SECTARIAN RIOTING IN AUSTRALIA

Jeff Kildea[*]

Introduction

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a series of sectarian riots between Catholics and Protestants occurred throughout Australia. In fact, there were at least 20 such riots between 1843 and 1922 across all six Australian colonies or states, some of them with fatal consequences. For the most part, those riots occurred in the context of Catholics of Irish descent reacting to what they regarded as provocations either by members of the Loyal Orange Institution celebrating the anniversary of William III's victory at the battle of the Boyne or by ultra-Protestant preachers denigrating in public the beliefs and practices of the Catholic church.[1]

In this article I will examine some of those sectarian riots, which, were they to occur today, would be described as products of the 'culture wars' and examples of 'identity politics' fuelled by 'hate speech' and 'cancel culture'. As we in our turn struggle to meet the challenges of modern-day intergroup conflict, there is utility in examining how our forebears faced the challenges which sectarian conflict posed for Australia's emerging democracy seeking to build a society based on religious tolerance and social harmony freed from the conflicts of the old world.[2]

Orangemen celebrating William III's victory at the Boyne

The first type of provocation leading to sectarian rioting was the celebration of the anniversary of the battle that occurred on 12 July 1690 at the River Boyne in County Meath about 50 kilometres north of Dublin. In that battle the Protestant king William III, formerly Prince William of Orange, whom parliament in 1689 had proclaimed king of England, defeated the deposed Catholic king James II.

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1   Of the twenty sectarian riots so far identified, six were of the former type, thirteen were of the latter, and one was related to the 1843 elections for the Legislative Council. A brief description of each is provided in the Appendix.

2   For a discussion of sectarianism in Australia see Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1987; Jeff Kildea, *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia 1910–1925*, Citadel Books, Sydney, 2002; Malcolm Campbell, 'Bigotry: An Australian History', *Australasian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 21, 2021, pp. 75–89; Mark Lyons, 'Aspects of Sectarianism in New South Wales Circa 1865 to 1880', PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1972.

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William's victory ensured Protestant hegemony in both Britain and Ireland. It was a hegemony reinforced by penal laws that would last into the nineteenth century.[3]

Melbourne 1846

The first sectarian riot to be considered concerned a clash that took place in Melbourne on Monday 13 July 1846 outside the Pastoral Hotel in the city centre when Orangemen preparing to hold their Twelfth of July dinner unfurled from the hotel's

Twelfth of July Parade in Belfast in 2005 with Banner showing William III crossing the Boyne – Author

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3   John Childs, *The Williamite Wars in Ireland, 1688–1691*, Humbledon Continuum, London, 2007, pp. 205–225; Charles Ivar McGrath, 'Securing the Protestant Interest: The Origins and Purpose of the Penal Laws of 1695', *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 117, 1996, pp. 25–46. The battle of the Boyne actually occurred on 1 July 1690 according to the Julian calendar then in force in England. After England adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752, the revised date of 12 July was set aside to celebrate the battle, reflecting the 11-days difference that by then applied between the two calendars.

window a banner depicting William III crossing the Boyne[4]. Many Catholic Irish considered this a provocative act. The *Leader* newspaper, commenting on a later sectarian disturbance, observed:

> To Catholic Irishmen the picture has a deep and bitter significance.... .
> The figure of William crossing the Boyne means to Irishmen the final establishment of English domination, civil and religious; the beginning of a long period of cruel oppression on account of religious opinions.[5]

It was not only the banner that was provocative. Newspaper advertisements promoting the dinner had spoken of King William's glorious victory over 'the Popish Hosts that would enslave British subjects and subvert the moral, political, and religious order of things as established by the British Constitution'. The advertisements urged Orangemen to attend the dinner 'to commemorate Protestant deliverance from Popish ascendancy, tyranny, and thraldom'.[6]

Advertisement for Twelfth of July Dinner: Sentinel *9 July 1846, p. 3*

After the banner was unfurled a large crowd began to assemble in the street outside the hotel. With hooting and jeering, the crowd demanded the removal of the banner. Then some young men started pelting it with stones. Others tried to enter the building. The Orangemen retaliated by firing into the crowd from the hotel, wounding several onlookers. The police intervened and arrested many on both sides. All were bailed to answer charges when called upon but ultimately no one was prosecuted for his part in the riot or the shooting.[7]

Instead, attention turned to the political arena with calls from the mayor and the press for legislation to suppress the activities of religious and political societies that might lead to breaches of the peace such as had occurred that day.[8] In response,

4   Melbourne Argus 14 July 1846, p. 2; 24 July 1846, p. 4; Port Phillip Patriot 14 July 1846, p. 3; Port Phillip Gazette 15 July 1846, p. 3

5   *Leader* 30 November 1867, p. 17.

6   *Sentinel* 9 July 1846, p. 3.

7   *Port Phillip Gazette* 15 August 1846, p. 2.

8   *Melbourne Argus* 4 August 1846, p. 4.

Governor Charles Fitzroy on 7 October 1846 sent to the Legislative Council 'A Bill to prevent Party Processions and certain other public exhibitions in the colony of New South Wales'.[9] At that time New South Wales included the Port Phillip and Moreton Bay settlements.

