

RELIGION AND VIOLENCE: THE CASE OF PAISLEY AND ULSTER EVANGELICALS

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Abstract

This essay uses the specific question of how far and in what ways, Ian Paisley has been responsible for the violence in Northern Ireland to consider the wider question of evangelical Protestant attitudes to political violence. It concludes that, though evangelicalism is an important inspiration for the 'ethnic defence' strand Ulster unionism, it is also a pacifying influence. Only among a tiny number of people (most of them influenced by British Israelite ideas) is there anything comparable to the Islamic fundamentalist notion of 'jihad'.

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INTRODUCTION

This essay uses a very narrow question to address a wider one. The main point is to explore a theme in political sociology and the sociology of religion: what is the effect of evangelical Protestantism on political violence? It will be approached through the smaller question of the effect of religion on loyalist terrorism in Northern Ireland. That in turn will be addressed by considering to what extent Ian Paisley is responsible for the conflict in Northern Ireland. The intellectual justification for so personalising the topic is that, unless the abstract question is expressed in personal terms, it will be untestable. The practical justification is that this is how many people outside Northern Ireland see the link between religion and political violence. The authors of one biography describe Paisley as a 'malign colossus' (Moloney and Pollak 1986); the author of another entitles it *Persecuting Zeal* (Cooke 1996). Testing various interpretations of the proposition 'Paisley caused the Troubles' may allow us to see if Paisley is, as another biography title described him, a 'man of wrath' (Marrinan 1973). Even if definitive answers are not possible, it will be useful to clarify what sort of evidence would be needed to judge the impact of religious beliefs on attitudes to political violence.

PAISLEY, RELIGION AND POLITICS

Ian Paisley, the son of an independent evangelical clergyman, began his own ministry in east Belfast in 1945. Growing popularity as a revival preacher led to him being invited to lead a number of small groups of disaffected conservative Presbyterians. In 1951 he formed these into the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster (FPC). It grew only slowly. By 1966, the start of the serious unrest, the FPC has acquired only 13 congregations; some of them very small. In the next six years, it added a further 23 as the political upheaval caused a small realignment of Ulster Protestantism (Bruce 1986).

From his arrival in Belfast, Paisley was involved in Ulster politics. Throughout his life he has been committed to the view that Ulster is in peril of being 'sold out' by the British and by its own political officer corp. Hence he was involved with various right-wing ginger groups and campaigned against Captain Terence O'Neill, who during his short time as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland made some tentative accommodating gestures towards Catholics. In January 1969 Paisley stood against O'Neill in his Stormont parliament constituency of Bannside and ran him so close that O'Neill resigned. Paisley won the seat at the by-election. In 1971 he won the Westminster seat for the same area; despite losing voters in boundary changes, he has been repeatedly returned with large majorities. In 1979, when the first elections were held to the European parliament, Paisley topped the poll in Northern Ireland, a feat repeated at every Euro-election. Although Paisley has established himself as Ulster's leading unionist politician, his party has been less successful. Originally the Protestant Unionist party, it became the Democratic Unionist party (DUP) in 1971. When the Ulster Unionist party (UUP) fragmented in the early 1970s, the DUP became one of three elements claiming to represent unionist orthodoxy; the other two were the Vanguard party and the conservative branches of the UUP. The liberal strands of the UUP withered after the failure of the 1974 power-sharing executive. Vanguard also collapsed. Unionist politics settled into the shape it held for the next twenty-five years. The larger UUP claimed the historic right to represent Ulster unionists: the DUP claimed that the UUP was not to be trusted. Since 1975, the DUP proportion of the unionist vote has varied between a low of 27 per cent and a high of 46 per cent.

In brief, Ian Paisley has had a remarkable career. No other person has successfully created a church and a party. Both were founded on the same principle: the truth we hold dear is under threat, not just from our enemies but also from our friends.

In explaining Paisley's success, I have previously stressed the importance of religion for Ulster unionism (Bruce 1986: 1998). Sadly often, I have been caricatured as arguing that the Northern Ireland conflict is 'about' religion (McGarry and O'Leary 1995). My argument is importantly different. What I have said, and it seems so obvious it barely merits repetition, is that evangelicalism is important as: (a) a marker of social divisions; (b) a source of social identity; (c) a source of claims to social virtue; (d) legitimation for political attitudes and actions; and (e) a source of motives in political action. I have argued that the historical presence of evangelicalism combines with other features of the conflict (such as the fact that the enemy are Roman Catholics) so powerfully that, while only a core of Ulster Protestants is directly influenced by all five, (a) and (b) influence all Unionists and, in various secularized permutations, (c), (d), and (e) are also influential way beyond the small core of committed Paisleyites.

In principle, evangelical Protestantism should perform the function of 'ethnic defence' less well than Catholicism or Lutheranism. They are organic and communal faiths; evangelical Protestantism stresses the individual. There is indeed one strand of evangelicalism that shies away from political involvement. Common among the Brethren is the pietist view that the chances of improving the world are too small to justify the threat to one's own purity. The Christian should avoid earthly entanglements. But evangelicalism can become strongly attached to ethnic identity if it is influenced by Calvinism. The socio-logic is this. God knows the future. Hence he knows which of us are saved and which damned and that fate was determined before we were born. The world divides into two immutable populations: the saved and the damned. We cannot be sure of our fate but the Bible says: 'by their deeds shall ye know them' and 'a diseased tree will not bear fruit'. So if we live virtuous lives we can be fairly confident we are saved. People who persistently do harm to us must be damned. Although salvation is determined for each individual separately, is it likely that the children of the righteous are damned? So we are the chosen people and our inherited enemies must be the damned. Add a large dose of Old Testament 'Children of Israel' imagery and one has a strong tendency for Calvinists, when they form a small population beset on all sides, to think in religio-ethnic terms. Although in one sense Paisley is committed to the idea that Catholics can become 'born again' and be saved (which is why he spends large parts of his life preaching the gospel to uninterested shoppers in Belfast's city centre), he and his people are also liable to transfer the saved and damned categories to Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland.

In brief, the structure of the conflict in Northern Ireland means that, where as the activist evangelical tradition in the USA takes the form of voluntary association campaigns against individual vices such as alcohol consumption, abortion and pornography, in Ulster, it takes the form of defending the political rights of Protestants against the auld enemy.

