

FR. MC MANUS' TRILOGY
OF CURRENT ARTICLES
ON NORTHERN IRELAND

The Irish Echo

OLDEST IRISH AMERICAN NEWSPAPER IN USA, ESTABLISHED IN 1928

Don't mention anti-Catholicism in the North



Fr. Sean Mc Manus.

Fr. Sean McManus. OpEd. Irish Echo. New York City. May 31-June 6, 2017.

Thanks to The Irish People newspaper (now discontinued) being digitalized, one can read this:

"Father Sean McManus in giving the Benediction said: 'We pray for an Ireland free and independent, where the little man, the man of no property, the ordinary guy, can walk tall without having to depend on political patronage.... An Ireland where all power, whether political, ecclesiastical, military or economic will always be used for the good of the people.'

'We pray, in particular, that once the divisive British presence has been banished, we will have a Country of harmony and reconciliation. An Ireland where religion will never again be used as a political device. An Ireland where the Catholic man from the Falls Road can go and have a pint of Guinness with his Protestant pal from the Shankill Road. . . An Ireland where the young Protestant woman from the Shankill Road can date the young Catholic man from the Falls Road.

'We pray above all for the little children of Ireland that one day they will soon be able to share the same playground, the same classroom, the same school, and, yes, one day the same Church to worship the same God that died for both.'

(Second Annual Irish Northern Aid Dinner, New York City. January 18, 1974.)

The Irish People Newspaper. Page 9. January 26, 1974.

That brought back a lot of memories.

It also bears witness that this Fermanagh man has always had a deep ecumenical theology and has been animated by a non-sectarian vision for his homeland, or as Wolfe Tone put it, the desire to "substitute the common name of Irishman, in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter."

When I first came to America, on October 2, 1972, I saw it as my duty to counteract England's Big Lie: that there was a "Religious War" in Northern Ireland (the Six Counties of Ireland that England was still holding onto).

But being from Fermanagh, I knew it would be silly and woefully non-historical to ignore that, in fact, England had (since The English Reformation, as distinct from the German Reformation) used anti-Catholicism as a major weapon in its conquest of Ireland.

Before the English Reformation (1169 to 1536), very Catholic England oppressed very Catholic Ireland without using the weapon of anti-Catholicism.

Some silly Irish Americans, however, felt that to deny that there was a religious war in Northern Ireland they had to avoid condemning anti-Catholic discrimination. That stupid idea was spread by the Stickies (the Official Republican Movement, as distinct from the Provisional Republican Movement. (It was also spread by the British embassy, naturally).

In the early 80s, I launched a campaign to expose the constitutional foundation of anti-Catholicism in Ireland: The Act of Settlement, 1701- the foundation stone of the Royal Family.

This act still today forbids a Catholic from being the monarch. It's like having a provision in the U.S. Constitution barring a black person from being president.

I always point out that the Orangemen did not enact the Act of Settlement. Thus, state-sponsored sectarianism and anti-Catholic bigotry are enshrined in the unwritten, non-codified British constitution.

One person – believing in the Stickie nonsense and the British big lie – tried to oppose my campaign: "[McManus claims] Americans should be objecting to the Act of Settlement. under the belief it has something to do with the conflict in Ireland. It is quite possibly the most idiotic thing for Americans to be lobbying for."

How convenient. Absolving the British monarchy and parliament from any connection with "the conflict in Ireland."

Fortunately, nobody listened to that egregious nonsense.

However, the big lie is hard to keep down. It has popped up recently.

Another person — the spiritual heir, perhaps, to the former person — took to the internet to decry my analysis of the root causes of Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland, and how the Protestants are not to be ultimately blamed but the British constitution: “Sean Mc-Manus’ continued harping on it being Catholics vs. the world drives me nuts – it’s counterproductive to progress.”

A bit like trying to dismiss African American opposition to anti-black bigotry as being counterproductive to progress. God save us from such progress, and from such egregious misunderstanding!

Furthermore, isn’t the phrase “Catholics against the world” a very strange formulation for someone proclaiming his concern for justice in Northern Ireland? It almost betrays an animus for all Catholics in the world, period.

But isn’t it a bit ironic that this Fermanagh man has to listen to lectures from people who apparently have a very superficial understanding of the real nature of England’s rule in Ireland?

Indeed, especially ironic, given the quoted benediction at the beginning of this article over 43 years ago about my vision for the relationship between northern Protestants and Catholics.