The bill was the work of the Irish-born attorney general John Hubert Plunkett, a prominent Catholic, who modelled his bill on similar legislation passed by the Westminster parliament in 1832 prohibiting Orange processions in Ireland.[10] The *Sydney Morning Herald* praised the object of the bill but complained it was too broad as it captured inoffensive organisations such as total abstinence and temperance societies.[11] An amended bill confined the prohibition to religious and political assemblies and processions in which the participants carried weapons or:

> publicly exhibited any banner, emblem, flag, or symbol the display whereof may be calculated to provoke animosity between Her Majesty's subjects of different religious persuasions or who shall be accompanied by any music of like nature or tendency.

The amended bill satisfied the press and council members who had advocated for the temperance societies. The legislation, which included a three-year sunset clause, received the governor's assent on 27 October 1846.[12]

The new act faced its first test with Sydney's St Patrick's Day celebrations the following year.[13] On that day the St Patrick's Total Abstinence Society assembled as usual at St Patrick's Hall, Church Hill, from where, accompanied by their banners and band, they processed to Macquarie Street, marching back to St Patrick's church to celebrate solemn high mass.[14] Although a Catholic and an Irishman, Attorney General Plunkett was not impressed. He wrote to Father John McEncroe, one of

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9   *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 October 1846, p. 2.

10   2 & 3 William IV c. 118; *Sydney Morning Herald* 16 October 1846, p. 2. The Chief Secretary for Ireland Edward Stanley on presenting the 1832 bill to parliament explained: 'The object of his Bill was not to fetter the manifestation of political opinion in any way whatever. His Bill was directed against party processions connected with religious subjects, and calculated to maintain and prolong religious animosities, which moved with banners exciting angry feelings, and which were not unfrequently armed, ready to meet the conflicts they provoked.' (HC Deb 14 June 1832 vol 13 cc717-28).

11   *Sydney Morning Herald* 14 October 1846, p. 2. These societies registered their own protest with petitions to the legislature (*Sydney Morning Herald* 16 October 1846, p. 2.).

12   10 Vic. No. 1. It was notified in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* 27 October 1846, p.1.

13   Cf. the situation regarding the UK act on which the NSW act was based: 'In practice, if not intent, the Party Processions Act had only been directed against Orange marches' (Annie Tock Morrisette, 'Preventing the Parade: The Party Processions Acts in Ireland and Canada', *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2018, pp. 110–124, p.117). Neil P. Maddox, '"A Melancholy Record": The Story of the Nineteenth-Century Irish Party Processions Acts', Irish Jurist, Vol. 39, 2004, pp. 242-273 at 250-251.'

14   *Sydney Chronicle* 20 March 1847, p. 2.

the organisers of the celebrations, advising that it had been represented to him that the procession was a party religious procession in violation of the act and seeking clarification as to its 'real character'. He warned that if there had been a breach of the act he would prosecute, adding 'I am convinced that the future peace of society depends upon its strict observance'.[15]

Plunkett's concerns were borne out 21 years later in circumstances similar to the 1846 riot that prompted his legislation. During celebrations marking Prince Alfred's visit to Melbourne in November 1867, an image of William III crossing the Boyne was displayed on the Protestant Hall in Stephen Street (now Exhibition Street). This prompted stone throwing and jeering, which were followed by shots fired from the building into the crowd, wounding several onlookers, including a 13-year-old boy, who died of his wounds a fortnight later. Ironically, the boy was an English-born Protestant.[16]

In his reply to Plunkett's inquiry, McEncroe wrote that the St Patrick's day parade consisted of teetotallers and was thus neither religious nor political. He pointed out that a quarter of the St Patrick's Total Abstinence Society members were Protestants and that the Protestant Total Abstinence Society had been invited to participate. Plunkett responded that he disagreed with McEncroe as to the character of the procession, saying it was not the nature of the society that concerned him but of the procession itself. He wrote that, as it had proceeded to the church for mass, 'it assumed the character of a religious procession'.

Instead of testing the attorney's opinion in court, the society publicly expressed its regret for its unintentional infringement of the law and pledged to avoid any semblance of violating the act in future. This satisfied Plunkett, who did not prosecute. The *Sydney Chronicle*, a Catholic newspaper that had approved the legislation when passed, protested that it was 'a direct infringement upon the religious liberty of the people of this colony to whatever denomination they may belong'.[17] When in the following October the mayor of Melbourne relied on the act to prohibit members of the Independent Order of Oddfellows (a benevolent society) to march in procession with their banners and insignia, the *Melbourne Argus*, owned and edited by the Orangeman William Kerr, which had also originally approved the legislation, added its voice to the Catholic *Chronicle*'s criticism of the act.[18]

Plunkett's strict reading of the Party Processions Prevention Act was enough to prompt the abandonment of St Patrick's Day parades and Twelfth of July processions

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15 The correspondence between Plunkett and McEncroe was published in the *Sydney Chronicle* 3 April 1847, p. 3.

16 *Age* 28 November 1867, p. 5; 6 December 1867, p. 5; *Argus* 28 November 1867, p. 5; 6 December 1867, p. 4.

17 *Sydney Chronicle* 3 April 1847, p. 2.