PAISLEY AND VIOLENCE

My main concern is to explore the causal connections between evangelical Protestantism and political violence. I will begin by working through various meanings of the often-made claim that Paisley is responsible for the Troubles. I want to stress at the outset that although the way in which his accusers frame the accusation is profoundly moral, I am engaged in a sociological exercise. I use the language of judgement because it is familiar and easily accessible but I am really interested in exploring causal connections between a certain body of ideas that Paisley represents and certain courses of action. Whether those ideas or actions are morally or religiously justified is not my concern.

Paisley's stated attitude to political violence is clear enough. He shares Calvin's view that the state and the true religion should be mutually supportive. He generalizes that notion of reciprocity into the idea that the state should protect the citizen and the citizen should be loyal to the state. So long as the state delivers, the citizen has no right to use violence for political ends. The following from Paisley's Protestant Telegraph succinctly expresses his view:

It is wrong for Protestants to contemplate taking the law into their own hands and meting out justice to those whom they believe guilty of atrocities... 'Avenge not yourselves' is the unmistakable teaching of Scripture. Romans 12, verse 19, goes on to remind Christians that 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord'. This does not mean, of course, that Protestants ought not to be ready to defend themselves, their homes and their families from attack. It does mean that the punishment of offenders must and should be left to those

holding official authority to judge and punish.

If the state abandons the citizen then the citizen is released from his obligation and may do whatever is necessary to protect himself, his family and his country. Clearly there is a lot of slack in deciding whether this or that circumstance justifies the conclusion that the state has failed the citizen but the principle is clear and is clearly opposed to loyalist terrorism.

A Paisley is really a terrorist

It is, of course possible that Paisley is a hypocrite and that his actions belie his words. So we should begin by examining his own behaviour. Has he ever been involved in terrorism?

There is the question of the company he has kept. In his early days in Belfast he courted JW Nixon, an independent Unionist Stormont MP. The former Detective Inspector had been dismissed from the Royal Ulster Constabulary for making an inflammatory speech from an Orange platform in 1924 and was widely suspected of having led a murder squad in Belfast's violence of 1922 (Farrell 1983).

In the early years of the troubles, Paisley and his Ulster Constitution Defence Committee (UCDC) broke the law a number of times with acts of civil disobedience that mirrored the street protest of the nationalist civil rights movement. Although he was never involved in committing violent attacks, some of his close supporters certainly were. The Protestants who set upon a Civil Rights march at Burntollet Bridge in County Londonderry in January 1969 were led by a close associate, Major Ronald Bunting, and the intention to stop the march had been announced at a Paisley rally in Derry's Guildhall the day before (Cooke 1995: 160). As he aged and became more successful in electoral politics (and I would not like to guess which of those had the greater effect on his behaviour) the street protests became less frequent. However, close associates periodically broke the law on assembly and challenged the authorities with sometimes threatening demonstrations. For example, in 1986, deputy leader of the DUP Peter Robinson led some 500 men into the Irish Republic where they blockaded the small village of Clontibret. The same year they laid siege to Hillsborough for a night.

These examples immediately raise an interesting question about behaviour appropriate to the roles of clergyman and politician.

Although leading illegal demonstrations is commonplace for Ulster politicians, unionist and nationalist, it is clear from the general response, but especially from the response of other Protestant clergy, that clergy are expected to be more decorous and less confrontational than Paisley has been.

Claims that Paisley has been involved in more serious crimes gain their plausibility from the actions of those around him. In 1966 Noel Doherty, a member of Paisley's congregation for ten years, helped Paisley form the Ulster Protestant Volunteers and the UCDC. Doherty and Billy Mitchell, a Free Presbyterian Sunday School teacher who later became a leading member of the terrorist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), arranged a supply of mining explosives with a Free Presbyterian from Loughgall in Co. Armagh. The group launched a series of bomb attacks on public utilities. The idea was to pretend to be the IRA and thus dramatise the claims that Prime Minister O'Neill's tentative reforms were encouraging republicans. The real authors were identified when Thomas McDowell, a member of the UVF and of Paisley's Free Presbyterian congregation in Kilkeel, electrocuted himself while setting a bomb. Of ten people charged with the offences, nine were members of the Free Presbyterian church. However, only the prosecution's chief witness (whose evidence was judged by the court to be unreliable) claimed that Paisley himself had any prior knowledge of these attacks.

In listing Paisleyites who developed paramilitary ties, we should add the curious group Tara (Moore 1996). Formed by William McGrath, this secretive organization issued a number of blood-curdling press releases in 1969 and 1970 and was infiltrated by the UVF men, keen to discover if it had any serious military expertise and if so, to expropriate it. Tara did nothing else and was soon made irrelevant by the UVF and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). McGrath was a 'British Israelite' (of which more below). Although not himself a Free Presbyterian, he took part in early UCDC demonstrations and a number of Tara members were Free Presbyterians or DUP activists. It is worth noting here that very many people (journalists in particular) have an interest in proving that Paisley was involved in serious crimes. Given the financial rewards that the tabloid press would have given to anyone who could produce convincing evidence, its absence can be taken as compelling. Over twenty years I have been offered, in all sincerity, the most bizarre conspiracy stories linking evangelicals and terrorism. They have usually been supported by the 'no smoke without fire' justification. My response, and it strengthens with every year that goes by, is that there are so many people which such a strong interest in finding the fires that, were they there, we would have seen the evidence by now.

It is also worth noting that the onset of the serious terror campaigns in 1970 polarized Ulster unionists. People such as John McKeague (the founder of the Shankill Defence Association and the Red Hand Commando) who had previously flirted with violence under the Paisley banner, now devoted themselves to straight-forwardly terrorist activity. We might take a cynical view and suppose that Paisley and his supporters became critical of the loyalist paramilitaries once they became rivals as defenders of the Protestant people. We should also note (and more will be said about this below) that twice in the 1970s Paisley worked in co-operation with the paramilitaries. However, if the charge is put at its most robust, we must conclude that there is no evidence that Paisley was himself ever involved in serious terrorist activity.

B Paisley has encouraged others to terrorism

So we can move to the lesser charge of incitement. Has Paisley deliberately encouraged others to commit terrorist acts? This must be separated from inadvertently encouraging others to terrorism, being willing to benefit from the terrorism of others, and not acting sufficiently robustly to discourage others.