Not to mention that for this year, the 500th anniversary of Luther’s Reformation, I have made many statements rejoicing in the theological agreement between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification – the one issue that more than anything else sparked the Reformation; and welcoming, also, the fact that the Anglican/Episcopalian Church and the World Methodist Council have endorsed the Agreement on Justification.

The root cause of anti-Catholicism in North

Fr. Sean McManus, OpEd. Irish Echo. New York City. July 12 -19, 2017

A state's constitution is the fundamental set of principles by which the state is to be governed.

It is, therefore, of foundational importance and superior to all other laws of the state, as in the case of the written U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Can you imagine how awful it would be if there were a discriminatory law still within the Constitution?

Imagine, for example, if there were a provision prohibiting a black person being president of the United States.

Imagine how that would have powerfully condoned and promoted white racism, bigotry, and contempt in the 1950s and 1960s in, say, Mississippi.

And suppose presidents and members of Congress had ignored that foundational provision, and merely expressed concern about some individual Jim Crow laws in Mississippi.

Would they have gotten away with it? Would the rest of the world have ignored that Pontius Pilate hand washing act?

How come, then, that the British constitution and "the Queen/King in Parliament" – have gotten away with constitutionally enshrined discrimination and sectarianism?

Since 1701 – 316 years, for goodness sake – until this very moment, and ongoing, there is at the heart of the British constitution a law prohibiting a Catholic being king or queen of England.

The Act of Settlement of 1701 is an integral part of the unwritten, un-codified British constitution which consists of, according to University College London, "an accumulation of various statutes, conventions, judicial decisions and treaties which collectively can be referred to as the British Constitution."

The 1701 Act of Settlement determines succession to the Crown of England, and is, therefore, a fundamental constitutional statute.

Indeed, it is the very foundation stone of the royal family.

The Act of Settlement contains provisions that decree only a Protestant can succeed to the British throne and that if the monarch becomes a Catholic, or marries a Catholic, he/she forfeits the throne and "the people are absolved from their allegiance."

The ban on marrying a Catholic was repealed in February 2013 by the Succession to the Crown Act.

However minimalistic that change may have been to the ordinary Englishman in the street, how do you think the extreme Orangeman would react to any proposed change in this Anti-Catholic law?

The *Belfast Telegraph* gives the answer: "Members of the Protestant Orange Order [led by Jeffrey Donaldson MP, DUP] have descended on Downing Street to oppose the lifting of a ban on those in line to the throne from marrying a Catholic." (Orangemen at No. 10 over Catholic ban." Saturday, November 12, 2011).

The Succession to the Crown Act also removed the outdated sexist rule that allowed a woman in the line of succession to be superseded by a younger brother.

Thus, Queen Elizabeth II would not, in fact, have become queen in 1952 had she had a younger brother.

In effect and consequence, the ban on a Catholic being king or queen would be like having a provision in the U.S. Constitution prohibiting a black person being president of the United States – irrespective of the historical reasons for the Act of Settlement, 1701 (and there are always historical reasons, anyway, for all sorts of sectarianism/racism, two sides of the same coin).

Certainly, pointing out that the queen is also head of the Church of England is no valid excuse, and should cut no ice with Americans who know, and are proud of the fact that the Founding Fathers insisted on separation of church and state, this being enshrined in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

The Act of Settlement may mean little to the ordinary Englishman in the street, but it does, indeed, mean a whole lot to extreme Unionists/Loyalist/Protestants in Northern Ireland.

Time and time again, unionist leaders in Northern Ireland have pointed out that their allegiance is not just to the British Crown but, rather, to "Protestant succession to the British Crown."

This is like American white supremacists saying their allegiance would only be to the U.S. Constitution if it guaranteed their supremacy while ensuring that blacks were deemed inferior.

Why am I one of the few people in America who, for over 40 years, has raised the state-sponsored anti-Catholicism of the 1701 Act of Settlement?

How can constitutional bigotry and discrimination be conveniently ignored? And to be clear: anti-Catholicism is not about theological disagreement with Catholicism, but rather a socio-political system and mind-set determined to keep Catholics down.

Just as anti-Semitism is not a theological disagreement, but rather an organized system of hostility towards people of the Jewish faith or heritage.

Of course, it is easy for some people to criticize the extreme anti-Catholicism of the Orange Order and the thuggery of associated Protestant paramilitaries.

But it was not the Orangemen who enacted the anti-Catholic Act of Settlement.

To quote the University College of London again: "It has been suggested that the British Constitution can be summed up in eight words: What the Queen [Monarch] in Parliament enacts is law. This means that Parliament, using the power of the Crown, enacts law which no other body can challenge."

