



8

The Presbyterian Campaign (1923–1930) Against the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918

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Introduction

Stewart J. Brown's seminal article in the *Innes Review* (1991) provided a detailed examination of the campaign of the 'presbyterian churches against the Scoto-Irish Roman Catholic community'.¹ The main points to emerge from this article have been referenced in many of the key works on historical sectarianism in Scotland and on state-funded Catholic schooling in Scotland.² Brown's article points out that the campaign was twofold: the *restriction of Irish Catholic immigration* and the *repeal or revision of the Education (Scotland) Act 1918*. His article, however, is primarily focused on the *restriction of Irish Catholic immigration*. This chapter aims to explore the second part of the campaign in some detail: the *repeal or revision of the Education (Scotland) Act 1918* from 1923 to 1930. The chapter will also discuss some later responses to this campaign from writers with a Church of Scotland or Protestant background.

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The chapter will begin with a short explanation of the nature of the opposition of the Church of Scotland to the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act and the initial reaction to the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act. The chapter will then examine the 1923 campaign and the ongoing developments in the Church of Scotland, concluding at 1930 with the introduction of the Committee on Education of the united Church of Scotland. The chapter will also examine early perspectives on the campaigns from literature generated by members of the Church of Scotland, especially the perspectives of Alexander Gammie, one of John White's biographers, and the historian, J. R. Fleming. The chapter will continue with a contrasting section on later perspectives from some influential figures within the Church of Scotland, notably the perspectives of Duncan B. Forrester and Douglas Murray. The chapter will end with some concluding remarks.

The Reaction of the Church of Scotland to the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act

The Education Committee of the Church of Scotland in 1872 was primarily focused on the impact of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act on the then current school system.³ The Education Committee voiced concerns about the implications of the 1872 Act for the future of the parochial schools and their transference to Boards. They were also concerned about the preservation of religious instruction and the burden on the taxpayers. The 1872 report stated that there was no need for the intervention planned under the 1872 Act: the reported non-attendance in schools in towns was exaggerated and increased grants for the Highland and Island parishes and 'better organisation' of the schools in the burghs would resolve the issues in primary education. The committee did not question the 'reasonableness' of providing grants to Episcopalian and Catholic denominational schools. The 1873 report discussed these issues further.⁴ The main point remained that the Education Committee did not accept that there was any need for major interventions in the existing arrangements for schooling.

The reaction to the 1872 Act raises a very important issue that will continue to be raised in subsequent discussions: the status of religious instruction in non-denominational schools. The Church of Scotland was concerned that religious instruction was at the discretion of the School Board and there were no guarantees that religious instruction would 'be taught according to the use and wont of Scottish schools'.⁵ Stevenson points out that religious instruction was in practice taught in the majority of schools, bar one or two exceptions.⁶ Nevertheless, the Church of Scotland would campaign vigorously for religious instruction as a statutory provision.

The Initial Reaction of the Church of Scotland to the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act

In the 1918 report of the Education Committee, there was no strong reaction to the transfer of denominational schools by the Education Committee and the General Assembly.⁷ The 1918 report did explore the implications of the new 1918 Act and the introduction of Education Authorities and Education Committees. There is a factual explanation of the arrangements for the transfer of voluntary schools and the continuation of religious instruction and approval of teachers in these schools. The Education Committee, however, was more concerned to press for the appointment of supervisors or advisors for religious instruction in public schools (with no role in the secular education in the schools). This could be extended to the voluntary schools; they could also appoint their own supervisors or advisors.

The 1919 report also provided a factual update of the Act and repeated the information about the transfer of the voluntary schools.⁸ The 1920, 1921 and 1922 Education Committee reports make no mention of denominational schools, Catholic schools or voluntary schools.⁹ Rather, there is a campaign in 1920 to ensure an adequate religious training for those who will teach in non-denominational schools and four directors of religious instruction were appointed for Scotland.

Irish Immigration in the 1923 Assembly

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1923 proved to be an important point in the discussion about Catholic schools. There is no comment concerning Catholic schools or the 1918 Education Act in the 1923 Education Committee report.¹⁰ There is, however, a separate report of the committee that was set up to consider overtures from the Presbytery of Glasgow and from the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr on the topics of 'Irish Immigration' and the 'Education (Scotland) Act 1918'.¹¹ This was presented to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on 23 May 1923. The two topics were later discussed under two Sub-Committees. As has been stated, there has been considerable academic engagement with the campaign on Irish immigration. A short summary will follow in the interests of providing important contextual background to the discussion on the Education (Scotland) Act 1918.

