



to the Roman Church. Religion, as we will see, had entered into the world of Ireland's nationhood.

Indeed, in his times, Donal O'Neill, King of Tyrone (d. 1325), reminded the Irish people that Ireland's misery with the English started with Adrian IV's letter to Henry II. O'Neill wrote a letter to the Irish people saying that the Pope should rescind England's right to rule Ireland. O'Neill was correct in his prediction that England would abuse and mistreat the Irish and demonize Ireland's Catholic Faith. We know the history of King Henry VIII's removing England from the Catholic Church (1536) and setting up the rival Church of England. And Henry also worked furiously, but unsuccessfully, to convert the Irish Catholic population to his Church of England. Henry's religion initiative left an indelible mark on what became North Ireland as a Protestant state and all of the rest of Ireland as a Catholic state. Henry also transplanted a population of Scottish Presbyterians into the province of Ulster to be the beginning of the present population, primarily Protestant, of North Ireland. Religion is still the principal divider of Ireland into two nations.

Irish resistance to the new English dominance continues to this date, The vote in the North Ireland Assembly in May 2022 resulted in the Sinn Fein party, with its long history of resistance to English rule, winning the most votes and taking the most seats in the Assembly, as North Ireland's population has become increasingly Catholic.

That recent vote may remind us of Oliver Cromwell's (1649-1650) brief but brutal impact on Ireland. Cromwell created the Commonwealth with England, Scotland and Ireland as members. From this Ireland, Cromwell awarded his soldiers with gifts of Irish land, pushing the Catholic population to the West: "To Connaught or to Hell" was the choice Cromwell gave the Irish people. Native Irish ownership of land in 1641 was 60%, declining to 9% by 1660. Back in England, Cromwell's head wound up on a pike. Not only did the Irish despise Cromwell!

The Siege of Derry in 1688 and the Battle of the Boyne (1690) brought the name William of Orange to Ireland thus to remain in the North as the Orange Order and other militant North Ireland entities. The Irish fought William at the Boyne as the Irish fought to return a Catholic King (James II) to the throne of England, hoping that a Catholic King would facilitate an independent Ireland. Also lamentable was The Act of Settlement which led to the seizure of 170,000 acres in Ulster taken mostly by Scots Presbyterians. By 1703 Catholics owned only 14% of what had been 60% of Ulster. By 1750 Catholics owned about 5% of Ulster. No wonder that Ireland is divided into Catholic and Protestant parts. The effort to restore a Catholic King failed as did the Year of the French when the French supported the 1798 rebellion led by Wolfe Tone. In fact, by 1801 under the Act of Union, Ireland was made part of the Union with seats in the London Parliament (all Irish delegates being Protestant). Rebel Robert Emmett rejected his seat in his moving "Let no man write my epitaph" speech.

The era of failed risings ended with the Gaelic League (1873). The league set out to return Ireland to its roots, including the return of the Irish language to the schools. Douglas Hyde's essay: "The Necessity of De Anglicizing Ireland" set the tone for the rebels, naming their political party Sinn Fein. Leaguers' names can be found among the names of the leaders of the

Easter Rising in 1916. Ireland was on a straight path to independence, if not to a unified Ireland. The League pressed for a Home Rule Bill (1914) which would give Ireland a measure of independence. The tension rose as Ireland approached self-rule. The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers armed themselves. The war in Europe brought soldiers from both north and south to fight for England and put armed conflict on the agenda in Ireland.

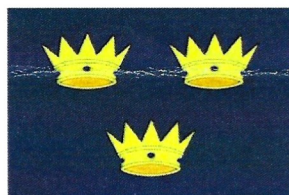
The Rising in Dublin on April 24, 1919 (Easter Monday) opened decades of violent conflict that would lead to the two Irelands which is the subject of this essay. W. B. Yeats took an optimistic view of the future after the Rising when he wrote that “a terrible beauty is born,” that beauty being an independent Ireland. Ireland was ten years from being a Free State and by 1949, Ireland was finally, an independent Republic – but not a unified state. In 1921, the Government of Ireland Act created the Two Irelands, one the Irish Free State of twenty-six counties with its own Dail, within the Commonwealth and the Northern Ireland state of six counties, a member of the Parliament in London, part of the UK and no longer officially Ulster.

As we know, the two Irelands had their conflicts. The Troubles in the 1990s might have something to do with the animosity which has kept Ireland from unifying. The religious divide between Protestant and Catholic is kept alive by political and religious leaders, like the Rev. Ian Paisley. Bottom line of unification is that the legislation that created the Two Irelands puts the legal union of the Two Irelands in the hands of the people of Northern Ireland. The North controls the possibility of a unified Ireland. The May 2022 election to choose the members of the Northern Ireland Assembly raised the hopes of nationalists when the Sinn Fein party won the most seats of the competing political parties. Its win gave Sinn Fein the power to name the First Minister of the Assembly but no government can be formed unless a Deputy First Minister is named by the Democratic Unionist Party (an aspect of Power Sharing). As of now in protest against the Northern Ireland Protocol, DUP will not engage with Sinn Fein to form a government. Much of the turbulence comes from the Brexit of the UK from the European Union. What comes next is anyone’s guess! Until then Ireland remains divided.

(Written by John Walsh with research assistance from Don Kenny)



Ulster



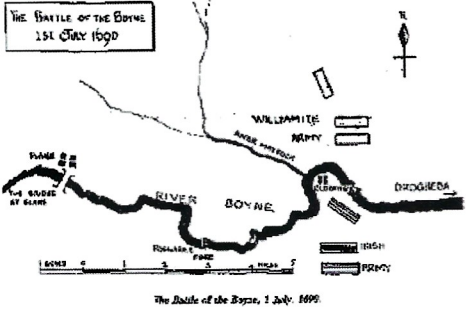
Munster



Leitrim



Connaught



The Battle of the Boyne, 1 July 1690