The first documented claim that Paisley encouraged others to commit acts of violence dates from the very start of the current violence. In 1966, Hugh McClean, one of the four men convicted of the murder of a young Catholic barman in Malvern Street, is reported to have said: 'I am terribly sorry I ever heard of that man Paisley or decided to follow him' (Boulton 1973: 54). That statement has been repeated endlessly but uncritically (see, for example, Cooke 1996: 149). What has not been noted is that McClean himself did not say it: it was attributed to him by an RUC officer. In court, McClean denied making this and other statements attributed to him by the police. Twenty years later, Gusty Spence, the leader of the UVF and one of the four convicted for the Malvern Street killings, said when pressed about Paisley's role: 'I have no time for Paisley's type of religious fervour or his politics but he had no involvement in re-forming the UVF though he stirred up a lot of tension at that time for his own ends'.

In his defence against the charge of incitement, Paisley could assert that he has been consistent in denouncing vigilante murder. At the time of the Malvern Street shootings, Paisley said: 'Like everyone else, I deplore and condemn this killing, as all right-thinking people must' (Bruce 1986: 79). He has since repeated that sentiment over and over and has frequently added that such crimes besmirch the name of Protestantism: 'What really stuns the decent Ulster Protestant is that a section of his own community would engage under the guise of Protestantism and Loyalty in crimes just as heinous and hellish [as those of the IRA]. As a Protestant leader I once again totally, utterly and unreservedly condemn these atrocious crimes and those who perpetrated them or planned to perpetrate them'. Or to quote his reaction to a sectarian murder in 1986: 'To take the word Protestant and use it as a flag under which this bloody deed was done reeks of the foulest hypocrisy'. Other Free Presbyterians and DUP leaders have been as unequivocal. In responding to one of Lenny Murphy's murders, Revd Ivan Foster said: 'Protestants must never believe that murder is an answer to murder' and he 'utterly repudiated murder as a means of defeating the IRA'.

One way of trying to assess the consequences of Paisley's rhetoric (and of the impact of the religion that inspires him) is to examine the behaviour of the members of the Free Presbyterian Church. If Paisley has incited others or if evangelical Protestantism encourages political violence, we might see this in the denominational affiliations of those convicted of serious offences. This is not easy. Courts and newspapers do not regularly record the denomination of those charged and convicted. However, where someone is known to be a Free Presbyterian this seems to be reported, presumably because the reporter wishes to draw attention to the tension between the terrorist's actions and his professed religiosity. Hence my information, compiled simply by carefully reading the papers for twenty years and asking respondents in the Free Presbyterian Church about names I thought I recognised probably falls not far short of the complete tally. It is also difficult to know what proportion of Free Presbyterians should have been involved in terrorism if their religion or Paisley's preaching had no effect. Knowing what is remarkable requires knowing what is normal or what we should expect. Most terror has been the work of young adult males. Allowing for turn-over (either by voluntarily leaving or dying) Paisley's Free Presbyterian Church has probably had about 10,000 adult male members since 1966. Apart from the 1966 UPV men, I can find only two Free Presbyterians who have been clearly involved in terrorism (see the Ulster Resistance details below). Membership of other evangelical sects is probably less likely to be mentioned in press reports but as most terrorist activity has been the work of the UDA and UVF, then data on the religion of their members (given below) can stand as a fairly complete assessment of the violence of evangelicals. We can reasonably conclude that committed evangelical Protestants have not been as involved in political violence as their proportion in the general population would lead them to be, if religion was irrelevant.

That Free Presbyterians by and large share Paisley's professed objections to vigilante violence is supported by the statements that have repeatedly been made to me by the many ministers and elders of the Church I have interviewed since the early 1980s. Their loyalty to their founder and to the Church makes Free Presbyterians very reluctant to talk about this issue with outsiders but a number have

privately expressed not only outright hostility to violence but also ambivalence about political activity. Although they are 'ethnic unionists' and would certainly vote for the DUP, they often rue the Troubles and Paisley's political profile. They accept that the constitutional crisis makes political activity inevitable but would much prefer that their leaders concentrated on the more important matter of winning souls for Christ. That this is not just empty rhetoric is supported by career patterns within the FPC. With the exception of Paisley himself, Free Presbyterian clergy who have been active in politics have not been promoted to high office in the Church or called to the largest and most prestigious congregations. William McCrea, Ivan Foster and William Beattie all followed Paisley in combining religion and politics. All served as councillors. McCrea was a Westminster MP for many years and is now a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly. Beattie was elected as a Protestant Unionist to the old Stormont. Foster was a leading figure in the best-known Third Force (of which more below). None attained the stature within the Church of David McIlveen (the minister of Sandown Road in East Belfast who deputises in Paisley's pulpit), John Douglas (the Clerk of the Presbytery and Principal of the Church's theology college), Bert Cooke (one of the first ordained ministers who served for two decades in Armagh), Alan Cairns (the leading minister in the USA) or others utterly unknown outside Church circles. The most respected ministers are those who have been least publicly active in politics.

When he was young, McCrea acted as spokesman for the short-lived United Loyalist Front. In July 1972, he shared a platform with masked UDA men. Although by then the UDA's reputation for sectarian murder was well-known, McCrea issued a press statement saying: 'We call on all Loyalists to give their continued support to the Ulster Defence Association as it seeks to ensure the safety of all law-abiding citizens against the bombs and bullets of the IRA. As the Catholic population have given their support to the IRA throughout this campaign of terror so must Loyalists grant unswerving support to those engaged in the cause of truth'. There is no evidence of any enduring relationship with the UDA and UVF thereafter but McCrea frequently made militant calls for aggressive action against the IRA. That he stood out from other FPC ministers in this respect may be explained by his circumstances: he was himself the target of a number of republican attacks and was friendly with the staff of Henry Brothers, a building firm in his constituency that was repeatedly targeted by republicans because it was willing to undertake work for the security forces.