The report articulates concerns over the 'incursion into Scotland of a large Irish Roman Catholic population within recent years'.¹² The Irish Roman Catholics are described as being segregated by their race, customs and traditions and by their loyalty to their Church. They 'cannot be assimilated and absorbed into the Scottish race'.¹³ They are claimed to divide Scotland racially, socially and ecclesiastically. The report makes a clear distinction between the Irish Roman Catholics and the small number of Scottish Roman Catholics and the Orange (Irish Protestant) population. The Scottish Roman Catholics, in contrast with the Irish Roman Catholics, have the 'right to call Scotland their country, in common with their fellow-countrymen of the Protestant faith'.¹⁴ The Orange population is 'of the same race as ourselves and of the same faith and are readily assimilated to the Scottish population'.¹⁵ The report estimates that soon every third person would be Irish: the Irish Roman Catholic population has, they claim, almost doubled in 40 years and in the next 40 years could be as high as 1,500,000.¹⁶ They are anxious that this alien people will have permeated the whole of Scotland.

The incursion of the Irish Roman Catholics is perceived to be a challenge to the ideals of the Reformation when Scotland became almost 'homogeneous in Faith and ideals'.¹⁷ The influx of the Irish Roman Catholics began the 'destruction of the unity and homogeneity of the Scottish people'.¹⁸ The Irish Roman Catholics came to provide cheap

labour in Scotland, and native Scots have emigrated to America and the dominions looking for better conditions of life, higher wages and wider prospects. The departure of the native Scots is described as a great loss, and they have been replaced by a people of a different race and a different faith. The report claims that very few of the Irish emigrated from Scotland. Scotland was now divided into two camps: Scottish and Irish.

The Irish Roman Catholics are described as being not as thrifty and independent as the Scots, and they are quick to seek social relief. They are poor partly because of intemperance and improvidence and demonstrate little ambition to better themselves.¹⁹ The report makes a claim that the Scots do not want to work with the Irish and that Irish foremen favour the employment of fellow Irishmen. The time had come for the Scottish people to safeguard their heritage which is a just and patriotic end. The report expresses anxiety that if the Catholic Church converts Scotland, the bigger prize of England will be within reach.²⁰ The report comments that the Sabbath is not as revered as it once was, it has become a day for political meetings and concerts. The increased secularisation of the Sabbath is exacerbated by the Irish influence. The Roman Catholic Church has able men attempting to convert the Scottish nation, though they may not be successful. The blatant stereotyping and inaccuracy of many of the claims (e.g. the claims concerning the preferential treatment in employment) have been discussed and critiqued by academics.²¹

The 1918 Education (Scotland) Act at the 1923 Assembly

The 1923 report focuses on the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act on pages 759 and 760. The report states that the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act has been very beneficial for the Roman Catholic Church. The schools have been sold or leased and an:

over-taxed and financially distressed Scotland has to pay immense sums for the lease or purchase of buildings, which the Scottish people control only to a limited extent.²²

The report states that the Education Act of 1918 was passed into law when Scotland was preoccupied by the war. This Act has made the Roman Catholic Church in proportion to numbers the:

most richly-endowed church in Scotland, and has securely entrenched her in the very schools she has either sold or leased to Education Authorities.²³

The report cites the example of the Glasgow Education Authority which pays the Roman Catholic Church £25,000 a year for the lease of the Roman Catholic schools, and has paid £47,000 for their fittings and furnishing.

The education act of 1872 made no such generous provision for the transference of the schools built by the Church of Scotland or the Free Church of Scotland.²⁴

The report further comments on the scale of the provision of Catholic schools in Glasgow:

Such an endowment of denominational schools in one city alone for the children of an alien race is surely unprecedented.²⁵

The report deplores the claims of the Roman Catholic Church, under the 1918 Act, for the erection of new Catholic secondary and primary schools when they are considered to be required. The report also states that the 'Church will not allow the children of her people to attend Protestant secondary schools'.²⁶ This means authorities are required to attend to the needs of the Catholic children, by paying for their education in Catholic schools or building new schools for them. The Roman Catholic Church is (in the use of the schools):

loaded with wealth received from an overburdened nation, is using it for the purpose of securely establishing a Faith in their land that is distasteful to the Scottish race, or of supplanting the people who supplied these riches by a race that is alien in sympathy and in religion.²⁷

The report informs the Assembly debate on 29 May 1923 under point 3:

The General Assembly call upon the Government to amend the Education (Scotland) Act of 1918, so that the right to impart religious instruction shall be accorded to all public schools as is accorded in transferred schools; and further, the General Assembly request that section 18 of the Education (Scotland) Act of 1918 be so altered as to bring it into line with section 38 of the Act of 1872, with the addition of the provision of section 18 of the Act of 1918 as regards the appointment of teachers and religious instruction in transferred schools. The General Assembly also consider that sub-sections 7, 8, 9 and 10 of section 18 should be revised and altered.²⁸

Section 18 of the 1918 Act is the section that is dedicated to voluntary or denominational schools. In the first point, the Assembly seeks to secure the same rights to deliver religious instruction in schools that have not been recently transferred. Sub-section 7 refers to the provision for the transfer of schools that were established after the passing of the Act. Sub-section 8 refers to the building of new denominational schools if required by the Education Authority. Sub-section 9 refers to the position of schools after ten years of transfer to the authority or building of a new school. If after inquiry the school is no longer required for denominational purposes and Sub-section 3 of section 8 of the 1918 Act is no longer applicable, the school can be discontinued or reconfigured as a public school. In these circumstances, compensation, if appropriate, should be paid to the appropriate body. Sub-section 10 refers to the modification of section 38 of the 1872 Act.