18 *Melbourne Argus* 5 October 1847, p. 2.

in the colonies for many years. But by the 1880s such parades had resumed.[19] Writing in 1884 in *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne*, Catholic journalist Edmund Finn, better known by his pen name Garryowen, said of the act:

> It was never more than a dead letter—dead as the defunct hobgoblin it was meant to exorcise. It was never required, for from the evil of the abortive celebration sprang one good result—viz., that no other July anniversary was bug-beared by an Orange procession.[20]

However, Finn spoke too soon. The act's continuing relevance was brought into sharp focus 12 years later when sectarian rioting broke out during Twelfth of July celebrations in Brunswick, Melbourne in 1896 and 1897.

Brunswick 1896/97[21]

In July 1896 advertisements appeared in newspapers giving notice of a proposed procession by members of the Brunswick Orange lodge on 19 July. Reports earlier in the week of processions elsewhere carried headlines such as 'Orange Celebration at Ballarat/Attack on Roman Catholicism' and 'Orangeism on the Warpath' and gave brief accounts of the speeches, which included the usual litany of the errors of the church of Rome.[22] In response, Father Edmund Luby, parish priest of St Ambrose's Catholic church, Brunswick, approached the police and claimed that the advertised procession would be illegal under s 10 of the *Unlawful Assemblies and Party Processions Statute* of 1865, the Victorian equivalent of Plunkett's 1846 legislation.

The police agreed, as did the Chief Secretary, Alexander Peacock, who advised the Orangemen they would breach the act if they marched. As a result, the procession was called off, although, according to the *Age*, 'not in time to prevent the assemblage of thousands of excited anti-Orangemen on the scene'.[23] Summoned by counter-advertisements, they proceeded to assault Orangemen as they arrived to enter their meeting place in the local Wesleyan chapel and then laid siege to it. The police, who were heavily outnumbered could do little to prevent the violence, and only managed to arrest a handful of men.[24]

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19 In New South Wales, St Patrick's day processions resumed in 1880 after the Hibernian society marched from St Benedict's Catholic church, Broadway to Circular Quay without the authorities attempting to prevent them. Thereafter a parade became a regular feature of Sydney's St Patrick's Day celebrations. See Jeff Kildea, 'Celebrating St Patrick's Day in nineteenth-century Sydney', *The Dictionary of Sydney*, 2012.

20 Garryowen, *Chronicles of Early Melbourne*, Vol 2, p. 687.

21 *Age* 20 July 1896, p. 5; 21 July 1896, p. 5; 19 July 1897, pp. 5-6.

22 *Age* 15 July 1896, p. 5; 17 July 1896, p. 8; *North Eastern Ensign* 17 July 1896, p. 2.

23 *Age* 16 July 1896, p. 6; 18 July 1896, p. 6.

24 *Age* 20 July 1896, p. 4.

1897 Brunswick Orange Twelfth of July parade: Weekly Times *24 July 1897, p. 11*

Police arrest a protester at 1897 Brunswick Orange Twelfth of July parade:
Weekly Times *24 July 1897, p. 10*

In March the following year, the Orange order sought a ruling that the St Patrick's Day parade would also be in breach of s 10. However, the Chief Secretary, on the advice of the Crown law department, disagreed and the parade went ahead, peacefully.[25] When July came, the Chief Secretary made a similar ruling with regard

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25   *Age* 16 March 1897, p. 5; 18 March 1897, p. 5.

to the Twelfth of July parade. The legality of the parade was debated in parliament but it went ahead under a heavy police guard of 300 foot police and 50 mounted police under the direction of Chief Commissioner Chomley. Even so, some in the crowd of 30 to 40,000 lining the route launched attacks on the Orangemen. At least eleven protesters were arrested and convicted of assault and riotous conduct.[26]

Ultra-Protestant preachers denigrating Catholicism

The second type of provocation leading to sectarian rioting was ultra-Protestant preachers publicly denigrating the beliefs and practices of the Catholic church. There are several examples of this including: 1866 in Sydney, where in what the newspapers called 'the Battle of York Street', a mob broke up a lecture by Scottish-born Presbyterian minister and Orangeman Reverend John McGibbon in which he identified the Catholic church as the Antichrist in scripture;[27] 1878 in Sydney, where ultra-Protestant preacher Reverend Daniel Allen, well known for his fiery anti-Catholic rhetoric at his open-air services, was chased out of Hyde Park by a mob estimated to be 5000-strong;[28] 1879 in Hobart, where a public lecture on the evils of Catholicism by a visiting Canadian ex-priest and Orangeman Charles Chiniquy was broken up.[29] The list goes on. However, we will look in detail at just two such riots: one in 1860 in Maitland, New South Wales and the other in 1874 in Ipswich, Queensland.

Maitland 1860

In the late afternoon of Thursday 29 March 1860, a large and excited crowd, estimated in the press at between 300 and 1000 strong, gathered outside the Free Church in West Maitland. Many had ridden in that afternoon from outlying districts. They were not there to attend divine worship. At 7.30 pm Reverend William McIntyre was scheduled to deliver a lecture on 'The Heathenism of Popery' and a large majority of the crowd comprised Roman Catholics determined to stop him.

