

The Churches & Reconciliation in Northern Ireland

Dr Gladys Ganiel

G.Ganiel@qub.ac.uk | www.gladysganiel.com



Guiding Questions

Does Religion Matter?

Should religion be taken seriously as an explanation for the Northern Ireland conflict?

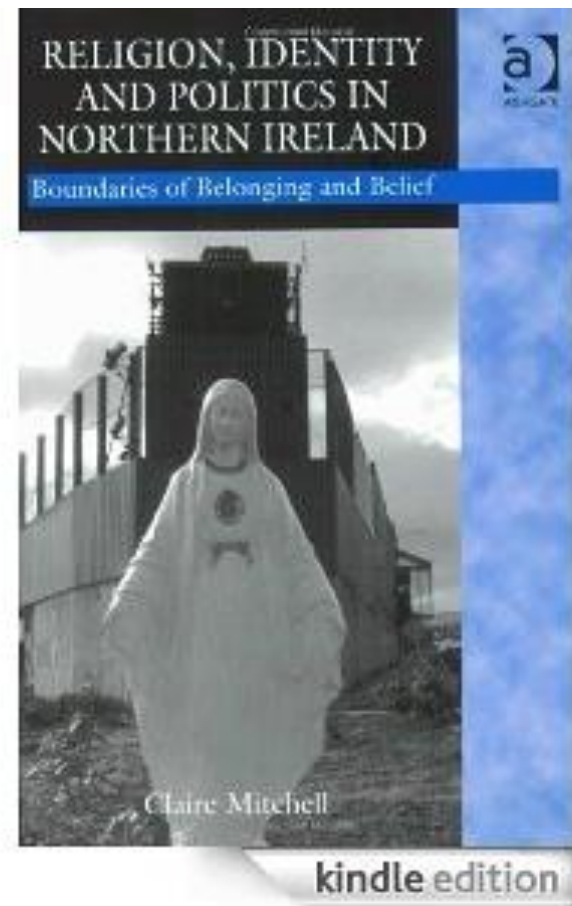
Can the churches contribute to reconciliation in Northern Ireland?



Religion, Identity & Politics

Claire Mitchell (2005)