The language of the 1923 report appears to be heavily influenced by thinking on eugenics. In that era, eugenics proposed a form of 'biological determinism': differences between races are characterised by inherited and inborn traits that help to explain social and economic distinctions.²⁹ Key phrases appear in the report to emphasise the seriousness of the problem posed by the presence of the (perceived to be) growing Irish Roman Catholic population. These phrases configure the problem as a problem of race. The problem is described as the 'problem of the Irish Roman Catholic population' (750) and 'an Irish Problem' (751). The

Irish are frequently referred to as the Irish 'race' (750 and on ten other pages) and as aliens: 'alien people' (758), a 'large alien population' (758), an 'alien race' (759) and a 'race that is alien' (760). It is important to note that the discussion about the repeal or revision of the Education (Scotland) Act 1918 in the 1923 report is partially couched in the language of racial and denominational difference that is prevalent in the campaign against Irish immigration. As has been seen above, there are two references in the discussion on Catholic schools pertaining to an alien race. First, the Catholic schools are described as schools for the children of an 'alien race' (759). Second, the Catholic Church is using the schools to establish a faith for a 'race that is alien in sympathy and in religion' (760).

In the 1924 report of the Committee on Church and Nation, the remit for the Education (Scotland) Act has been devolved to a Sub-Committee.³⁰ It is noted that this issue was also being discussed by a similar Committee of the United Free Church. The Sub-Committee met on 14 April 1924 in a conference with the United Free Church Sub-Committee. Some Education Authorities were invited to attend this meeting. There were plans to hold a further and enlarged conference. The report of the Sub-Committee is consistent with the call of the General Assembly in the deliverance of 1923, point 3, and extends the focus of the Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee sought financial information about the transferred schools. The Sub-Committee argued that all new transfers should be conducted subject to the 1872 Act. The Act should be amended such that Education Authorities should have control over teachers in transferred schools. The Sub-Committee also sought a report on the numbers of 'teachers in transferred schools who are members of religious orders'.³¹ It was proposed that if sub-sections (7, 8) of section 18 do refer to authorities having to take over future transferred schools from Roman Catholic or other churches, this should be repealed. Any transference of schools should be under the 1872 Act. The final point is a condemnation of the right to compensation for the transferred schools (after ten years) under Sub-section 9 of section 18. This is rejected as 'open to grave abuse'.³² The report of the Sub-Committee is incorporated into the Church and Nation Committee report under Appendix II. The General Assembly noted the report and renewed the remit for the Sub-Committee.

It is instructive that in the 1924 report of the Sub-Committee on the Education (Scotland) Act 1918, the pejorative language of 'race' and 'alien race' does not appear and will not resurface in any of the subsequent reports of the Sub-Committee. By contrast, the tone of the 1923 report has been continued in the 1924 report of the Sub-Committee on Irish immigration. This particular Sub-Committee had been charged to further the remit to urge the government to investigate the situation to preserve and protect Scottish nationality and civilisation.³³ The report commented that the increase in the Irish population was deemed to be detrimental because they were a drain on relief funds and they had a high level of criminal conviction.³⁴

The 1925 Committee on Church and Nation provided a series of proposed amendments to the 1918 Act.³⁵ First they proposed that Sub-section 3 (iii) be amended such that religious instruction is to be at the beginning or the end of the school period and, perhaps more crucially, will be specified in a table and approved by the Scottish Education Department. They proposed that Sub-section 7 be amended to exclude payment or rent to those who transfer a school to the Education Authority. The proposed amendment to Sub-section 8 is also concerned with religious instruction being at the beginning or the end of the school period. Sub-section 9 is to be amended to delete the time limit of ten years and to delete all reference to possible compensation. They also provided an alternative amendment that section 18 should not be applicable to any school acquired by an Education Authority after the passing of this Act. The Sub-Committee reported on a further joint conference with the United Free Church which agreed on the amendments outlined above and formed a joint deputation to the Secretary of State for Scotland to present the agreed amendments. The Secretary of State suggested a conference with Dr. Macdonald of the Education Department. The Secretary agreed to meet the deputation after the conference. The remit to the Sub-Committee was continued. The report of the Sub-Committee on Irish immigration of 1925 focused on the high levels of emigration of Scots and the intention to discuss the 'racial problem' with the Secretary of State for Scotland.³⁶

The 1926 report of the Committee on Church and Nation included a series of amendments to the 1918 Act in Appendix IV that had been agreed by the joint Sub-Committee.³⁷ There are two that are highlighted

as key points in the short section that reports on the Sub-Committee on the Act. First, the Sub-Committee proposes that 'religious teaching, according to use and wont' be obligatory in all non-transferred schools.³⁸ Second, where there is sufficient accommodation in schools, there is no need to transfer or build a new school. If parents desired denominational religious instruction, then, this could be provided by teachers of the same faith as the children. In the same year, the General Assembly instructed the Sub-Committee on Irish immigration to 'take what steps are open to ascertain the relative position of the Scottish and Irish races in Scotland'.³⁹