Born in Invernesshire, Scotland in 1806, McIntyre was a Presbyterian minister who in 1837 had been recruited for ministry in New South Wales by Reverend John Dunmore Lang. However, he broke with Lang in 1841, the same year he was appointed to Maitland. When the Church of Scotland split in 1843 over state interference in the church's affairs, McIntyre sided with the Free Church of Scotland. In 1846 he helped establish the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA), an independent church in communion with the Free Church. A biographer observed:

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26   *Advocate* 17 July 1897, p. 10; *Geelong Advertiser* 19 July 1897, p. 2; *Argus* 29 July 1897, p. 7.
27   *Empire* 24 August 1866, p. 5; 25 August 1866, p. 4. The Antichrist is referred to in 1 John 2:18–22; 4:1–6 and 2 John 1:7–11.
28   *Evening News* 11 March 1878, p. 2; 18 March 1878, p. 3; *Sydney Morning Herald* 11 March 1878, p. 4; 18 March 1878, p. 5.
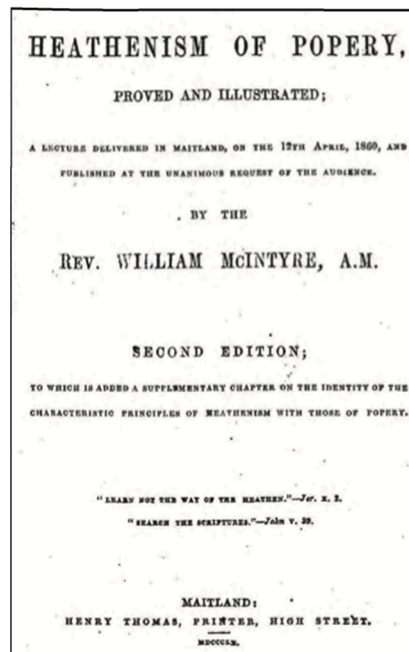29   *Mercury* 25 June 1879, p. 3; 26 June 1879, p. 2.

McIntyre's commitment to Calvinist orthodoxy was total. … [His] narrowness, his abrasive ephemeral writing and ruthlessness in disposing of ecclesiastical rivals made him unpopular in the general community. … McIntyre's admirers see him as a man of monumental integrity but Lang and many of his PCEA colleagues to 1864 thought him devious, unprincipled and inordinately fond of power.[30]

Reverend William McIntyre: Ferguson Library

When McIntyre arrived at the church at about 6.15 pm to prepare the venue for his lecture he was set upon by several individuals, who knocked his hat off his head and pounded his body. Members of his party, including his wife and young nephew, were also assaulted. His brother Daniel, who had come to his assistance, was beaten severely, leaving him bleeding from a gash on his head. McIntyre and his party retreated to the nearby high school while the mob began tearing down the fence surrounding the church and pelting its windows with stones. The police, led by the police magistrate, Captain Edward Denny Day, intervened to prevent further damage. Assured by Day that the lecture would not proceed, the crowd began to disperse. Some of them, not satisfied with the damage already inflicted, threw

HEATHENISM OF POPERY,

PROVED AND ILLUSTRATED;

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN MAITLAND, ON THE 12TH APRIL, 1860, AND PUBLISHED AT THE UNANIMOUS REQUEST OF THE AUDIENCE.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM McINTYRE, A.M.

SECOND EDITION;

TO WHICH IS ADDED A SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER ON THE IDENTITY OF THE CHARACTERISTIC PRINCIPLES OF HEATHENISM WITH THOSE OF POPERY.

"LEARN NOT THE WAY OF THE HEATHEN."—Jer. x. 2.
"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES."—John v. 39.

MAITLAND:
HENRY THOMAS, PRINTER, HIGH STREET.
MDCCCLX.

Cover of Reverend McIntyre's Maitland lecture: Trove

30   Barry Bridges, 'MCINTYRE, William (1806-1870)', *Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (https://sites.google.com/view/australian-dictionary-of-evang/m/mcintyre-william-1806-1870). See also Alan Dougan, 'William McIntyre (1805–1870)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography.*

stones at nearby buildings as they walked away from the church, smashing the windows of several houses and a hotel.[31]

The previous month, McIntyre had delivered a speech at a public meeting at Hinton in which he said, 'Protestants … looked upon Popery as a baptised heathenism rather than as a form of Christianity, and he for one had great difficulty in looking upon it as a church at all'.[32] McIntyre's Hinton speech raised the hackles of many Catholics who took exception to his attack on their religion. On Sunday 11 March Dean John Thomas Lynch of St John the Baptist Catholic church in West Maitland gave a lecture lasting an hour and forty minutes in which he 'laid bare the whole matter and … promised to deliver a series of lectures … in refutation of Mr McIntyre's unchristian tirade'. The *Northern Times* reported that during this lecture Lynch not only criticised 'the absence of politeness and social feeling and the illiberality of sentiment' in McIntyre's speech, 'he held the 'rev. minister up to the ridicule of the assembled congregation'. Lynch returned to the subject the following Sunday once more refuting McIntyre's 'aspersions' against the Catholic church. While the editor acknowledged that McIntyre had committed 'an unwarrantable violation of social charity and a breach of sound judgment' that had provoked 'the enraged hostility' of the Catholics, he was also critical of Lynch for having responded 'very intemperately' … by stirring up the grievance into an exaggerated form'.[33]