One reason for supposing that Paisley and his supporters condone terrorism is that they have been unusually willing to conduct funerals for loyalist terrorists. William McCrea and Ivan Foster conducted funerals for Wesley Somerville and Horace Boyle, members of the notorious Portadown UVF cell led by Robin Jackson. Foster gave a graveside oration for Sinclair Johnston, a Larne UVF shot by the RUC during rioting in 1972. McCrea buried Benjamin Redfern, a UDA lifer who was crushed by a bin lorry while trying to escape from the Maze prison. Robert 'Basher' Bates, convicted of a number of vicious murders committed by Lenny Murphy's 'Shankill Butchers' gang, was murdered by a loyalist in June 1997 and was buried by Free Presbyterian minister Alan Smylie. Smylie had come to know Bates through his prison chaplaincy work in the Maze. Roy Metcalfe, a Lurgan businessman who sold army surplus clothing and loyalist memorabilia, was murdered by the IRA in October 1989, purportedly because he was active in Ulster Resistance and the UVF. He was buried by Free Presbyterian minister David Creane. Revd David McIlveen buried UDA man Raymond Elder in 1994. When Billy Wright, the UVF man who founded the breakaway Loyalist Volunteer Front was buried, the Reverend John Gray conducted a short service outside his home. McCrea had previously been very public in defending Billy Wright when the UVF expelled him and threatened to murder him if he did not leave Northern Ireland.

That conducting funerals signifies support for the actions of the dead is not a terribly persuasive argument. By the same token the Catholic Church would be guilty of supporting republican violence. After all, almost every republican terrorist has been buried by the Church and the Maze hunger strikers were given the last rites despite being unrepentant killers and active suicides. That the press makes more of FP than RC involvement in rituals for the dead probably stems, not from political bias, but from the different relationship between the church, religious rituals and the character of the dead found in Protestant and Catholic traditions. The Catholic Church claims a mission to an entire people, irrespective of how observant any of them have been in their lifetime. The Church also believes that its rituals are sacramental. That is, they have some required spiritual power. Hence the Church has generally taken the view that, provided the IRA does not try to use the service as a public relations opportunity (by for example displaying items of IRA uniform on the coffin), it will bury any Catholic.

Protestant denominations and sects are more vulnerable to claims that burying terrorists signifies support for their actions is that membership is voluntary and dependent on the qualities of the putative member. They may, if they wish, restrict their offices to their members. Moreover, they do not see their rituals as sacraments and hence are doing little damage to the salvational future of any person by refusing to bury him. As loyalist paramilitaries are rarely active churchgoers, it is common for the families of deceased loyalists to find it difficult to persuade any Protestant minister to officiate. Paisleyites would defend their decision to take part on two grounds. First, somebody ought to do it, if only for the sake of the family. Second, a paramilitary funeral attracts the unsaved and those are the people most in need of hearing the word of God.

What is the record of the rest of Paisley's party? Again it is hard to know how many adult male members the DUP has had over the course of the Troubles but even if we confine our attention to those active enough to have stood as candidates in elections, we would have to set a figure of at least 500 and given the considerable turnover as people move in and out of parties, the cadre could be larger. I can find only six DUP activists who have been implicated in serious crimes and none involved actual violence against people.

One was Eddie Sayers, a small businessman from Omagh, who stood as a DUP candidate in elections in 1973 and 1977. He later left the DUP for the UDA and became its Mid-Ulster Brigadier. Another was Billy Baxter, a Bangor DUP councillor who was arrested in 1993 and later convicted for soliciting funds for the UVF; he was expelled from the party. In 1986, Strabane DUP councillor Ronald Oliver Broly was charged with three counts of arson: he set fire to a digger, a primary school and a GAA club. And there are the three Ulster Resistance cases mentioned below.

We might also add George Seawright, a DUP councillor for North Belfast and Free Presbyterian elder (he later switched to attending a gospel hall), who refused to retract an outburst at a meeting of the Belfast Education and Library Board. A discussion of Catholic parents objecting to the national anthem being played at the end of joint school concerts was followed by debate over the installation of a new incinerator for a Catholic school. Seawright said something to the effect that Catholics and their priests should be incinerated and refused to withdraw or apologise. The DUP insisted that he apologise. When he refused to do so, he was expelled from the party.

One of the best grounds for arguing that the Paisleyites had encouraged others to commit acts of terrorism is that the DUP has twice openly worked in association with the loyalist paramilitaries. In 1974, Paisley, along with every other Ulster unionist politician, supported the Ulster Workers' Council strike which brought down the power-sharing executive. Paisley was not particularly active. He was in the USA when the strike began and even after he returned played little or no part in co-ordinating the action. Nonetheless he sat at a table with leading paramilitaries, at a time when there were no illusions about who was responsible for the many sectarian murders of Catholics and bomb attacks on bars in nationalist areas. The DUP was more centrally implicated in the attempt in 1977 to repeat the strike in that it was planned by Paisley and leaders of the UDA and did not involve the Ulster Unionist party.

In summary we can say that Paisley's record in deliberately encouraging others to use political violence is mixed. He and other evangelicals have been very clear in repeatedly denouncing sectarian murder. However, despite denouncing individual acts of violence, Paisley has twice given public support to the main loyalist terror organizations.

C Paisley was willing to benefit from the terrorist acts of others

One of the most common responses I have had to my general assertion that Ulster evangelicals, even the Paisleyites, are by and large law-abiding, is to say that they nonetheless bear some responsibility for the Troubles because they have been willing to accept the political benefits of the violence of others less scrupulous than themselves.

This is obviously true, just as it is true that constitutional nationalists have been happy to accept the political gains of republican violence. The Social Democratic and Labour party (SDLP) would not have enjoyed political office in the 1974 power-sharing executive or seen many of its aspirations met in the 1997 Good Friday agreement had the IRA not forced the government to seek radical innovations. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how politicians could reject any political benefits no matter how unsavoury their origins. Paisley could no more insist that the 1974 power-sharing executive should stay in office because some of those who brought it down were terrorists than the SDLP could refuse to take up office in 1999 because the current settlement was brought about by Sinn Fein's combined Armalite and ballot box strategy.

D Paisley has created an atmosphere that encourages political violence.

Perhaps the most compelling charge against Paisley and his supporters is that, despite their repeated objections to vigilante violence, the way in which they have pursued their political goals has created a political environment in which others found it easy to see terrorism as acceptable.