The 1927 report of the Education Sub-Committee presents a proposed statement that was to be submitted to representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁰ The statement begins in expressing that:

Our desire is for the largest possible measure of agreement with the Roman Catholic Church in the administration of the Education (Scotland) Act 1918, by the Education Authorities of Scotland.⁴¹

In this statement, the two main points highlighted in the 1926 report are revisited. The Sub-Committee seeks the 'acquiescence' of the Roman Catholic Church in their demand for the statutory right for religious instruction in other schools (non-denominational). They also ask that separate schools be only employed in large cities and towns where the numbers of Catholic children are large; in smaller towns, villages and rural areas, they ask that the Roman Catholic children attend public schools and receive appropriate religious instruction. The actual wording of the underlying principles, however, is less sanguine. Principle (2) advocates discretion for Education Authorities in providing additional transferred schools (where they are deemed necessary or desirable) but that there be no statutory obligation if they can arrange appropriate religious instruction by teachers of the same faith as the children. This is quite different from what appears to be an initial appeal for good sense extended by the Roman Catholic Church. The Sub-Committee on Irish immigration of 1927 produced a statement on the population of the Scottish and Irish races in Scotland.⁴² The statement revisited the issues of emigration and the alleged drain on relief funds. The statement expresses great concerns about social, moral and spiritual disruption for the Scottish race and the pressing need to preserve the Scottish race.

The proposed changes to provision of school accommodation and assurances of ‘guarantee’ of appropriate religious instruction were reiterated in the report on the Education (Scotland) Act 1918 (contained in the report of the Committee on Church and Nation) in 1928 with renewed urgency as a result of the process of the Bonnybridge case.⁴³ It is useful to examine the Bonnybridge case and the implications of the final ruling in this case.

The Catholic clergy in Bonnybridge (a small town near Falkirk) had requested that Stirlingshire Authority build a new Catholic school for the growing population of Catholic children.⁴⁴ This was refused but an existing school could be considered for transfer. The building of a local Catholic school was completed in 1925, and the local priest, Father Miley, and the trustees requested the transfer of the school to the local authority. This would have been under the provision of section 18 (7) of the 1918 Act. This was refused and the case was sent to the Scottish Education Department for arbitration. In 1928, the Scottish Education Department granted permission for the transfer. Stirlingshire Authority was unhappy with this decision and a legal battle ensued. The first interpretation was by the First Division of the Court of Session that favoured the transfer, but an appeal to the Inner House, later in the year, led to the case of Stirlingshire Authority being upheld. The trustees appealed and the matter was referred to the House of Lords. In 1929, the Lords supported the first decision that the school be transferred. The Bonnybridge case has been interpreted as an important consolidation of the responsibility of an Authority to accept a new Catholic school that had been built after the 1918 Act (under the conditions of section 18 (7)). Rt Rev. William Francis Brown, auxiliary bishop in the English diocese of Southwark but an energetic advocate of Catholic education throughout Britain, wrote in *The Tablet* in December 1929 that Sub-section 7 of section 18 of the Act had been written very carefully to ‘secure the right to new (Catholic) schools’ (Brown, 1929).⁴⁵ He also commented that authorities around the country had been willing to fund new Catholic schools and that Stirlingshire, apart from one or two difficult cases, had been fair in their dealings with Catholic schools.

There was a fuller report of the Sub-Committee published in the Supplementary Reports of the Schemes of the Church of Scotland, 1928.⁴⁶ This report was focused on the impending change in legislation

that would result in the cessation of the Education Authorities and the establishment of Education Committees of County Councils and the town councils of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee. The Church of Scotland was concerned about the continuation of the religious instruction in non-transferred schools according to use and wont. The Sub-Committee identified three proposals. First, they sought the insertion of a clause that maintained the then current system. Second, they sought representation of the Scottish churches on the proposed Committees. Third, they sought supervisors of religious instruction in all non-transferred schools. There were serious concerns that the move to Education Committees would weaken the 'security' for religious instruction. The Secretary of State agreed to the request for representation on the proposed committee but limited to: 'at least one person conversant with the custom which has prevailed in the public schools of Scotland of giving instruction in religion to children'.⁴⁷ The Church of Scotland was dissatisfied with this and sought representation of all the churches that had handed schools over in 1873. The Sub-Committee sought and received support from the Educational Institute of Scotland on 8 November for the 'continuance of religious instruction in every school according to use and want'.⁴⁸ The Sub-Committee on Irish immigration of 1928 proposed that they pursue the passing of immigration laws in the UK, to 'mitigate the danger to Scottish nationality'.⁴⁹

In the 1929 report of the Committee on Church and Nation, there is a separate section devoted to the Local Government (Scotland) Bill.⁵⁰ This presents correspondence between John White and Sir John Gilmour, Secretary of State for Scotland. The Church of Scotland sought to 'safeguard' religious instruction in the new bill. The Church now requested at least three persons, not one, conversant with the customs which prevailed in the public schools in Scotland and the Church sought guarantees that these be representatives of the churches. The Church was also anxious that if a Sub-Committee was formed for religious instruction that an adequate representation would be ensured from the Church Association in each area. John White added a reminder that the Church of Scotland transferred their schools in accordance with the 1872 Act for no payment and without the security of religious instruction that was conferred to the schools in 1918.