McIntyre soon let it be known that he intended to reply to Lynch's lectures by backing up his claims with a lecture of his own entitled 'The Heathenism of Popery Proved and Illustrated'. On 25 March, the Sunday before McIntyre was due to speak, a notice affixed to the palings outside St John's Catholic church called attention to the lecture, 'intimating that the congregation were expected to attend and do their duty'.[34] Dean Lynch tried to forestall any resort to violence by writing a letter to the *Maitland Mercury* that was published on the day of McIntyre's lecture. In it Lynch urged the Catholics of the Hunter River district not to allow 'any expression, however offensive to your creed, to betray you into a single act of violence'.[35] After the riot, the editor of the *Northern Times*, claimed that Lynch could have done more to prevent it, arguing he should have shown up at the Free Church and addressed the crowd.[36]

While many of Maitland's citizens hoped the town would return to the state of 'Christian harmony and good feeling that had prevailed in this district for many years', McIntyre was not about to let the matter drop.[37] On the night of the riot,

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31   *Northern Times* 31 March 1860, p. 2; *Sydney Morning Herald* 31 March 1860, p. 4; 2 April 1860, p. 4; *Empire* 31 March 1860, p. 5; 2 April 1860, p. 5.
32   *Maitland Mercury* 28 February 1860, p. 2.
33   *Northern Times* 31 March 1860, p. 2.
34   *Northern Times* 31 March 1860, p. 2.
35   *Maitland Mercury* 29 March 1860, p. 3.
36   *Northern Times* 31 March 1860, p. 2.
37   *Maitland Mercury* 3 April 1860, p. 2.

To the Catholics of the Hunter River District.

A S it has ever been the fond wish of my heart to pro-
mote peace and concord amongst all classes and
creeds in the community, I cannot contemplate without
much pain any attempt to hold up in an offensive form
to the public gaze the doctrines and practices of your
Church. Such an attempt is calculated to disturb the
harmony so long and so happily pervading this district.
You will, however, prove the efficacy of my teaching, and
your warm attachment to your Pastor, by not allowing
any expression, however offensive to your creed,
to betray you into a single act of violence. Your
cause is good and righteous, and needs not the support
of any act which would deprive you of the sympathy and
respect of your fellow-citizens.

J. T. LYNCH,
Dean.

West Maitland, March 28, 1860.   1966

*Dean Lynch's letter
urging Catholics not
to resort to violence:*
Maitland Mercury
29 March 1860, p. 3

he had recovered sufficiently to participate in a meeting of the committee
appointed to organise his lecture. The committee resolved to postpone his
address until Thursday 12 April 1860 at 11 am and to inform the government
of the riot and of their belief that no sufficient arrangement had been made by
the police magistrate for the preservation of the peace. The following Monday
McIntyre and 40 of his supporters met at the Rose Inn and resolved to hold a public
meeting at 2 pm on Wednesday 11 April 1860 at the Olympic Theatre 'to adopt such
measures as may be deemed necessary to vindicate and maintain the right of every
member of the community to liberty of speech'.[38]

Fearing that the postponed lecture and the proposed public meeting might lead
to further violence, the police magistrate, Captain Day, convened a meeting of the
magistrates of the district at the courthouse to discuss what measures should be
taken to preserve the peace of the town. The extent of their concern can be measured
by the fact that they resolved to request the government to send a mounted force
to Maitland and that 300 special constables be sworn in to aid the regular forces
in the event of a riot.[39] While Day's fellow magistrates expressed satisfaction as
to his explanation of his inability, with the forces available, to disperse the rioters
the previous Thursday, the government called upon him to answer McIntyre's
committee's charges as to his handling of the affair.[40] In the end no action was taken
against Day for his handling of the 29 March disturbance.

38   *Maitland Mercury* 3 April 1860, p. 2.
39   *Maitland Mercury* 7 April 1860, p. 2.
40   *Sydney Morning Herald* 4 April 1860, p. 3.

The venue for Wednesday's public meeting was changed after the proprietor of the Olympic Theatre, fearful of the likelihood of damage, withdrew his consent to his building being used.[41] But before that meeting took place, 50 to 70 Catholics of the district attended a meeting on the Tuesday in St John's schoolroom to protest against the persistence of 'one individual member of the community' to engage in conduct calculated to disturb the peace and propagate sectarian rancour and ill will and to repudiate the charge of Catholic hostility to liberty of speech. Speaking in support of the first motion, John Sheehan told the gathering that he had gone with his family to hear Reverend McIntyre's speech and that the riot only started when McIntyre and his wife retaliated after having been hissed by the crowd. He criticised the government for having raised 300 special constables 'from the trifling cause that had given rise to it' and for having selected them on sectarian principles, saying that of the 300 special constables, only six were Catholics. The chairman, W.T. Mitchell, said he trusted the meeting would let the matter drop and advised 'all good Catholics' not to go near the public meeting to be held the next day.[42]

The free-speech meeting was held in a paddock off High Street, West Maitland. According to the *Maitland Mercury*, when the meeting commenced at 11 am, those in attendance, including special constables, numbered about 400 but by its close it had almost trebled, 'some ladies also attending'. Several motions were proposed and passed with speakers, including Reverend McIntyre, espousing the right of all to liberty of speech.[43]

The civil authorities were not alone in their concern to avoid further violence in Maitland. John Bede Polding, the Catholic archbishop of Sydney, penned a pastoral letter addressed to the Catholics of Maitland and the neighbouring districts, which he personally brought to the town on the morning before McIntyre was due to deliver his postponed lecture.[44] In the letter, Polding acknowledged the righteousness of the anger at the 'outrageous insult' offered to the Catholic church:

> We do not wonder at your feelings of anger, for we know well, though perhaps the world does not know, that Catholics feel more acutely an insult to their faith and church than an attack upon themselves personally.