Religion derives its
significance from five
overlapping dimensions

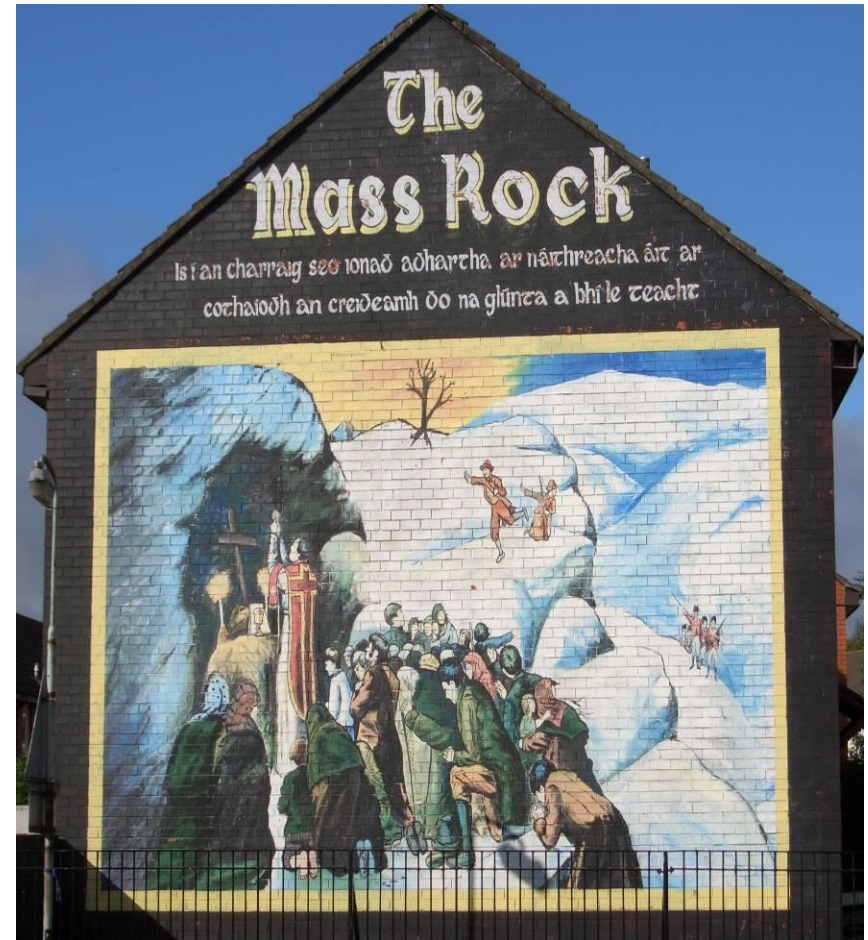


Religious Dimensions

- 1) relationship between the churches and socio-political power (i.e. relationships with nationalist and unionist politicians)
- 2) role of religion as the dominant ethnic marker (maintained through segregated education, marriage, housing patterns and social networks)

Religious Dimensions

3. religion's role in the construction of communities (esp. Catholicism, the role of the Catholic Church in organising social life and the importance of ritual)



Religious Dimensions



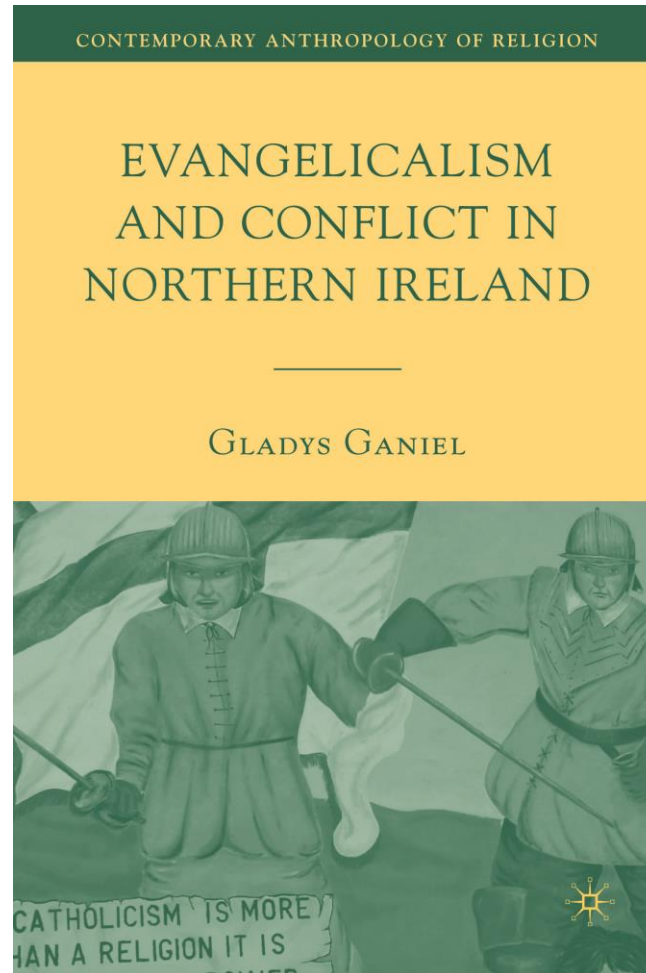
4) religion's role in the construction of ideologies (esp. Protestantism, concepts such as liberty, the 'honest Ulsterman', and anti-Catholicism)

Religious Dimensions

5) relationship between theology and politics (esp. for fundamentalists/evangelicals)



Should religion be taken seriously as a cause of conflict?