After a meeting with the joint committee on 15 January 1929, Sir John sent a letter to John White on 24 January 1929. Sir John rejected the three proposals but stated that he would add an amendment to the effect that if an Education Authority decided to discontinue religious instruction under section 7 of the 1918 Act, this could not be enacted without being ratified by the electorate of the area. John White's reply on 28 January 1929 states that the ratification by the electorate was a 'very valuable safeguard'. He registers his disappointment that the three proposals have been rejected and argues that Church Associations be recognised in each area. Sir John Gilmour, in a later letter of 2 February, states that Church Associations cannot be accorded statutory recognition until they have been formed and have demonstrated their usefulness. The amendment was added and the bill stated that at least 'two persons interested in the promotion of religious instruction in terms of section 7 of the Education (Scotland) Act' be nominated by the Churches or denominational bodies, but that these would be nominated separately from those who represented the denominations which were concerned with the transferred schools.⁵¹ According to Augustus Muir, one of John White's biographers, White himself drafted the clause on the two persons to be nominated; further, he sought and gathered support and the clause was inserted in the bill.⁵² The General Assembly recorded 'deep satisfaction' with these outcomes and instructed the Committee on Education to oversee the nomination of representatives and to bring before the presbyteries the proposal for Associations of Churches.

The Sub-Committee on Irish immigration of 1929 renewed the emphasis on safeguarding Scottish nationality.⁵³ The report also included a review of statistics and an account of a meeting with representatives of the government. At this meeting the deputation sought regulations on immigration, repatriation of natives of the Irish Free State who were a financial burden on the state or convicted of criminal activity and that voting rights be only accorded to people who had accrued a period of residence.

The report of the Committee on Education for 1930 is from the Committee on Education of the united Church of Scotland.⁵⁴ The report states that it benefits from the co-operation of the Committees of the uniting Churches.⁵⁵ The Church of Scotland had reunited with the majority

of the United Free Church in 1929, thereby ending the Disruption that began in 1843.⁵⁶ The united Church was still very 'interested in maintaining the place of religion in the life of the schools'.⁵⁷ The main focus of the report is on the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1929 and the Bonnybridge case. There are two other short sections on work in training colleges and the schoolmasters' pension scheme. The section on the Local Government Act describes the action to ensure the presbyteries were fully cognisant of their responsibility to confirm that appropriate Church representatives are appointed for the Education Committees. The section on the Bonnybridge case provides the narrative of the events, procedure and outcome of the case. This is prefixed by a statement that the Committee has not made any public pronouncement on the effects of the decision, but the implications of the decision have to be considered. This must be undertaken to avoid anything that will 'awaken religious animosities or induce an atmosphere of sectarian bitterness'.⁵⁸ The Committee interprets the decision as 'far-reaching' because the Education Authority has no locus in such decisions as these belong to the Scottish Education Department (which is circumscribed by statute). The Committee recommends careful study and a full inquiry into the recent interpretation of the 1918 Act.

The Sub-Committee on Irish immigration of 1930 urges the government to produce exact statistics on immigration and issues like the number of Irish on unemployment benefit.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the Sub-Committee expresses dissatisfaction with the few statistics that have been provided by the government in what appears to be a lukewarm response to the request for information.

Some Early Perspectives on the Campaigns

The next two sections will examine some responses to the twin campaign against Irish immigration and the Education (Scotland) Act 1918. Brown and Bruce et al. note that the official biography of John White written by Augustus Muir in 1958 makes no mention of the campaign against the Irish Catholics.⁶⁰ Bruce et al. argue that this demonstrates that anti-Catholicism had by that point become outdated. Brown further adds that J. H. S. Burleigh is silent on this matter in his *Church*

History of Scotland (1960).⁶¹ There is, however, some mention of the campaigns in earlier works, in books produced around the time of the campaign. Alexander Gammie wrote an early biography of White in 1929 in the ‘Great Churchmen Series’. There is a brief mention of the campaign in Gammie’s book in a terse account of some of the additional areas of activity for the Church and Nation Committee formed in 1919 and jointly led by John White. One of the major initial areas of activity for the Committee was ‘the question of how best to commend the teaching of Jesus Christ to those who are seeking to solve the problems of industrial life’. Gammie adds:

To these subjects many others were added from time to time, such as the Lambeth proposals for the Re-union of Christendom, the question of Presbyterian Superintendence, the problem of Irish Immigration, the proposed Amendment of the Education (Scotland) Act 1918, in regard to Religious Instruction, to quote only a few.⁶²

The omission or brief acknowledgement of the twofold campaign is not, however, replicated in Fleming’s third volume of *A History of the Church in Scotland 1875–1929*.⁶³ Fleming addresses both issues and, in doing so, he uses the rhetoric and language of the Sub-Committee in an indiscriminate manner.