This expression of empathy was not mere words. In 1838 Polding himself had been the object of one of McIntyre's anti-Catholic tracts: 'Is the Service of the Mass Idolatrous? Being a Candid Inquiry into the doctrine maintained on the subject by Bishop Polding'. Nevertheless, Polding continued with a mild rebuke, 'But, dearly

41   *Empire* 9 April 1860, p. 8.
42   *Northern Times* 11 April 1860, p. 2; *Maitland Mercury* 12 April 1860, p. 2.
43   *Maitland Mercury* 12 April 1860, p. 2; *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 April 1860, p. 5.
44   Although a titular see of East Maitland had been created in 1847, it remained under the administration of the archdiocese of Sydney until James Murray was appointed Bishop of Maitland in 1865 ('History of Maitland-Newcastle', https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/about/history/).

beloved, we would fain have seen all of you choose the nobler part, and so shame your assailant by enduring your wrong in silence.' With Easter Sunday having just passed, Polding asked his flock to imitate Christ and 'overcome natural resentment by looking anew on the example of Him who bore with patience the extremity of wrong and insult, and blasphemy, for our sakes'. He urged:

> Leave God to avenge his own cause. Let no one persuade you that any
> good, no, no not even of worldly credit, can come of anger and violence.
> Peace, good order, Christian patience, these must be your watchword.[45]

Perhaps Polding's message had the desired effect, or perhaps it was the presence of armed dragoons and the 300 special constables, but that night McIntyre's three-hour lecture with its diatribe against Catholicism's errant dogmas and idolatrous practices was delivered without interruption. So large was the attendance that the meeting was moved from the church to the nearby paddock in which the free-speech meeting had been held. In its commentary on the meeting, the *Empire* saw the irony in the rioters silencing McIntyre on 29 March, with the editor observing that, but for the rioters' fury, McIntyre's lecture would have already been forgotten, adding, 'A discourse that occasioned one riot, three public meetings, and the attendance of a small army of horse and foot police, will not be so easily banished from recollection'.[46]

All that remained of the affair was the prosecution of the rioters. In all, twenty men had been charged. Three were brought before the bench of magistrates at East Maitland on Friday 13 April 1860: Thomas Long, James Wenslow, and John Dillon. Of the remaining seventeen, McIntyre agreed that only another three should be prosecuted. Representing the accused was Daniel Henry Deniehy, a well-known lawyer, orator, and politician.[47] Despite Deniehy's argument to the court that the prosecution had failed to prove an unlawful intent, the defendants were committed to stand trial at the next sitting of the Maitland Circuit Court. The next day Thomas Hartigan, Patrick Halloran, and Dennis Coleman appeared before the magistrates with a similar result.[48] The trial of the six men indicted for 'unlawfully and riotously assembling … to disturb the peace' and assaulting Reverend William McIntyre was heard before Justice Samuel Frederick Milford and a jury of twelve at the East Maitland courthouse on 13 September 1860. The trial took all day with the jurymen retiring at 6.15 pm to consider their verdict. Because they could not arrive at a verdict the jurors were held overnight. The next day the foreman informed the

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45   *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 April 1860, p. 5; 13 April 1860, p. 5.
46   *Empire* 13 April 1860, p. 4. McIntyre's lecture was printed and circulated, thereby gaining further publicity for his views.
47   *Maitland Mercury* 14 April 1860, p. 2. See G. P. Walsh, 'Daniel Henry Deniehy (1828–1865)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.
48   *Empire* 18 April 1860, p. 8.

judge they had not come to an agreement and were not likely to do so. The jury was discharged and the defendants remanded on bail to appear at the next sitting of the circuit court.[49] But when the men appeared before Justice Edward Wise the following March, the Crown announced it would not be proceeding with the prosecution. The defendants were discharged on their own recognisance to appear when called upon, thus effectively putting an end to the affair.[50]

In February 1862 Reverend McIntyre left Maitland to become the minister at St George's Presbyterian church in Sydney. Maintaining his support of Free Church principles, he and his congregation remained outside the unions of 1864 and 1865 that led to the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales. McIntyre continued to lead the PCEA until his death in Sydney in 1870.[51] Dean Lynch also departed Maitland in 1862, being appointed as vicar forane of the diocese of Armidale in November that year. He remained there for eight years before being posted to Pyrmont in Sydney and then Campbelltown, where he died in 1884.[52]

Ipswich 1874

What makes the Ipswich riot of 1874 stand out as particularly egregious is that it was not in response to an overt act of provocation as in earlier cases. The riot occurred in the town's School of Arts building during a lecture by Reverend David Porteus, an Orangeman well-known for his anti-Catholic rhetoric. Unlike the advertised title of McIntyre's lecture – 'The Heathenism of Popery' – it is difficult to argue that the subject or title of Porteus's lecture on Martin Luther, 'The Monk that Shook the World', was provocative or offensive to Catholics. It was the third in a series of lectures which Porteus had delivered in the town, the first two having passed without fuss on 19 July and 8 September.[53] A possible explanation arises from the fact that the Orange order was proposing to hold a picnic on the following Monday to celebrate the Prince of Wales' birthday. The state government had agreed to provide a special train for the occasion. Some Catholics believed that Ipswich's Orangemen, led by their worshipful master, Reverend Porteus, would march to the station flying triumphal and offensive banners. The School of Arts meeting presented hot-headed Catholics with an opportunity for a pre-emptive strike.[54]

