social club that bears the spectacular title, the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes. These men paraded accompanied by several bands through the streets of Larne in Co Antrim. They carried banners and wore aprons, collars and sashes similar, but not identical, to the ones worn by Orangemen on similar outings. At the church, the minister preached a sermon based on the slightly tongue-in-the-cheek Buffalo motto, "Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit" ("Nobody is wise all of the time").

Later that year, I attended a procession to church of similarly adorned Freemasons through the streets of Greyabbey in Co Down. In a similar way, the Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds used to process to church through Belfast's Woodvale before the Second World War, as did the International Order of Good Templars through the streets of Larne. But the list is endless. All of these groups were Protestant in composition, but it is the case that various Catholic organisations, National Foresters, Hibernians, but also male and female sodalities, have held, and still hold processions which are not intended or perceived to make territorial claims.

By a well-recognized subtlety, only the misinformed will identify any of these processions as hostile in their intent. This same subtlety applies to the processions of the loyal orders themselves. It may be agreed that there have certainly been processions of the loyal orders that have indeed sought to define certain local territories as "Protestant", and it is also true that nationalists have laid claim to certain territories as "Catholic" by resisting loyal order processions. However, there are plenty of loyal order processions which do nothing of the kind.

Most loyal order processions are uncontested and unexceptional in the same manner as the Buffalo procession I attended. In particular, there is a well-established tradition that parades to church, "church parades", are not intended to challenge territorial boundaries. This important distinction became fuzzy and unsustainable at the time of the Drumcree conflict that appeared in the mid-1990s, when a church parade came to be regarded as an invasion (or a defence) of a contested area. Nevertheless, this important distinction remained and remains intact.

Bryan makes a most interesting observation about this very real ambiguity found in loyal order processions. He explains that journalists often find it difficult to reconcile

their own understanding that loyal order parades are on the one hand enjoyable family occasions, but are, on the other hand, opportunities for defending territorial claims and sometimes for riot (Bryan, 1998).

Nor should one neglect the oft-stated claim that in the days before the Troubles, Catholics would turn out to watch Orange and similar processions. Or that a Catholic neighbour might help an old gentleman get ready for the Twelfth. The fact that some are inclined to dismiss such claims as Pollyanna-like wishful-thinking says much about the occasional failure or even reluctance of some to recognize the subtlety of life in Northern Ireland.

In short, it is indeed the case that processions have the possibility of being used to make a territorial claim that a particular street or geographical area belongs to one's own side. But there are mechanisms within Protestant—and indeed Catholic—culture that allows processions to take place without their being interpreted as making any such threatening territorial claims.

Rioting and territory

A feature of life in Northern Ireland during the Troubles has been the riot. Yet even rioting should not be regarded as an unambiguous expression of aggression. While some rioting in Northern Ireland—as elsewhere in the world—is intended merely to make a general political point, much rioting in Ulster has overt territorial implications. Again, some riots have genuinely attempted to injure people or to force people out of their homes, often with a view to creating miniature, single-faith homelands. This is not, however, universally the case. Much riotous behaviour, indeed, has a strongly recreational flavour and interestingly requires a degree of cooperation from antagonists.

A former security guard once explained to me what he used to see, on a typical Sunday afternoon in the 1990s, through his closed-circuit television screen at Belfast's Yorkgate Shopping Centre in Belfast. Youths from a Catholic area (he thought North Queen's Street) would take over an empty car park, while similar Protestant youths (he thought, probably from Tiger's Bay) gathered outside. Stones, bottles and verbal abuse would then be exchanged. From his secure position, the guard would then telephone the police, and these would arrive and disperse the crowds. Once the police had gone, however, the youths would reassemble and resume hostilities. This cycle would repeat itself until teatime.

My point here is that, in this case, the territorial conflict had been contrived by mutual agreement by the youths for the purpose of creating an occasion for riot. The space was a public space—a car park—to which neither side was making any serious territorial claim. The rioting was essentially "recreational", almost a competitive sport, without the element of winning or losing but with the buzz of mild danger.

However, as in other competitive recreations, the activity implied cooperation as well as antagonism. For the activity to have any point at all, the opposite side must, at the very least, turn up. There was no fun in just standing around in an empty car

park. At Yorkgate, week after week, the same people would occupy the car park and obligingly, the same group of opponents would take their place outside.