Considerable areas of a once entirely Protestant character have been occupied, one might say colonised, by a race of antagonistic habits and ideals. The Irish Roman Catholics are financially poor and obtain more than their share of relief funds. Criminal statistics do not tell in their favour—they fall too easy a prey to intemperance and improvidence and show little desire to rise in the social scale.⁶⁴

Fleming turns his attention to the second part of the campaign: the Education (Scotland) Act 1918. He claims that the Catholic Church has focused on Catholic school education as a means to ensure continuity in the faith:

An over-taxed people found itself obliged to pay immense sums for school buildings over which they had no rights, and which were used to propagate an alien form of faith.⁶⁵

He is pessimistic about any long-term success of the twofold campaign begun in 1923:

It does not seem likely any agitation for the disenfranchisement or repatriation of Irish immigrants will be successful, but there is at least good ground for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry that will take steps to safeguard the future and prevent the ideals, traditions, and spiritual foundations of the Scottish Race being undermined by hostile forces in the land of their inheritance.⁶⁶

This polemical approach is somewhat tempered by the sober admission that secular materialism is more to be feared than the pope.⁶⁷ Interestingly, Fleming has clearly failed to recognise the divergent paths taken by the two campaigns. While the Sub-Committee on Irish immigration continued to use the language of ‘race’ and preservation of the ‘Scottish race and nationality’, the Sub-Committee on Education abandoned the language of ‘race’ used in the 1923 report in all subsequent reports.

Some Later Perspectives on the Campaigns

Space will not permit a full survey of the perspectives leading up to the present day, but it is illuminating to discuss perspectives that emerge in the ecumenical age of the late 20th and early 21st centuries and, particularly, around the time of the public apology by the Church of Scotland for ‘any part played in sectarianism by our Church in the past’.⁶⁸

Relationships between the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church at national and local levels had greatly improved from the 1960s onwards, as the following examples will demonstrate. At the national level, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church have cooperated in a Joint Commission on Doctrine for over 40 years.⁶⁹ The launch of ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) in 1990 was highly significant as the Roman Catholic Church were full members. On the local level, some of the local meetings of ministers, the ‘fraternals’, invited the neighbouring Catholic priests to join them.⁷⁰ There has been

some recent grass-roots collaboration between the two churches to tackle sectarianism.⁷¹ In May 2001, Norman Shanks, the then leader of the Iona Community, was instrumental in the initiation of a study into sectarianism, and in 2002 the Church and Nation Committee provided a report on sectarianism: ‘The Demon in our Society’.⁷² This report acknowledges that the Church and Nation Committee campaigned ‘intemperately’ against Irish immigration and that this was effectively racism. The report stated that the Church of Scotland in the twenty-first century had to be part of the solution. In a later report on sectarianism to the General Assembly of 2012, the General Assembly reiterates its regret for statements made regarding Irish immigration.⁷³

It is interesting to note that this contrite tone is reflected in the later literature produced by scholars within the Church of Scotland and wider Protestant traditions. In particular let us focus on some of the work produced by some of the most influential scholars of the Church of Scotland. Duncan B. Forrester, the then Professor of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology and Dean of the Faculty of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, wrote in 1999 that:

The early days of the reunited Church as a Protestant folk-church were sullied by concerns about the ‘Irish Roman Catholic menace’ and calls from the Church of Scotland for the repatriation of Irish Roman Catholics who were on relief or had fallen foul of the law.⁷⁴

Douglas Murray, the then Principal of Trinity College and Senior Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History at the University of Glasgow, points out the flaws in the campaign in 2000:

The campaign was futile and its basic premise, that the Irish population in Scotland was continuing to increase, was shown by both the government and the press to be false.⁷⁵

The use of the words *sullied*, *futile* and *false* contrasts markedly with the words used by Fleming and the 1923 report: *antagonistic habits and ideals*, *intemperance*, *improvidence* and *alien form of faith*.⁷⁶

Later, Muirhead (2015), in a more popular account of the history of Scotland's churches, written after the public apology of the Church of Scotland, describes the reaction of some to the inclusion of the Catholic schools in 1918:

For some there was outrage at Catholic education being paid for out of the rates and 'Rome on the Rates' became a slogan in the campaign.⁷⁷

He tempers this with an acknowledgement of the position of the Catholic parents:

Of course the parents paid rates too and had previously been paying for schools that they did not use.⁷⁸

He balances up the (alleged) segregation caused by the schools with the advantages of the increased opportunity for Catholic children to progress to post-elementary school education. Later in the book, discussing anti-Catholicism, he states:

One topic that remained, and remains, an embarrassment to Scottish Churches was anti-Catholicism, something which came to the fore periodically, often triggered by changes in the political climate.⁷⁹