On Thursday 5 November 1874 about 300 people crowded into the School of Arts hall to hear Porteus's lecture. James Foote MLA was in the chair. According

49   *Maitland Mercury* 15 September 1860, p. 4.
50   *Maitland Mercury* 16 March 1861, p. 2; 19 March 1861, p. 3.
51   Barry Bridges, 'MCINTYRE, William (1806–1870)'.
52   Harold Campbell, 'Dean Lynch: Laying the Foundations for Maitland Diocese', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1971, pp. 46–61.
53   *Queensland Times* 16 July 1874, p. 2; 8 September 1874, p. 2; 31 October 1874, p. 2.
54   *Telegraph* 7 November 1874, p. 2; 9 November 1874, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier* 9 November 1874, p. 3.

Advertisements for Rev. Porteus's lecture and Orange order's picnic: Queensland Times *31 October 1874, p. 2*

to the *Queensland Times* 'an excited hum ran through the whole crowd' and a row of some kind was anticipated. This was borne out by the fact that in introducing the speaker, the chairman commented on the peaceable and orderly demeanour of Ipswich people at public meetings where toleration had always prevailed. This was belied when Porteus was greeted with groans and hisses from his detractors as well as applause from his supporters when he rose to speak. He too asked for toleration, reminding the audience that Protestants had not attacked recent processions and outdoor displays by Catholics. For about 20 minutes Porteus spoke with only the occasional interruption of stamping feet or interjections. Then, for no particular reason, a yell arose from the centre of the hall followed by taunts and personal abuse directed at the speaker. A great commotion ensued and a group of men rushed from the back of the hall to the front, making a great noise. They then made for the platform. Porteus and Foote quickly exited the hall through a back door. Hand to hand fighting ensued with chairs being broken and their remnants used as weapons, stones being thrown, lamps in the chandeliers being smashed, their burning oil streaming onto the floor. One man Denis Toohey was stabbed. The police magistrate Captain Townley was present and he read the Riot Act. Eventually the police gained control of the hall but fighting continued for some time in the streets outside.[55]

55   *Queensland Times* 7 November 1874, p. 5; *Brisbane Courier* 7 November 1874, p. 4; *Telegraph* 7 November 1874, p. 3.

Queensland's Catholic leaders quickly realised the damage the riot had done to the reputation of the Church and to interdenominational relations. On Saturday Bishop James Quinn of Brisbane travelled to Ipswich and attended a meeting of more than 600 Catholics held the next day after mass. Quinn strongly urged 'all good Catholics' not to interfere with the proposed Orange parade and to assist in maintaining peace and order. The meeting passed a resolution condemning 'all, whether of their own denomination or of any other, who instigated or promoted the disorder' and another resolution declaring that:

> any ill-advised Catholic who might offer violence or insult to any such procession or meeting should be regarded by the Catholic body as more hostile to its interests and to those of the colonists generally than any member of the Orange association'.[56]

Then, in a show of Christian fellowship, Quinn attended the Orange lodge's picnic on Monday at Oxley West, 26 kilometres to the east of Ipswich, travelling with Reverend Porteus and 300 Orangemen on the special train. Before setting out, the lodge members had assembled at the station without the feared triumphal procession. At the picnic grounds Quinn addressed the assembled Orangemen in a most irenic manner, reading the resolutions passed at the Catholic meeting the day before and offering (with his tongue no doubt well and truly in his cheek) that if Reverend Porteus wished to deliver his lecture again he would have no objection in chairing it.[57]

Bishop James Quinn of Brisbane:
Australian Town and Country Journal
20 February 1875, p. 293

Porteus did not take up the bishop's offer when he delivered without interruption his third lecture on Luther at the School of Arts, Ipswich on 22 December 1874.[58] Porteus left Ipswich in March 1876 and thereafter held postings in several parishes in eastern Australia. A controversialist to the end, Porteus died on 25 July 1916.[59]

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56   *Brisbane Courier* 9 November 1874, p. 3.
57   *Telegraph* (Brisbane) 9 November 1874, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier* 10 November 1874, p. 3.
58   *Queensland Times* 2 January 1875, p. 6.
59   *Argus* 27 July 1916, p. 1; *Spectator and Methodist Chronicle* 27 September 1916, p. 1263.

The final scene of the Ipswich riot drama occurred in February 1875 with the trial and conviction of several of the rioters, six of them being sentenced to prison terms of between three and six weeks plus fines of between £3 and £15.[60]

Conclusion

When I was at school we had a saying, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me'. But if our excursion through the history of sectarian disturbances teaches us anything, it is that my schooldays saying was probably not true. Names do hurt. That, of course, does not excuse those who take the law into their own hands to vindicate their offended ethnic, religious, or other identity. In the disturbances we have discussed, no one in the cool light of day suggested otherwise.