Religion & Evangelicals

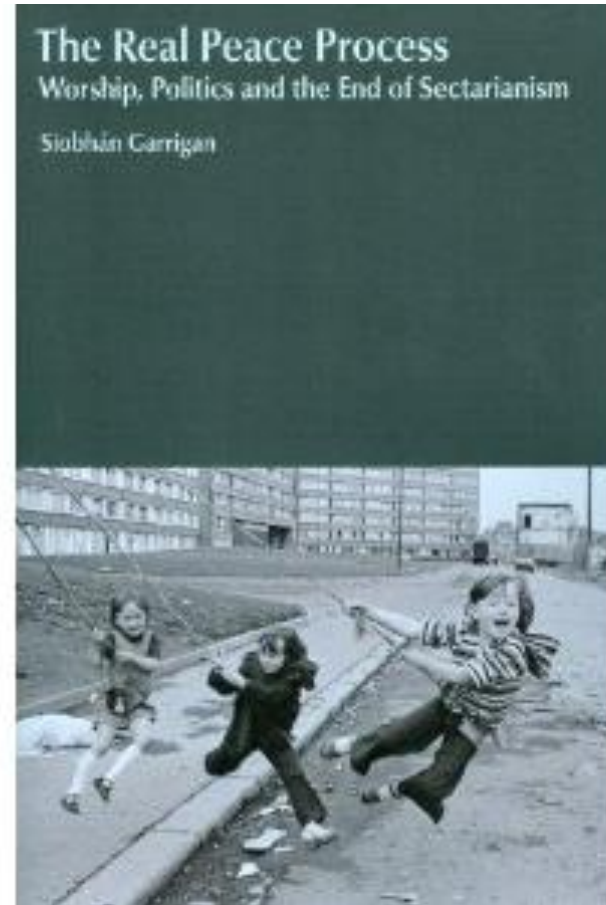
Religion is important mostly for Protestants, for whom *evangelicalism* is a 'core' of their identity (Steve Bruce 1986, 2007; see also Patrick Mitchel 2003)



Religion and Catholics

Siobhán Garrigan on Worship, Politics and the End of Sectarianism

Appropriation of Catholic
symbols by
republicanism;
identification with
Christ as an innocent
victim



How to address religious aspects of conflict?

- Understand how religion is important (see Claire Mitchell)
- Understand for whom it is most important
- Understand how their religious tradition has contributed to conflict
- Drawing on that religious tradition, look for religiously-based resources for peace

For whom is it important?



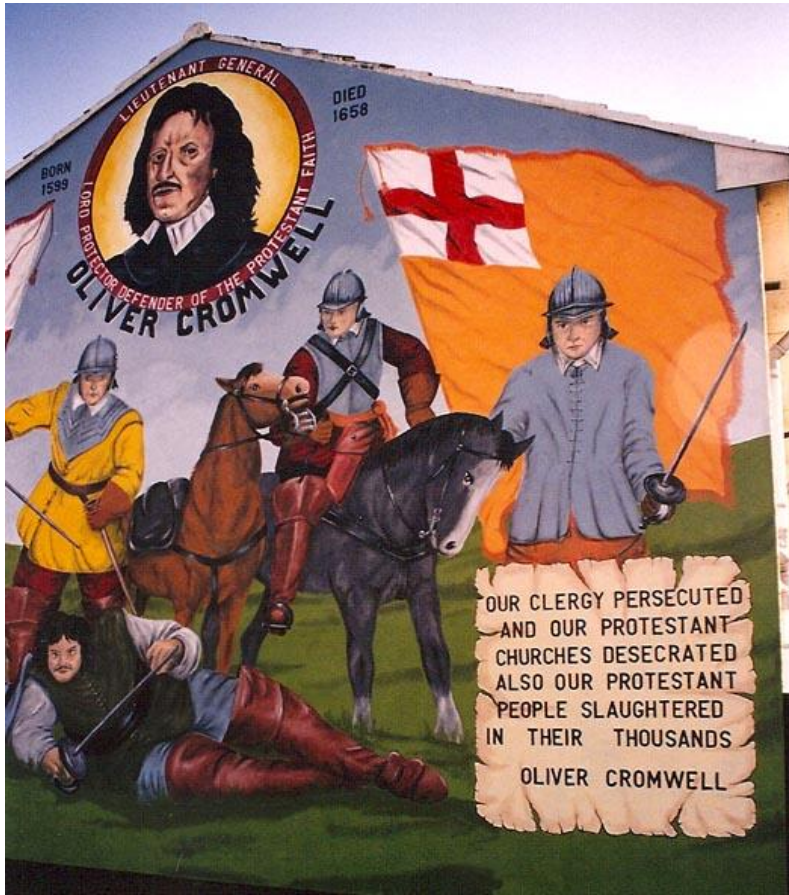
- Evangelicals
 - 25 – 30 per cent of the Protestant population
 - Must be ‘born again’
 - Bible is inspired word of God
 - Resurrection historical event
 - Social Action, evangelism
 - ‘subculture’ (Mitchell & Ganiel 2011)