The legacy of the *futile* and *false* anti-Catholic campaign, according to Muirhead, is a lingering sense of *embarrassment*. The language has changed, the tone is conciliatory and a more critical evaluation emerges. Murray provides an astute analysis when he states that the campaign against Irish immigration was rooted in the anxiety of the Presbyterian churches about their declining influence in Scottish society and the Roman Catholic support for the Labour party.⁸⁰ Murray argues that there was also a serious concern about a challenge to Article III of the Articles Declaratory: 'that the Church of Scotland was a national Church representative of the Christian faith of the Scottish people'. Part of the impetus for the united Church was that this would be the largest Church in Scotland, but the increase in the number of Roman Catholics posed a potential threat to this ambition. Sinclair adds that this would then be a very serious challenge to

the concept of Scottishness that reaffirmed the close connection between nationality (and, for some, race) and Presbyterianism.⁸¹

The issue of the later evaluation of the campaign against the Education (Scotland) Act 1918 is more problematic. The 2002 report does address the issue of 'Education and separate schooling' in a very short section (section 6).⁸² This refers to more recent discussion and debates about denominational schools and sectarianism. The General Assembly of 1999 reached the conclusion that:

Separate schooling, while not necessarily causing sectarian attitudes, and indeed there is no real evidence to show that denominational schools, in themselves, lead to prejudicial attitudes, may nevertheless help reinforce the prejudice and stereotypes which are passed on by society.⁸³

The 2002 report accepts that this statement itself has been perceived by some people as being sectarian. The report ends this section with an inconclusive and unsatisfactory statement:

We believe that it is right to acknowledge this perception and, in the spirit of our report, to reflect upon its significance.

There is no explicit apology in the 2002 report for the use of racial language in the 1923 report when referring to Catholic schools. The 1923 report, as clearly outlined above, did refer to the Catholic schools educating children of an 'alien race' and the schools being used to establish a faith for 'a race that is alien in sympathy and religion'.⁸⁴ The majority of the statements of culpability in the 2002 report refer to the campaign against Irish immigration. It may be possible that these statements were intended to incorporate the two racial references to Catholic schools. It is also possible that the 2002 report was distracted by more contemporary debates about Catholic schools.⁸⁵ Later debates on the position of denominational schooling became more focused on issues such as segregation and sectarianism and parental rights. Catholic schools could be perceived to be sectarian or contribute to sectarianism by segregating children.⁸⁶ The facts remain, however, that two racial statements were used in reference to Catholic schools in the 1923 report.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has examined the twofold campaign against the *restriction of Irish Catholic immigration* and the *repeal or revision of the Education (Scotland) Act 1918*, with a detailed exposition of the campaign against the Education (Scotland) Act 1918. The campaign against Irish immigration was partially used as a means of expediting the process of unification between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church. The campaign against the Education (Scotland) Act 1918, while attempting to repeal some of the perceived injustices of the 1918 Act, was similarly used to serve some pressing concerns of the Church of Scotland in relation to education. The Church of Scotland used the campaign as part of the strategy to secure religious instruction in non-denominational schools and, latterly, to ensure adequate representation on the Education Committees to protect the interests of the (newly reunited) Church of Scotland.

Notes

1. S. J. Brown, “‘Outside the Covenant’: The Scottish Presbyterian Churches and Irish Immigration, 1922–1938”, *Innes Review*, 42(1), 1991, 19–45.
2. For example: G. P. T. Finn (2003), “Sectarianism”, in T. G. K. Bryce and W. M. Humes (eds.), *Scottish Education: Post-Devolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 897–907; S. Bruce, T. Glendinning, I. Paterson and M. Rosie, *Sectarianism in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); J. Conroy, “Sectarianism and Scottish Education”, in T. G. K. Bryce and W. M. Humes (eds.), *Scottish Education: Beyond Devolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 793–803.
3. Appendix Education (Scotland) Bill. Statement by the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland: *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland for the year 1872* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
4. Report of the Education Committee submitted to the General Assembly, May 1873: *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland for the year 1873* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).

5. Stevenson, J. Stevenson, *Fulfilling a Vision. The Contribution of the Church of Scotland to School Education, 1772–1872* (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 142–145.
6. *Ibid.*, 145.
7. Report of the Education Committee submitted to the General Assembly, May 1918: *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland for the year 1918* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
8. Report of Education Committee submitted to the General Assembly, May 1919: *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland for the year 1919* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
9. Report of Education Committee submitted to the General Assembly, May 1920: *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland for the year 1920* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons); Report of Education Committee submitted to the General Assembly, May 1921: *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland for the year 1921* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons); Report of Education Committee submitted to the General Assembly, May 1922: *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland for the year 1922* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
10. Report of Education Committee submitted to the General Assembly, May 1923: *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland for the year 1923* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
11. *Report of committee to consider overtures from the Presbytery of Glasgow and from the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr on 'Irish Immigration' and the 'Education (Scotland) Act 1918' to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 23 May 1923.*
12. *Ibid.*, 751. There is some mention of Poles working in coal mining districts, but the threat is perceived to be caused by the Irish race.
13. *Ibid.*, 750.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 758.
17. *Ibid.*, 751.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 758.
20. *Ibid.*, 757.
21. M. Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992); T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700–2007* (London: Penguin 2006); Brown, 'Outside the covenant'.