Other riots—for example, those described by Kenney who wrote of riots at the interface between Woodvale and Ardoyne—do not require the same degree of mutual consent to construct the defensible space. This is because the territories already pre-exist the riot as a more generally agreed “social fact”. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable degree of cooperation. Kenney indicates that, at this rioting in Woodvale-Ardoyne, there was again no attempt actually to take over any territory. Like the riots in Yorkgate, the rioting was essentially “recreational”, with no real attempt to win or to lose (Buckley and Kenney, 1995: 83). Yet here again, just like the Yorkgate rioting, there was no fun in merely throwing stones down an empty street. The violence required other people of the other side—or even the police—at least to turn up and somehow reciprocate. All this required a degree of cooperation and mutual, if tacit, agreement.

Indeed, in other riots in the 1980s, which Mary Kenney and I witnessed, what struck us was the good humour that accompanied many riots. Rioting, we thought, involved an emergent moral system, in which there were flexible, but nevertheless very real rules of engagement that limited the violence. Rioters in our presence never, for example, engaged in murder. Nor did they (often) try to do their opponents more than slight harm. For example, there were restrictions on the kind of bottle throwing that was thought legitimate. Injured people were not attacked. In short, in the riots we watched, the violence was limited by a sense that opponents were human beings (Buckley and Kenney, 1995: Ch 10).

Territory and Neighbourhood

The Northern Ireland question has always found a major focus in questions of territory. The focus of the conflict for many years was upon the territorial question of whether the six counties of Northern Ireland belonged to Ireland or to the United Kingdom, and although this issue has faded somewhat, it still lurks in the background. This “macro-territorial” question has found an echo in micro-territoriality in relation to specific localities, with particular areas defined as Protestant or as Catholic. Micro-territorial concerns, often important for their own sake, reflect the greater “macro” picture.

Because much of the conflict has been focused in the more ghettoised areas of Northern Ireland, there has been a tendency among scholars to forget that there are also many mixed residential areas that belong to neither one side nor the other. Though there is indeed much residential segregation in Northern Ireland, sometimes created by violence or the threat of violence, it is a mistake to oversimplify and see Protestants (or indeed Catholics) as entirely concerned merely to define their particular towns or neighbourhoods as ethically cleansed homelands.

For example, even in a city like Londonderry, where there has been considerable tension, there is also considerable local pride shared between the two communities and a willingness to cooperate at all kinds of levels. Not least, in that city, there has

been practical power-sharing local government for many years, albeit spiced by occasional outbursts of hostile rhetoric. In Derry too, there have also been successful attempts to accommodate the fears and complaints relating to demonstrations and parades. And, though there has been considerable tension in radically divided towns such as Portadown or Lurgan, one should not exaggerate the conflict in these places. For most of the time, these places are tense but nevertheless peaceful. None of them was ever a Stalingrad.

In many smaller towns and in the countryside, there is considerable variation along a continuum from extreme violence to the situation that I found in and around Portaferry. Here, Protestants and Catholics prided themselves on being good neighbours. This good neighbourliness manifested itself in all kinds of ways. For example, there was practical help between farmers, with the larger tasks being shared for example in order to make more economical use of expensive equipment. Very many of the local activities, the Women's Institute, the Lions, yachting, golf etc, took no account of sectarian difference. In Portaferry, there was also evidence of general good-neighbourly behaviour between people irrespective of sectarian division, lending a cup of sugar here or a ladder there (Buckley, 1982 *passim*).

Important here are the local galas or community festivals found in very many towns, in Portaferry, in Hilltown, in my own home of Holywood and indeed in the Halloween festival in Derry, where both Catholics and Protestants come together in a communal event. There is pressure from government to turn such events into commercial "tourist attractions". I believe it would be a grave error to take the commercialisation of such festivals too far; for such community events affirm and thus make real the imagined unity of communities that are in other ways divided.

The coexistence of social division with social harmony—of enmity with amity—was remarked by several commentators when the Troubles were in their early stages. Rosemary Harris called her book on Ballygawley, *Prejudice and Tolerance* (1972). And Elliott Leyton, writing of Annalong talks of "opposition and integration" and notes that their divided population were all *The One Blood* (1975a, 1975b). The reality is that in Portaferry, Ballygawley, Annalong and many other places, community relations have remained quietly strong, much as they were in the 1970s and earlier. It is merely that writers have stopped writing monographs of this kind. Subsequent studies have been inclined to concentrate on less peaceful places and to neglect the cooperation and amity that still exists and can readily be rediscovered.