Historical importance of Evangelicalism



- Conversion attempts then tension, hardened boundaries
- The 1912 Solemn League & Covenant
- Privileged relationship with unionist political power, esp. 1921-72
- Through organisations like the Orange Order

What mattered for evangelicals?



- Covenantal Calvinism (the state must conform to God's laws)
- Protestants as 'chosen people' / divine right to rule
- Justify violence as a last resort

Evangelicals during the Troubles?

- Prominence of Paisleyism
- Continues to articulate 'traditional' evangelical ideas
- Paisley-centred view has, until recently, obscured broader changes within evangelicalism



Evangelicalism and Change

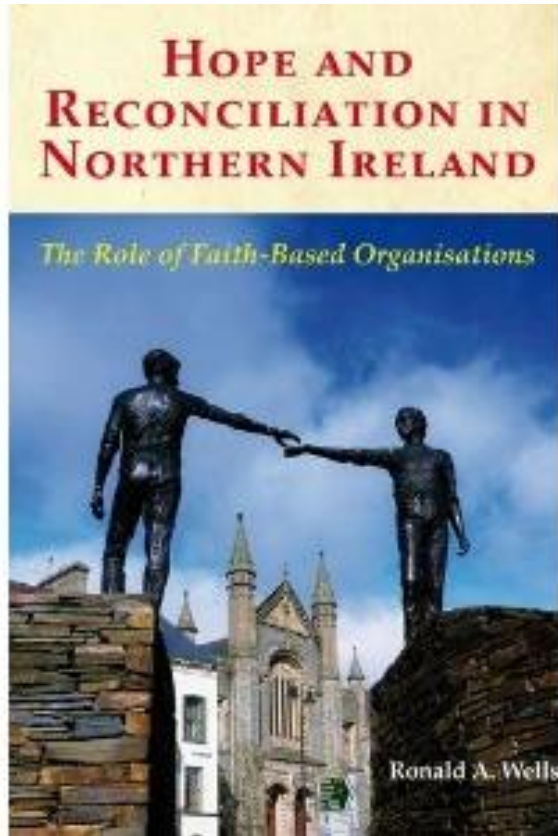
- For God and His Glory Alone (1985)
- Formation of Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland (ECONI) as a counter to Paisleyism
- 'Mediating' Evangelicals



Why has evangelicalism changed?

- Adjusting to loss of privilege, relationship with political power
- Adjusting to increased secularisation
- Adjusting to changes in the 'structure' of civil society (funding favours 'cross community' and 'reconciliation' groups)
- Heartfelt reflection and actual changes in identity