Among the evidence that would be presented for such a charge is the number of times Paisley has tried to mobilise popular militia. Although he insisted that his Ulster Protestant Volunteers was intended as a political rather than a paramilitary organization, it is obvious that he intended his organization to revive memories of the original Ulster Volunteer Force. In August 1969, Paisley reacted to

the disbanding of the Ulster Special Constabulary by saying: 'I say to all B-Specials, "Don't let anyone disarm you". We will take whatever action we think fit to stop the B Specials being disbanded' and calling for the founding of a People's Militia. Two years later he called for the B Specials to be re-formed. In 1981, after the British and Irish governments signalled a new closeness in their relationship, Paisley launched the largest of 'third forces' (the police and the army being the first and the second forces). The initiative was heavily backed by DUP members. In February, Paisley took five journalists to a secret location near Ballymena to see 500 men in combat jackets wave what were purported to be certificates for legally held firearms. In July Paisley told a crowd in Six Mile Cross: 'We have a choice to make. Shall we allow ourselves to be murdered by the IRA, or shall we go out and kill the killers'. In November of that year, when the political temperature had been raised by the IRA's assassination of MP Reverend Robert Bradford, Paisley inspected a parade of 6000 men in Newtownards. As usual there was much militant rhetoric. At the Newtownards rally, Paisley said: 'We demand that the IRA be exterminated from Ulster ... there are men willing to do the job of exterminating the IRA. recruit them under the Crown and they will do it. If you refuse, we will have no other decision to make but to do it ourselves' (in Cooke 1995: 192). At a rally in Belfast shortly after, he said: 'I believe the time has come when all Lundies [i.e. traitors], yellowbellies and all the cowards must leave our ranks - and we shall fight to the death'. But that pulpit rhetoric was quickly qualified when he later said: 'This force proposes to act entirely within the law and will in no way usurp either the work or the activities of the crown forces'. But there was no fighting. The rallies gradually got smaller: 50 men in Enniskillen and only 20 in Portadown. In a few places, small groups of Third Force men made a display for journalists of 'patrolling' but the initiative petered out. When three Enniskillen Third Forcers were charged with usurping the power of the police and with action likely to cause a breach of the peace, the DUP allowed the matter to pass. In 1986, after the signing of the hated Anglo-Irish Accord which signalled a deeper involvement of Dublin in Northern Ireland, Paisley, Robinson and other DUP leaders accepted an invitation to lead a new third force called Ulster Resistance. There were large rallies in Larne and Ballymena, addressed by Paisley and other DUP leaders. Paisley's Deputy Peter Robinson made the following hyperbolic assessment at an Enniskillen rally: 'Thousands have already joined the movement and the task of shaping them into an effective force is continuing. The Resistance has indicated that drilling and training has already started. The officer of the nine divisions have taken up their duties'.

The reality was quite different. There was no mass movement. This third force dribbled away to leave a small handful of County Armagh loyalists who collaborated with the UVF and UDA in a bank robbery in Portadown in July 1987 that funded a large purchase of arms from South Africa. Two DUP activists from the same area -- Noel Little and James King -- were caught trying to swap a Shorts missile system for small arms with the South African state company Armscor. Both were members of Paisley's Free Presbyterian Church. A third member of that group was a member of a Territorial Army missile unit that trained with a replica of the Shorts weapon. Three of his colleagues were drummed out of the TA; one, Jim Shannon, was a leading DUP councillor who was later mayor of Newtownards. By now the DUP leadership had divorced itself from the rump Ulster Resistance but when, in November 1988, part of the South African arms shipment was found in an arms dump with five maroon Ulster Resistance berets, one of the men convicted of possession was Mervyn Spratt, a long-serving DUP member from Markethill in County Armagh who had unsuccessfully contested a council seat on three occasions. Peter Robinson campaigned on behalf of the 'Paris Three' and Dr Paisley sent them bibles. One of them, James King, told a reporter 'that made a difference with God's word to read everyday'.

In addition to these grand gestures of defiance of the government, Paisley has, in Spence's words, 'stirred up a lot of tension'. Examples have been given above. I will cite a few more from the period of the Anglo-Irish accord. On 23rd June 1986, the 'rolling devolution' Assembly, which Jim Prior had launched in 1983 but which had been boycotted by every party except the Alliance and the DUP, was formally prorogued. Rather than go quietly, DUP members barricaded themselves in Stormont and had to be forcibly ejected by the RUC. Earlier in the summer a number of RUC officers had been intimidated out of their homes in what had previously been safe Protestant areas. When Paisley was dumped outside Stormont, he snapped at the officers: 'Don't come crying to me when your homes are attacked. You will reap what you sow'. Paisley told a press conference: 'There could be hand-to-hand fighting in every street in Northern Ireland. We are on the verge of civil war because when you take away the forum of democracy, you don't have anything left'. He also called on RUC officers to 'follow the example of the British Army officers at the Curragh'. He later denied he was inciting them to revolt against the government and said that he was encouraging them to resign, which is what the Curragh officers threatened to do in 1917 if they were asked to serve in Ulster against the potentially rebellious unionists. In his address to the Independent Orange Order rally on the Twelfth of July, Paisley told his audience that his father had shouldered a rifle in Carson's 1912 UVF and he would do the same. 'They can call it sedition if they like, and they can call it incitement to violence if they like. But I want to say that it will be over our dead bodies if they ship us down the river'. When the RUC banned an Orange parade from marching through a nationalist area of Portadown, Paisley encouraged Ulster loyalists to go to the town to support an illegal parade. In the confrontations, a young loyalist was killed by a plastic baton round fired by the RUC.

There are number of separate things going on here. First there is the repeat of the contractarian idea that at a certain point, citizens are free to oppose the government because it has betrayed them. So in the aftermath of the failure of the various protests against the Anglo-Irish Accord one finds DUP politicians saying, in effect, we have tried democratic politics and we have won a majority of seats in elections but still we do not get our way. As Jim Allister, DUP Chief Whip in 1985 put it: 'If we have done all that and we are still ejected [from the UK] ... then I would act in concert with hundreds of thousands of other individual loyalists in arming ourselves. No self-respecting individual is going to do anything but resist' (O'Toole 1985: 27). Gregory Campbell, DUP member for Londonderry, talked of setting up a provisional government: 'that provisional government must have a defence; and that defence must be armed' (O'Toole 1985: 27).

In most of these statements there is both a philosophical and a pragmatic alignment of the individual's likely actions with those of others: the DUP men will take up arms if that is the popular wish of the Protestant people. There is a prediction that there will be lots of violence, usually because other people, less level-headed and thoughtful, will commit it. When looked at closely few of these statements are a direct incitement to violence. Most are the proposition that violence will be justified 'soon' and that some other group of people will soon take up arms. Nonetheless, it is hard to resist the conclusion that the speakers will be rather pleased if that is the result, unless of course the government changes its policy.