HISTORY

One aspect of this social unity found in small localities has been the local history movement, a movement which rather contradicts received wisdom about Irish history. This is that Irish history—not least *Protestant* history—is divisive.³

³ A much fuller account of divisive Protestant ethnic history is found in Buckley, 1989.

Divisive history

Most obviously the discourse about the Williamite and Jacobite Wars is divisive. The Twelfth of July and the Siege of Derry have provided many of the most familiar symbols and slogans of Protestant resistance. These include “No Surrender”, “Not an inch”, and “REM 1690”. Such ideas have traditionally been posted on walls and spoken from countless platforms, providing inspiration for successive generations of Protestants who want to resist Catholicism. The now less common pictures of King William, painted on Orange Order banners and the gable-ends of houses, encapsulate the narrative according to which a Protestant ascendancy—and, it is said, civil and religious liberty—were established in Ireland.

Another historical tradition concerns the Cruthin. In a succession of publications, Ian Adamson and his followers tried to show that Pictish tribes, especially the Cruthin, were the aboriginal inhabitants of the north of Ireland until they were driven out to Scotland by the invading Gauls or Gaels. In the 1980s this historical narrative gained considerable support, particularly in the Ulster Unionist Party circles and among members of the Ulster Defence Association. The point of this narrative was that the various Plantations were a reinvasion of Ireland by these same Pictish peoples whose home, Ulster originally was (Adamson, 1974, 1982).

The Ulster-Scots language movement is closely associated with the Cruthin argument. Its adherents (see Montgomery *et al*, 2006; Robinson, 1997) claimed that the speech found in parts of Antrim, Down and Donegal, was a separate language with its own grammar and vocabulary. The idea of an Ulster-Scots language has been much criticised by scholars (see for example, the two editions of *Ulster Folklife* (Vols 44 and 45) devoted to the topic). However, the creation of a polar opposite to Irish has had the paradoxical political effect of defusing an old political argument, allowing Protestants to recognize Irish without a loss of face. Now, Irish and Ulster Scots are official languages of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

What may be regarded as a theological variant of the Cruthin theory can be discovered in the views of British Israel. British Israel is an organization found in Britain and in the British Commonwealth, and, though it has declined somewhat, it was once significant in Northern Ireland, being influential in such diverse organisations as the paramilitary group Tara and the Churches of God as well as having its own association, the Covenant People’s Fellowship. British Israel takes the view that Ulster Protestants—indeed, British people in general—are descended the lost ten tribes of Israel, or, as some say more specifically, from the Tribe of Dan. As in the Cruthin theory, its doctrines imply that Irish Protestants (the Children of Israel) came to Ireland in an early period—at the time of Jeremiah the Prophet—and that Protestants have a special right to live in Ireland. Their doctrines also suggest that Ulster Protestants and the British people generally have a special place in God’s plans for spreading His Word around the globe.

Local history

These familiar versions of history help define Protestants as against their Catholic neighbours, and they provide a self-conscious counterbalance to nationalist history

In effect, they provide a focus for Protestant identity, a set of somewhat aggressive role models to be emulated and a political rhetoric which may justify political claims. (Buckley, 1989), However, they are not the only form of history available to Ulster Protestants.

Local history in particular provides a popular historiographical counterpart to that pride in locality and good neighbourliness found all over Northern Ireland, and which often (not of course always) counteracts sectarian division. Local history societies thrived particularly from the 1960s to the 1990s, when there were very many local history societies. As well as holding meetings, such societies have often prolifically generated very many publications in the form mostly of booklets and journals.

Much of what these societies have produced had to do with a history that has little to do with either a Protestant or a Catholic identity. One can see this by taking editions of such journals at random from a library shelf. For example, the 2006 edition of *Saintfield Heritage*, published by the Saintfield Heritage Society, contains some 40 short articles, including “An evacuee’s memories of Tullywest”, “A Drover’s Tale”, “Saintfield’s First Blue Plaque”, “Saintfield Ontario”, “Saintfield Academy Fund Raising” and so forth. Similarly, the 2000 edition of the Mourne Local Studies Group journal, *12 Miles of Mourne*, contains short, well-researched articles on historical topics of local interest, among them: “The murder of Thomas Armer”; “Greencastle, Co Down: a place apart”; and “Charting fishery developments at Kilkeel, Co Down 1821-69”. In each case, the topics have local interest and most have no sectarian implications at all.