22. *Report of committee to consider overtures, 759.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, 760.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, 763.
29. M. Turda, "Race, Science, and Eugenics in the 20th Century", in A. Bashford and P. Levine, *Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 62–79.
30. Report of Sub-Committee on Education (Scotland) Act 1918 to Church and Nation Committee, in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1924* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
31. *Ibid.*, 647.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Report of Sub-Committee on Irish Immigration, to Church and Nation Committee, in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1924* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
34. *Ibid.*, 640.
35. Education (Scotland) Act 1918 in Church and Nation Committee, in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1925* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
36. Report of Sub-Committee on Irish Immigration to Church and Nation Committee, in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1925* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons). The General Assembly instructed the Sub-Committee to 'watch over the racial situation in Scotland' (727).
37. Proposed Amendments to the Education (Scotland) Act 1918. Appendix V of Report on Committee on Church and Nation in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1926* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
38. *Ibid.*, 592.
39. Report of Sub-Committee on Irish Immigration to Church and Nation Committee, in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1926* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons), 596.

40. Education (Scotland) Act 1918, Appendix IV of Church and Nation Committee, in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1927* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
41. *Ibid.*, 1192.
42. Irish Immigration, Appendix V of Church and Nation Committee, in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1927* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
43. Education (Scotland) Act 1918, Appendix IV of Church and Nation Committee, in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1928* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
44. A. Bain, “The significance of the Bonnybridge School Case of 1922–1929 for Catholic education in Scotland”, *Innes Review*, 62(1), 2011, 70–81.
45. W. F. Brown, “The Bonnybridge School Case”, *The Tablet*, 21 December 1929.
46. Report of Sub-Committee on Education (Scotland) Act 1918 to Church and Nation Committee, in *Supplementary Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly at the Adjourned Meeting, 1928* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
47. *Ibid.*, 200.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Report of Sub-Committee on Irish Immigration, to Church and Nation Committee in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1928* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
50. Local Government (Scotland) Bill, Committee on Church and Nation in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, May 1929 and at the Adjourned Meeting October 1929* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
51. *Ibid.*, 711–712.
52. A. Muir, *John White* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), 274–275.
53. Report of Sub-Committee on Irish Immigration, to Church and Nation Committee in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1929* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).

54. J. McKay, *The Kirk and the Kingdom* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).
55. Report of the Committee on Education in *Church of Scotland: Reports to the General Assembly with the Legislative Acts, 1930* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
56. M. Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 437.
57. Report of the Committee on Education, 1930, 1123.
58. *Ibid.*, 1128.
59. Report of Sub-Committee on Irish Immigration, to Church and Nation Committee in *Reports on the schemes of the Church of Scotland with the Legislative Acts passed by the General Assembly, 1930* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons).
60. Brown, 'Outside the covenant'; Bruce et al., *Sectarianism in Scotland*; Muir, *John White*.
61. Brown, 'Outside the covenant'.
62. A. Gammie, *Dr John White: A Biography and a Study* (London: James Clarke, 1929), 115–16.
63. J. R. Fleming, *A History of the Church in Scotland 1875–1929* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1933).
64. *Ibid.*, 146–147.
65. *Ibid.*, 148.
66. *Ibid.*, 150.
67. *Ibid.*, 151.
68. Church & Society Council, *Sectarianism*, A Report for the Church of Scotland General Assembly, May 2012.
69. S. M. Kesting, "Ecumenism in Scotland", *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 14(2), 2014, 175–192.
70. Andrew T. N. Muirhead, *Reformation, Dissent and Diversity* (London: Bloomsbury), 212.
71. Kesting, 'Ecumenism', 176.
72. E. Kelly, "Challenging Sectarianism in Scotland: The Prism of Racism", *Scottish Affairs*, 42(1), 2003, 32–46; The Church and Nation Committee, *The Demon in our Society* (2002).
73. Church & Society Council, *Sectarianism* (2012).
74. D. B. Forrester, "Ecclesia Scoticana – Established, Free or National?", *Theology* 102(806), 1999, 80–89.
75. D. M. Murray, *Rebuilding the Kirk: Presbyterian Reunion in Scotland 1909–1929* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 2000), 272–273.

76. Fleming, *Church in Scotland*.
77. Muirhead, *Reformation*, 34.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., 208.
80. Murray, *Rebuilding the Kirk*, 273.
81. D. Sinclair, “The Identity of a Nation”, in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Scotland’s Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2000).
82. The Church and Nation Committee (2002), 19–20.
83. *Report of Department of Education to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1999), 2.4.2.
84. *Report of committee to consider overtures* (1923).
85. See S. J. McKinney, “The historical and contemporary debate about the relation of Catholic schools in Scotland and the social problem of sectarianism”, *Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica – Journal of Theories and Research in Education*, 10(1), 2015, 13–45.
86. A. M. Douglas, *Church and School in Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1985).