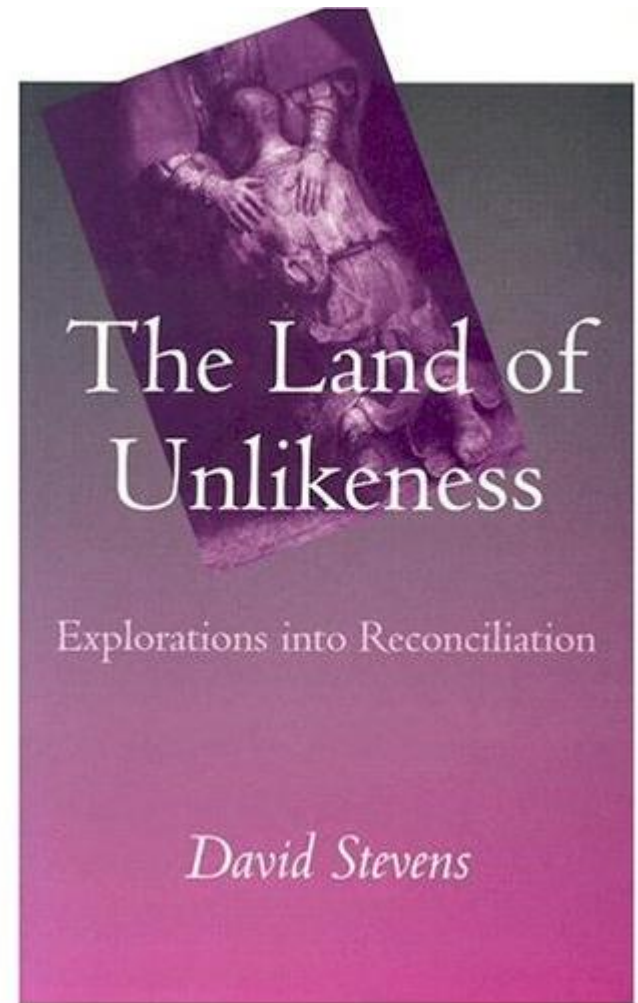
The Churches and Reconciliation



Hope and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland by Ronald Wells (2010)

'Special Interest' Organisations or Groups

- The Corrymeela Community
- Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland
- The Clonard-Fitzroy Fellowship



Denominational Initiatives



- Church of Ireland, 'Hard Gospel'
- Presbyterian Peacemaking Programme
- 'Mediating' Methodists (Brewer)
- New 'Irish Churches Peace Project,' 2013-2015, funded by EU & OFMDFM

Irish Churches Peace Project

- £1.3 million
- 2 ¼ years
- Director
- 6 Development Officers
- 15 Church Traditions
- Relationships and Resources
(see Irish Council of Churches website)



Catholic Church

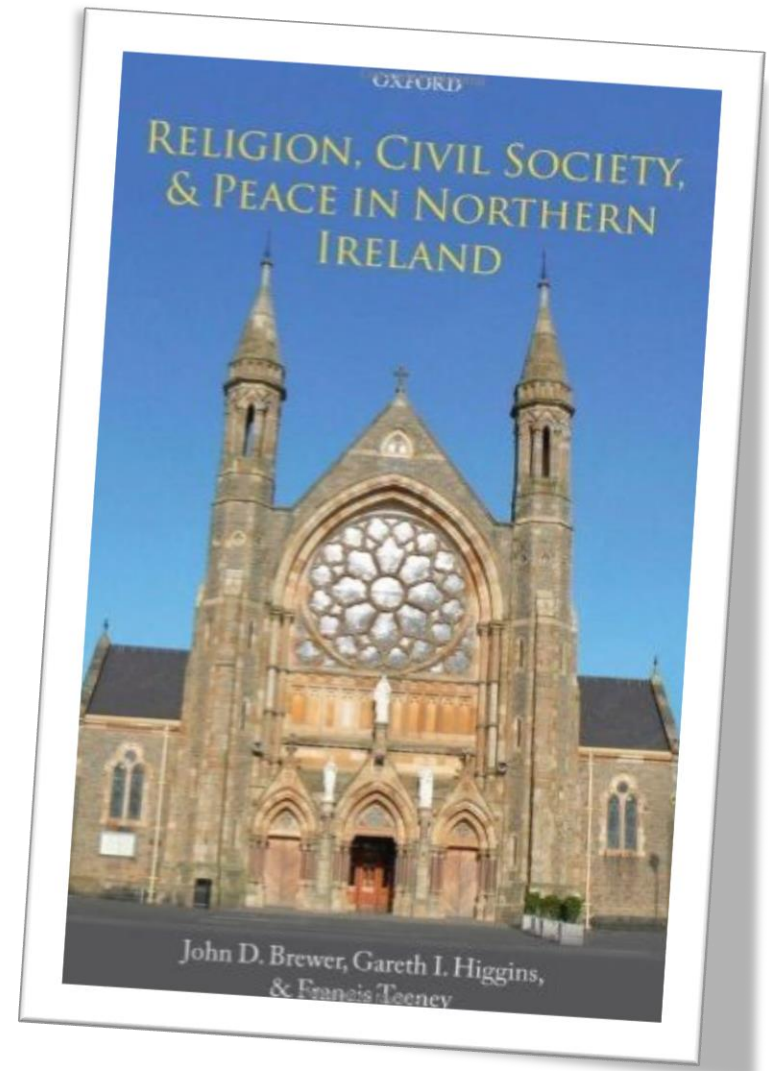
- Prominent clergy
- Clonard monastery (Unity Pilgrims), other parishes with cross-community reconciliation groups
- Role of the Irish School of Ecumenics (R. Wells, 2010)