Of interest here is the fact that these journals seem to feel no compulsion to avoid topics that speak of just Catholics or Protestants. In the Mourne journal, for example, there was an article on “The YMCA harvest camp at Clough, August 1945”; and another on “Louis High School”, material interesting, respectively, to Protestants and to Catholics. In a different area, the Ards Historical Society recently brought out a booklet by a notable Orangeman, David Cargo,⁴ on *Brotherhoods in Newtownards* (2008) dealing mainly, but not entirely, with Protestant groups.

In short, the local history movement, without really trying, has shown that Catholics and Protestants have much to unite them in their local communities, while they feel free, nevertheless, to give each group an honoured place in that community. They therefore give expression to a widespread view that, despite all the problems, all of the different types of people who live in Northern Ireland, and who live in particular localities have the right to live there with dignity.

RELIGION

Again, religion, and especially Protestant religion, has been seen in scholarly discourse as an expression or even a *source* of hostility. The dominant Protestant theology found in Ulster is Evangelical and Arminian. The word “Evangelical” alludes to

⁴ Cargo is Grand Lecturer in the Grand Royal Arch Purple Chapter.

the doctrine that religious authority derives from the Bible. Arminian theology derives from Arminius, a seventeenth century divine who held that each individual should actively turn towards God, and thereby receive God's grace which will inspire that person to a life of holiness. These doctrines differ significantly from the emphasis of the Roman Catholic Church which gives a major role to the sacraments, the priesthood and the Church itself in the achievement of salvation.

Within this general Evangelical and Arminian framework, both individual Protestants and the formal doctrines of particular churches take up a variety of distinctive positions. There are those, sometimes dubbed "fundamentalists", who place a heavy emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible and on the need for sudden and personal conversion. These may be differentiated from more "liberal" opinion which is sympathetic towards ecumenism. Some, especially in the Presbyterian churches, adopt what they see as a "Calvinist" emphasis, stressing the positive role of divine intervention in the process of salvation.⁵ A distinctively tolerant emphasis on individual conscience and interpretation can be found in the "Inner Light" theology associated with Quakerism and Non-Subscribing Presbyterianism. A rather different emphasis on individual inspiration is to be found among adherents of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement who foster such "gifts of the spirit" as healing, prophecy and speaking in tongues. There are also a few individuals and rare congregations in the Church of Ireland whose theology leans towards Anglo-Catholicism. Apart from the fundamentalist-liberal division, too much importance, however, ought not to be given to this doctrinal variety, for they should all be seen as variations on an overarching Evangelical and Arminian theme.

The relevant technical phrase, in the present context, is "the scandal of particularity". This is the notion that one's own group has a unique access to salvation and to God's Truth. Some individuals and some groups more than others take the view that their own path to salvation is the only one. Much of what has been written on aggressive Christian doctrine has concentrated on Protestantism rather than Catholicism. One should note however, that, if pressed, some Catholics are susceptible to this same "scandal of particularity". Many Catholics too believe that the sacraments of their own church are the only path to salvation.

The impact of Protestant particularism can be illustrated by an example from my fieldwork. A young Catholic woman once accompanied me on "work experience" as I travelled around conducting interviews on religious topics. After one such interview, she confessed she was shocked to discover that, as a Catholic, she was thought not to be a "Christian" by a man we had just spoken to. And indeed there are many Protestants who see Catholicism as outside the pale of Christianity. Brewer and Higgins differentiate these kinds of anti-Catholic religious views as "Covenanting" and "Pharisaic", the one being based on the view that "we" are "God's Chosen People", the other that "they" have incorrect doctrines (1998, 153 *et passim*). In reality, I have always found these two types of opinion to be difficult to separate.

⁵ Brooke notes the tendency of Presbyterian Calvinism to slide into Arminianism (1987: 175 ff).

Some of the more florid aspects of this anti-Catholic thought concern doctrines about the Second Coming. These often involve the idea that the Pope might be an Antichrist or perhaps *the* Antichrist. This notion is, of course, very ancient. It is founded in interpretations of the Book of Revelation and on the views of early Protestant sages, not least, Luther and Calvin. It is also found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, to which Presbyterian ministers subscribe before ordination, though nowadays, it is possible for a new minister to avoid subscribing to this particular view. Doctrines such as these are not mere theology. They are, as one might say, “fighting talk”.