And that's where the buck stops.

In significant measure, orange bigotry and anti-Catholicism is but a logical, inevitable outworking of the 1701 Act of Settlement, which must be seen as an utter disgrace to modern-day England.

For as long as it is in place, extreme fundamentalist Orangeman will see it as their patriotic duty to endorse and implement this act, which means refusing to accept Catholics as equals, because the British constitution does not.

[Northern Ireland as “The Beloved Community”]

A homage to ‘The Beloved Community’

(The text of the article is given below in Word. The entire article, including photos, is available by clicking this link:

<http://pages.cdn.pagesuite.com/0/4/04f3c5a7-e309-4fa1-b93b-fc7a790cc978/page.pdf>

Fr. Sean Mc Manus. OpEd. Irish Echo. New York City. July 26-August 1. 2017

In the words of the motto of the Irish National Caucus, I believe “Ireland, too, has the right to be one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

In the meantime, I also believe the Good Friday Agreement is the proper way forward. And that, in effect, means seeing Northern Ireland as “The Beloved Community.” (Not too difficult for this Fermanagh-native to do).

The term, “The Beloved Community” was first devised at the beginning of the 20TH Century by the important American philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce (1855–1916). But it was Blessed Martin Luther King, Jr. who made the term famous, investing it with a deeper and wider meaning. The King Center explains:

“For Dr. King, The Beloved Community was not a lofty utopian goal to be confused with the rapturous image of the Peaceable Kingdom, in which lions and lambs coexist in idyllic harmony. Rather, The Beloved Community was for him a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence.

Dr. King’s Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger, and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.”

This— for the time being, pending the common-sense and inevitable reunification of Ireland— is the Northern Ireland that the Irish National Caucus has worked for since its inception on February 6, 1974, and for which it opened the very first Irish office on Capitol Hill on International Human Rights Day, December 10, 1978.

Now, only the utterly naïve and those totally lacking in a knowledge of Irish history, not to mention British history, would think that this means one does not expose on-going injustice, human rights violations and anti-Catholic discrimination and bigotry in Northern Ireland. (Or perhaps the applicable phrase here is “useful idiots”—useful, that is, to the British Government).

Certainly, Blessed Martin Luther King, Jr. did not believe such nonsense. Even in one of his most famous speeches—and the most conciliatory— “I Have a Dream” (1963), he pulls no punches, but speaks truth to power: “I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. . . . I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”

Yet, a misguided few in the United States have begun to criticize me for continuing to point out that—in the words of our Animated Internet Video (<http://www.irishnationalcaucus.org>)

— “There is still deep-rooted Anti-Catholic bigotry in Northern Ireland. A significant section of the Unionist/Protestant community resents sharing power with Catholics (Nationalists and Republicans) because they have never accepted Catholics as equals.”

One person charged I was “too Catholic”; and at the same time, another person accused me of not being Catholic enough because I issued a statement supporting Michele Gildernew in her successful campaign to become MP again for Fermanagh/South Tyrone.

The first person opined my emphasizing that Anti-Catholicism was enshrined in the British constitution—and, consequently, not ultimately the fault of the Protestants of The North— was “counterproductive to progress.”

No wonder the 1972 lyrics of “Stuck in the Middle With You” came to my Fermanagh mind, “Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right.”

Wouldn’t you think those two Irish-Americans would think twice before they would try to lecture me about Fermanagh and about the history of anti-Catholicism in The North? That, as we say in Fermanagh, takes some chutzpah. Both should have remembered the Fermanagh adage: “Don’t try to tell your Granny how to try the ducks.”

Furthermore, the strange, inexplicable attempt to deny/invalidate the entire basis for our Mac Bride Principles campaign, and its operating

motto: “American dollars must not subsidize anti-Catholic discrimination in Northern Ireland.” ... So now we are being told the Mac Bride Principles — the most successful Irish-American campaign for Irish justice since 1921— was “counterproductive to progress.” God help us all!

Now back to The Beloved Community.

I want to give The King Center the last word:

“In a July 13, 1966, article in Christian Century Magazine, Dr. King affirmed the ultimate goal inherent in the quest for The Beloved Community: ‘I do not think of political power as an end. Neither do I think of economic power as an end. They are ingredients in the objective that we seek in life. And I think that end of that objective is a truly brotherly society, the creation of The Beloved Community.’”

That is what I want to see in all of Ireland, north, south, east and west.

***This is the final of three OpEds penned in recent weeks
for this page by Fr. Sean McManus, founder and president
of the Washington, D.C.-based Irish National Caucus.***