Churches & Reconciliation?

Individual Christian

peacemakers have been heroic, but churches as institutions have not responded adequately.



What do Christians think about reconciliation?

- Surveys of faith leaders and laypeople, 2009

Reports available at:

<http://www.ecumenics.ie>

Analysis in:

Transforming Post-Catholic Ireland



Reconciliation in Northern Ireland?

- Faith communities place more importance on individual forms of reconciliation (reconciliation between individuals and God and reconciliation between individuals) than on social forms of reconciliation (reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, or reconciliation between people of different ethnicities).
- Only 35% of laypeople believe that their denomination has provided them with adequate training for promoting reconciliation.

Churches Contributions Post-Violence?

- Sites of healing?
- 'Dealing with the Past'
- Building a 'shared future'?
- Crossing boundaries?

*Or helping to maintain the segregated
status quo?*

Gladys Ganiel

Building a Church Without Walls

Home

Events Calendar

About Me

About This Blog

My Books

Media

Archives

Contact me

Marathon Runner



Peter Rollins: God is Undead – Lecture Review & Start of Fringe Festival Tonight with John Caputo

by Gladys Ganiel on April 14, 2015 in Atheism, Dealing with the Past, Ecumenism, Emerging Church, Evangelicalism, Morality, Post Modern Theology, Postmodern Theology, Secularisation, Social Justice, Sociology of Religion



Are we haunted by a god(s) we don't believe in? That was one of the fundamental questions raised by Peter Rollins in a lecture on Sunday afternoon, 'God is Undead: The Religion of New Atheism,' in the Seedhead Arts' Faculty Lecture series in the Black Box in Belfast. Rollins is probably best known around these [...]

Catherwood Lecture in Public Theology on Thursday: Jenny Taylor on Religious Literacy & Post-Multicultural Possibilities

by Gladys Ganiel on April 13, 2015 in Churches & Institutions



Welcome to Building a Church Without Walls, a website for people who are excited about how Christianity is developing in the 21st Century. I am a Research Fellow in the [Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice](#) at Queen's University Belfast. Check out the [Institute's Master's programme](#), which has a stream on Religion and Peacebuilding.



This is my personal site. All views are my own and are not representative of Queen's. I also write for the popular NI Politics site [Sluggie O'Toole](#).

View my profile on Academia:



Filter by topic or search my site

Select Category

For more information visit my blog at: www.gladysganiel.com

Contemporary Christianity's annual Catherwood Lecture in Public Theology will take place Thursday 16 April at 8 pm (7.30 for tea and coffee) at the Agape Centre, 238 Lisburn Road in Belfast. Dr Jenny Taylor, a cultural analyst, journalist, author and founder of Lapido Media, a consultancy specialising in religious literacy in world affairs, will speak [...]

SUBSCRIBE TO FREE EMAIL UPDATES...

Church Without Walls Calendar

Today	Thursday, 16 April
Thursday, 16 April	
20:00	Catherwood Lecture: Jenny Tay
Saturday, 18 April	
10:00	Repitching the Tent

Fr Martin Magill's Ecumenical Tithing: Shankill Gospel Hall



STUDY OF
FORMATION