Then there are the legends found in the rituals the loyal orders, especially in the “higher” orders open only to members of the Orange Order, namely, the Royal Arch Purple and the Royal Black orders, and exhibited on their emblems and banner pictures (Buckley and Kenney, 1995; see Kilpatrick, 1996 and Loftus, 1990).⁶ These Bible-based traditions assume that Irish Protestants are in a similar situation to the Israelites and Jews in the Bible. These doctrines therefore resemble those of the British Israelites, but not to the extent of believing that Ulster Protestants are actually descended from ancient Biblical peoples. Thus, the rituals re-enact stories, for example, about Moses and then Joseph and the Egyptians, Joshua and the Canaanites, David and the Philistines, Elijah and the prophets of Baal, Daniel and the Babylonians, and others. Though there are other minor themes, these rituals therefore speak centrally of the confrontation between the People of God and God’s enemies (Buckley and Kenney, 1995: Ch 11).

This type of divisive, “fighting-talk” religion has inevitably attracted scholarly interest not least because it is *indeed* fighting talk and because it therefore helped explain the Troubles. Nevertheless, there is a totally different aspect to religion which just as clearly is not fighting talk, and never was.

First of all, if one takes the trouble to discuss religion with people who are actively interested in it, and indeed, particularly if you talk to religious *fundamentalists* who are mostly singled out by this scholarly discourse, then they are likely scarcely even to mention those aspects of their religion which involve “fighting talk”. Religious fundamentalists are more likely to want to talk about the path to salvation, about their personal relationship to Jesus, about how their own lives were transformed by having been saved and so forth.

Moreover, if one does succeed in inveigling such people into discussing the more divisive aspects of religion, they will explain that they are opposed to the *Catholic Church* but not to Catholics themselves. Catholics, they will explain, are sinners in the same way as they themselves are sinners. It is the sin, not the sinner that they dislike. While an outsider may feel this to be a rather patronising attitude to Catholicism, it is not really intended to be so. I know quite conservative fundamentalists who (I believe sincerely) regard it as their specifically religious duty to be on good

⁶ There are understandably few first hand accounts of the rituals of these orders. A fascinating exception is found in Prosser (1982-5). See also the discussion in Buckley (2000).

terms with their Catholic neighbours. They themselves seem to see this doctrine as a positive way that they can cope with the social fact of being divided from people whom they suspect they would like, if only they could get to know them. Practising Christians of all kinds tend to see good neighbourliness as a specifically *Christian* virtue associated with the parable of the Good Samaritan, a story, of course, that deals with ethnic division.

Finally, ecumenism is increasingly a feature of religious life among both Catholics and Protestants. Of course, not all Protestants are in favour of ecumenism, and some fear that to engage in ecumenical dialogue is to risk losing their distinctive birthright. Nevertheless, ecumenism has acquired a steady momentum, particularly among middle-class church-attenders. Nor should it be forgotten that eighteenth and nineteenth century Irish Protestantism was once polarised between Presbyterianism and the Church of Ireland. This opposition diminished somewhat after the 1859 Revival, and it faded away even more after the Great War. And the amity between Presbyterians and Anglicans—between the churches and between church members—has remained more or less intact ever since (Brooke, 1987: Ch 9).⁷ Just because progress towards ecumenism is slow, it does not follow that it is impossible.

CONCLUSION

There has been a temptation, in the thirty and more years of the Troubles, for scholars to look to the culture of both sides, but particularly that of Ulster Protestants, and discover only sources of violence and antagonism. In the process, some of the subtlety of Protestant culture has been overlooked, as has the fact that Protestants (like others) have managed to salvage normal, decent human relations out of a difficult situation. This article has considered three well-known features of Protestant culture, its preoccupation with territory, history and religion, showing, however, that these topics are not unambiguously a source of enmity towards Catholicism and towards Catholics. My suggestion here has been that Protestant culture—like any other culture—is, at its best, *enabling*, allowing people to do whatever seems appropriate to the circumstances. Because of this inherent flexibility, Protestant culture, in the period since 1968, has generated considerable cooperation as well as conflict, amity as well as enmity, even when violence was at its worst.

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⁷ Brooke seems to think this process was complete after 1859. In fact, there was much opposition to Arminianism within Presbyterianism between 1859 and 1918, the central issue being the introduction of musical instruments into church. The church music question—and with it the division between Arminianism and Calvinism and hence between the Church of Ireland and Presbyterianism—was not finally laid to rest until the end of the Great War when individuals in the pro-organ lobby gave their congregations organs—still to be seen in many Presbyterian churches—as war-memorials.

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