The DUP scaled back the martial rhetoric considerably after 1994. With the UVF and UDA on cease-fire, and quite committed to the political innovations the DUP denounced, DUP people found it hard to assert plausibly that 'Ulster will fight' and when they did, they found themselves challenged by former UVF and UDA men. At a public meeting on the Shankill Road an ex-UVF man made a memorable offer to a DUP activist: 'If youse is serious, I'll get you a gun right now and you can go and do some fighting!'.

Christian Imagery

One particular way in which Ulster evangelicals could be accused of stirring up trouble is through their use of violent language. In almost every religion there are two vocabularies in tension: that of the God of Love and that of the God of War. Popular Protestant hymns encourage the Christian to 'fight the good fight' and promise 'nor shall the sword sleep in my hand'. The language is generally metaphorical but when sung by a population engaged in an actual war it takes on a new resonance. Similarly the language of the Old Testament that promises salvation to a small people beset on every side by their enemies acquires a new sharpness in the context of the Troubles.

Liberal Christians criticise Paisley for his religious imagery and language on the grounds that it appears to encourage violence and that, even when it does not, it assumes a radical division of the world into the saved and the damned, the good and the evil, them and us. Paisley can properly reply that he is doing no more than preaching the Christian gospel and singing the hymns that have been part of the Protestant canon throughout the English-speaking world for two hundred years.

This does not free Paisleyites of the charge of using inflammatory language because part of the charge would be that they are unusually and unnecessarily harsh in the terms they use in their own speeches and sermons. Paisley has described himself as a 'bluff Ulsterman'. In replying to the charge that his language 'could inflame other people to violent acts' he said:

No, I don't accept that because people who say that don't know the Ulster temperament. All Ulster people speak strong ... and I mean that's done on the Republican and Roman Catholic side, it's done on the unionist side, it's done in business as well... That is the language, the trademark of an Ulster man. he's blunt, he's straight.

Even allowing for the bluntness of Ulster speech, there are two features of Paisleyite rhetoric that can reasonably thought to have some connection with violence. The first is the elision of enemies. Ulster evangelicals believe that the conflict really is a religious war. They believe that, in Paisley's words: 'The Provisional IRA is in reality the armed wing of the Roman Catholic Church. Its real aim is to annihilate Protestantism' (in Cooke 1996: 58). Secular analysts see religious rhetoric as a cover for essentially secular motives. Evangelicals take an inverted view. They suppose that secular motives (Irish Republicanism, for example) are a cover for an essentially religious struggle that is centuries old: since the Reformation the Catholic Church has sought to destroy Protestantism. That in turn is

just one historical embodiment of the eternal struggle between good and evil. Christian critics such as Cooke (1996) and Brewer and Higgins (1999) suppose that conflating the IRA and Catholicism has the effect of de-humanising Catholics in the eyes of potential loyalist terrorists.

The second connection concerns the apocalypse. The political rhetoric of Paisleyites is often apocalyptic in the metaphorical sense that it supposes things are very very bad and are about to get very much worse. In that sense, Paisleyites are accused of stirring up trouble. The response of many, and this is important for understanding Protestant views of the conflict, would be that they genuinely believe in the imminence of the real Apocalypse. All Christians suppose that God began the world and will at some time bring it to an end. Christians differ in how they interpret the Biblical passages that are interpreted as scenarios of that end of the world. Although evangelicals (even within the Free Presbyterian Church) do not all share the same view, many read the dire evidence of murders, bombings and political betrayal as proof that the end is indeed nigh and that the world will shortly become even more violent as the Day of Judgement approaches. Those who do not subscribe to this vision may explain Paisley's constant predictions of doom as a secular political device for increasing electoral support. However, to one large strand of evangelical thought, Paisley is simply expounding Biblical prophecy.

We could thus conclude that there are features of evangelical religion that encourage division and hostility and that Paisley's rhetorical style and ideological preferences have done nothing to ameliorate the conflict. However, any overall explanation would have to recognise that Ulster evangelicals remain disposed to prefer those elements of Protestantism (when evangelicals elsewhere have changed) because they have been raised in an existing situation of conflict and hostility. There is no need to get bogged down in an infinite regress to realise that Ulster evangelicals are as much a product of their circumstances as the cause of them. They did not invent Irish nationalism or republicanism. Nor did they invent the many ways in which Roman Catholicism has repudiated and demonised Protestantism. We could mention, from the start of the twentieth century, the papal *Ne Temere* decree that was widely interpreted as asserting the invalidity of non-Catholic marriages. Or note that for all the improvement in inter-church relations, the Catholic Church still does not accept Protestants as being fully Christian.

It is hard to find a neutral way of making this point. Perhaps the best that can be said is that Protestantism and Catholicism are theoretically mutually antagonistic. In the real world, spokesmen for either side have the choice of stressing or down-playing the differences and points of tension. Paisley and like-minded evangelicals do the former; liberal Christians wish they would do the latter.

E Paisley is responsible for republican terror because he has denied legitimate demands.

In addition to the above claims that Paisley is responsible for loyalist violence, it is often said that he is responsible for republican violence (and hence also for loyalist reactions) because he has been an effective leader of the opposition to legitimate nationalist demands. Had he not ousted Terence O'Neill, political reform could have started earlier and allowed the arguments about nationalist grievances to be settled within the confines of democratic politics. Without his demagoguery, the 1974 power-sharing executive could have survived and created the accommodations reluctantly accepted by a slim majority of unionists in 1997. Ulster would have been saved twenty-five years of strife.

As with the above arguments, how persuasive this is rather depends on how legitimate one believes to be the positions that Paisley has opposed. To a nationalist, Paisley is an obstacle to legitimately-desired change. To most unionists, Paisley is simply an effective political leader who has, largely within the confines of the law, stood firm for unionist principles. As a disinterested observer, I would only say that if we find Paisley not guilty on the previous charges, then he could only be found guilty on this one if we also found guilty John Hume and the leaders of the SDLP who could be similarly charged with making political demands that unionists were not prepared to meet and hence provoking loyalist violence. That is, if representing political positions that others oppose with violence is of itself to cause that violence, then constitutional nationalists are as guilty as constitutional unionists.

THE RELIGION OF THE LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES.

Having looked at the paramilitary record of Paisley's church and party, I would now like to consider the religious affiliations of the main loyalist terrorist organizations. The working class loyalists who joined the UVF and UDA were almost entirely secular. Although many prisoners have become born-again Christians, this has invariably been as part of the pietistic retreat from loyalist terrorism. Within loyalist circles 'getting saved' is widely accepted as a good reason for leaving the UVF or UDA.

Since 1978, I have interviewed hundreds of UDA and UVF men and noted the biographies of many more. I can think of only a handful who were committed Christians before their paramilitary involvement. In addition to Noel Doherty, Thomas McDowell and the others involved in the 1966 bombings, there was Billy Mitchell, who was on the UVF Brigade Staff in the mid-1970s and who wrote for *Combat* under the pseudonym 'Richard Cameron', chosen to signify his attachment to the Scottish covenanting tradition. The UVF's political spokesman Ken Gibson was, some time before his involvement with the UVF, involved in the FPC, but unlike Mitchell he never explained or justified his paramilitary activity in religious terms. And there was Billy Wright, of whom more later.

Among the first generation of loyalist paramilitaries there were many who, although not personally pious, were happy to acknowledge the historical and social importance of evangelical religion, by maintaining the elements of religious ritual and symbolism that they had learnt either in the Orange Lodges or in the British Army. If pushed they would claim that Protestants were better people than Catholics because they had the right religion. Many had a household division of religious labour and would tell me proudly that the 'missus' was god-fearing and good-living and took the children to church but God was not a powerful presence in their lives. The men who reached adulthood and commanding positions in the UDA and UVF in the late 1980s had no time at all for religion and were openly scornful of even the limited borrowing of Christian symbolism and rhetoric from Lodge or Army ceremonies.

We see a slightly different picture when we turn from the 'fully terrorist' UDA and UVF to a variety of small organizations of the 1970s that employed some of the trappings of militia organization without actually engaging in direct murderous attacks. Tara has already been mentioned. The Down Orange Welfare recruited primarily from farmers and respectable small businessmen in County Down. The Orange Volunteers was a planning and marching organization within the Orange Order that collected some weapons in the early 1970s but appears not to have committed any murderous attacks. Bill Craig's Vanguard movement within the Ulster Unionist party had its Vanguard Service Corp but it did little more than parade as a ceremonial bodyguard for Craig. When Vanguard folded, it retained its initials by becoming the Ulster Volunteer Service Corp. There was also the Ulster Special Corp, an attempt by former Royal Ulster Constabulary B Specials to retain some sort of organizational structure in rural areas west of the Bann after the B Specials were disbanded. Like Paisley's various third forces, these groups saw themselves as citizen's militias, retaining a structure and building a capacity that would allow effective defence in the case of all-out war; the vast majority of their members were not active terrorists. The sociological interesting point about these organizations is that they were more popular in rural areas than were the UDA and UVF (which at various times were widely criticised by Protestant leaders as communist) and their members were more likely to be respectable church-going Christians. It is the social world that produced these fringe paramilitary groups that also produced the strongest presence for Ulster Resistance.

In brief, we can note that Ulster unionists divided by class and region in their response to political threat. In the 1960s there was some overlap between the two constituencies (occupied by Paisley's UPV) but once the Troubles began in earnest the two worlds separated. The paramilitaries recruited primarily from the urban and mostly secular working class. Rural and middle-class evangelicals expressed their opposition largely within conventional democratic politics. There continued to be a very small overlap (represented in the 1980s by some people on the fringes of the Ulster Clubs and in Ulster Resistance) that provided some support for the very small number of dissident loyalists who in the 1990s rejected the 'peacenik' line of the UDA and UVF. In the main, however, and all of the above may seem like a very long way to get to this simple point, the vast majority of Ulster evangelical Protestants (even those closely associated with Paisley) have not engaged in politically-motivated violence.

EVANGELICAL JIHAD

Like the famous dog in the Sherlock Holmes story that did not bark in the night, the pacifism of Ulster evangelicals derives its significance from the alternative of what might have been. Islam has a notion of jihad or holy war. Although it is sometimes interpreted metaphorically, Islam has at its heart an obligation to fight to expand the sphere of Allah. In many Islamic countries, jihad is taken quite literally. The Islamic cleric who said that God is more pleased by the murder of one heretic than by a thousand prayers may have been a little extreme but in Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Afghanistan, the Caucasus and Indonesia we find many Islamic movements that believe that it is quite proper to pursue religious goals by violent means. It is many centuries since one found Christian leaders making the same case.

Using the term 'fundamentalists' to describe both Ian Paisley and the Partisans of Allah confuses rather than illuminates because it overlooks the essential difference in theological justification for terror. Unlike Hezbollah, Paisley has never argued that God requires that

the unbelievers be slain.

It would not be difficult to construct a justification for evangelical jihad. Evangelicals believe that they worship God and that Catholicism is damnable heresy. Ulster evangelicals believe that the crusade of Irish nationalism to displace Protestantism from Northern Ireland is driven by the Catholics desire to reverse the Reformation and restore Rome's hegemony over all of Europe. Every political change in Northern Ireland since its creation (but most especially since 1966) have been designed to weaken the power of Protestantism. In its most brutal form, the anti-Protestantism of the republican movement has taken the form of murdering Protestant farmers in the border areas. As Protestants have been pushed north and east so the sphere of the Protestant Allah has shrunk and the sphere of war has expanded. In those circumstances it would not be hard to articulate a justification for a Protestant holy war.

The curious thing then is that even the most 'ethnic' of Ulster's evangelicals have rarely done that. Bible texts are used to construe the sufferings of God's loyal people in religious terms but even clerics such as Paisley have never argued the positive jihad case: that God requires the killing of heretics. On the contrary, what is often missed in the claims examined above is that even Paisley's most militant and martial rhetoric is secular. His proposals for popular militias of self-defence have always been presented in the secular language of the citizen's right to be defended by the state.

ETHNIC UNIONISM, BRITISH ISRAELISM AND THE LVF

Since the UDA and UVF called a halt to their violence in 1994, a number of small loyalist splinter groups have been formed to continue the armed struggle: the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF), the Orange Volunteers (OV), and the Red Hand Defenders (RHD). A UVF leader memorably described the dissidents as 'a motley collection of scum-bags and Bible-bashers' and he is right. As always with such social phenomena the range of motives for involvement was broad. A few of the dissidents resented the cease-fires because they felt too much of principle had been conceded to republicans. Some simply wished to continue to murder. Others were ambitious men who felt they were under-rated in the UDA and UVF. Some were professional criminals (mostly drug-dealers) who resented the often half-hearted attempts of the paramilitary leaders to constrain their activities. But that point about Bible-bashers is intriguing.

Billy Wright, the Portadown UVF leader whose expulsion from the UVF started the breakaway, had been a born-again Christian. During a five year absence from the organization, he had served as a gospel preacher in the County Armagh area. Always a man for the symbol, the code word he gave the LVF for claiming its murderous acts was 'Covenant!' The man who led the Orange Volunteers in 1998-99, Clifford Peeples was a keen UVF man who later became a Pentecostal pastor. One of the OVs first actions was a synchronised arson attack on 11 Catholic churches, which Peeples defended on the grounds that they are the bastions of the anti-Christ. : 'We are defenders of the reformed faith. Our members are practising Protestant worshippers'. Another suspected of giving political leadership is a former Paisley supporter, evangelical Christian lay preacher, and British Israelite. This now deeply unfashionable creed argues that the British race (exemplified by Ulster Protestants) is descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel and hence is not just metaphorically but actually the people of God. Although there is no evidence that he has been involved in any crimes as a result of this association, the man who acted as the link between the LVF and the wider world was an Elim Pentecostal pastor.

Four is not a large number but to have four evangelicals out of at most 200 dissident loyalists, when you have none in 2,000 loyal UDA and UVF members, is suggestive.

In two separate interviews a year apart Billy Wright was quite clear that while his faith drove him to defend the 'Protestant people of Ulster', the way in which he had taken that fight to the enemy would ensure his damnation. As with everything Wright said, there was an element of bravado and drama in that claim but he certainly recognised that what he was doing was un-Christian and would hinder rather than aid his salvation. Evangelical Protestantism requires being embedded in an ethnic or national identity in order to become a justification for killing and even then, most evangelical ethnic unionists are not engaged in terrorism and do not think it justified.

Unlike Peeples, Wright and the ex-named former Paisleyite, Paisley subordinates the political fate of Northern Ireland to the will of God. Though he sees them as closely linked he does not regard them as the same thing. It is common to find FP ministers praying for Ulster but also recognising that it may be in God's will to 'test' the people of God by forcing them into a united Ireland. Some can even see some value in that; it will test the people of God. As Ivan Foster put it in a sermon:

The spiritual health of the church is not dictated by the political health of the nation. This is something we in Ulster need to learn. We have become used to the cause of Christ being allied to the political cause of our Province, so that we have begun to think that the well-being of the Church of Christ is indissolubly linked with the political entity of Northern Ireland. That is not the case. ... God's Kingdom is superior and unaffiliated to the kingdoms of men. ... God's cause may flourish, irrespective of who sits upon the throne of government. To conclude this section, I wish to stress that, although it is difficult to avoid entirely the language of judgement, my concern is explanatory rather than moral. I am concerned to identify the links between religion, politics and violence. Tracing the lines from the starting point of what is known about Ulster evangelicals, even when those evangelicals are represented by the ultra-ethnic unionism of Free Presbyterians, I can only come to the conclusion that evangelicalism is not particularly associated with violence.

How then are we to explain the violence of the handful of evangelicals who have supported the dissident loyalists? An obvious variable is the lack of denominational constraint. What the religious ideologues who legitimated the actions of Orange Volunteers have in common is that they are utterly independent evangelicals. Both are 'self-appointed' pastors with personal followings. It seems clear that holding an official position in a large organization has a moderating influence on extremism, especially when, as is the case with the Free Presbyterian Church, the Baptists, the Elim Pentecostal Church, and the Brethren, the membership is middle-class.

But a bigger consideration seems to be religious justification for what we might call 'hyper-ethnic unionism'. The role of British Israelism is suggestive. This creed argues that the British race (exemplified now by Ulster Protestants because the rest of Britain has proved itself so unreliable) is descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel and hence is not just metaphorically but actually the people of God. With local variations in just who was held to compose this lost tribe, British Israelism was popular in the hey day of the Empire, especially in places such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where British settlers competed with the Irish and other Catholic peoples. Evangelical Protestantism has long been a major component of the ethnic identity of Ulster unionists. There have always been two deviant options. Some evangelicals have gone for pietistic retreat from the world; others have become liberal unionists. But most have embraced the religio-ethnic unionism represented by Ian Paisley. For reasons far too complex to be fully outlined here (but which mostly relate to the human tendency to reconcile one's ideas to the realities of one's situation), religio-ethnic unionism is breaking up. That section of the Protestant working class that provides the main base for loyalist terrorism has become pretty thoroughly secular and since 1994 its main political spokesmen have very deliberately stopped talking of the rights of 'the Protestant people'. The evangelicals are also changing. To go back to a point made earlier, the eruption of serious violence and the formation of the UVF and UDA created very clear divisions. Those people for whom evangelical religion was a major source of values were forced to distance themselves from the men of violence and the men of violence became increasingly cynical towards those who appeared to will the aims but to the means. As the ethnic unionist political programme has failed so evangelicals have started to stress the primacy of their religious identity and commitments over the political.

Or, to put it another way, the Troubles has called into question the role of religion in ethnic identity demanding of evangelical unionists that they be clear about what their religion will permit. The vast majority have remained law-abiding. Only a handful, most of them influenced by some form of British Israelism (itself the most extreme possible linking of religious and ethnic identity), have argued that their religion gives them the right to engage in vigilante violence.

CONCLUSION

Evangelicalism is heavily implicated in Northern Ireland's politics in that it is a major constituent of ethnic unionism. Arguably it is also a source of peace. Although the religion informs the unionist sense of identity is not, for most evangelicals, the same thing. Even Paisley who, more than most Ulster evangelicals, believes that the unionist cause is an especially Godly one, is prepared to distinguish between the will of God and the fate of the Protestant people of Northern Ireland. He may be a 'fundamentalist' in theological terms but he does not share Hezbollah's conviction that his cause is so divinely-blessed as to justify any act committed in its name.

One way of capturing the difference is to note that, although Paisley's desire to be involved in unionist politics has religious origins, the grounds for his political actions like his mandate are secular. Although he occupies the roles of church leader and political party leader and has skillfully used the former to advance the latter, he acts out each as if it were separate from the other. In that sense he accepts the division of church and state that characterises the society in which he operates. This is quite different to the basis of Islamic militancy. For Hezbollah politics and religion, state and church, are the same thing.

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