Fortunately, sectarianism between Catholics and Protestants has all but disappeared from Australian society. Nevertheless, ethno-religious conflict has not. Although images of William III no longer have 'a deep and bitter significance' for Australians of Irish descent and terms such as 'the Heathenism of Popery' and 'Antichrist' are no longer publicly hurled at Catholics, offensive or injurious language, which we now call 'hate speech', continues to exist, although now largely directed at people of other identities. And sometimes, as we have seen in recent years, such perceived offence has led to violent reactions not dissimilar to those I have discussed in this article. For example, on 15 September 2012 a protest in Sydney against an anti-Islamic film *Innocence of Muslims* turned violent resulting in injuries to police and protesters.[61]

Seemingly intractable issues that once divided Catholics and Protestants, such as state-aid for Catholic schools and self-government for Ireland, have been resolved. But other debates and conflicts in the homelands of more recent immigrants have taken their place, once more threatening our aspirations for a peaceful and tolerant Australia. Ultimately, it falls to the law makers and those who administer the law to determine where lies the line between liberty and licence and, if that line has been crossed, to take such steps as are necessary in the particular circumstances, not to assuage offended feelings, but to preserve the peace and social harmony of the community. Looking back at our sectarian past and understanding that we have been down this road before and have managed to come through provides a measure of hope that we can do so again.

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60   *Gympie Times* 20 February 1875, p. 3.
61   'Sydney anti-Islam film protests', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sydney_anti-Islam_film_protests.

<div align="center">APPENDIX – SECTARIAN RIOTS IN AUSTRALIA 1843 TO 1922</div>

Election

1843 in Melbourne: During the election for the legislative council in the seat of Melbourne supporters of the Catholic and the Protestant candidate fought each other outside the polling place causing delay to the declaration of the poll. The Riot Act was read and mounted police charged the mob, driving them away from the polling place.

Orange Display/Parade

1846 in Melbourne: During the Twelfth of July celebrations Orangemen displayed from a hotel window a banner of William III crossing the Boyne. This provoked an angry reaction from Irish Catholics, who pelted the building with stones. The Orangemen retaliated by firing on the crowd from the hotel windows, wounding several people.

1867 in Melbourne: During the visit of Prince Alfred to Melbourne, Orangemen displayed a painting on the Protestant Hall in Stephen Street (now Exhibition Street) depicting William III crossing the Boyne. When one night a crowd singing 'The Wearing of the Green' threw stones at the illuminated painting (or transparency, as it was called), shots were fired from a window of the Protestant Hall. Several people in the crowd were hit, including a 13-year-old boy who died of his wounds a fortnight later. He was an English-born Protestant.

1896 in Brunswick, Melbourne: A crowd of 25,000 had assembled to watch a parade of Orangemen celebrating the Twelfth of July. However, due to threats it was called off. Nevertheless, groups of Orangemen were set upon and several brawls erupted.

1897 in Brunswick, Melbourne: A contingent of 300 police and 30 mounted troopers escorted that year's Twelfth of July parade, watched on by a crowd estimated to be between 30 and 40,000, many of whom broke through the police ranks and attacked Orangemen, their banners and regalia.

1897 in Coolgardie, Western Australia: A parade of Orangemen celebrating the Twelfth of July was attacked by a mob wielding hurley sticks resulting in a general mêlee.

1901 in Boulder, Western Australia: As in Coolgardie four years before, a parade of Orangemen celebrating the Twelfth of July was attacked by a mob wielding hurley sticks resulting in a general mêlee.

Preacher/Speaker

1860 in Maitland, New South Wales: At a public lecture on 'The Heathenism of Popery' by ultra-Protestant preacher Reverend William McIntyre, a mob of Irish Catholics attacked the speaker and smashed the windows of his church.

1866 in Sydney: A mob of Irish Catholics broke up a public lecture on 'The Antichrist' by ultra-Protestant preacher and Orangeman Reverend John McGibbon, who identified the Church of Rome with the antichrist of scripture. The press dubbed the ensuing brawl as the 'Battle of York Street'.

1874 in Ipswich, Queensland: A public lecture on Martin Luther by ultra-Protestant preacher and Orangeman Reverend David Porteus was broken up by a mob that then rampaged through the nearby streets.

1878 in Sydney's Hyde Park: Ultra-Protestant preacher Reverend Daniel Allen, well known for his fiery anti-Catholic rhetoric at his open-air services, was chased out of Hyde Park with an estimated 5000-strong crowd pursuing him. When men wearing orange neckties were spotted, those wearing green attacked them with brickbats. When the police arrested one of the brickbat throwers and began dragging him away the scene turned nasty as the mob turned on the police. It was only when mounted police with sabres moved in that the mob dispersed.

1879 in Hobart: A public lecture on the evils of Catholicism by a visiting Canadian ex-priest and Orangeman Charles Chiniquy was broken up.

1886 in Lismore, New South Wales: A public lecture on the evils of the Catholic convent system by visiting American ex-nun Edith O'Gorman organised by the Orange order was broken up.

1900 in Adelaide, Brisbane, and Kalgoorlie: Public lectures on the evils of Catholicism by a visiting English ex-priest Joseph Slattery were broken up.

1903 in Wyalong and Temora, New South Wales: Public lectures by ultra-Protestant preacher and Orangeman Reverend Dill Macky were broken up. Shots were fired and stones thrown.

1922 in Coolamon and Marrar, New South Wales: Public lectures by ultra-Protestant preacher and Orangeman Reverend William Touchell on the Protestant Federation and the evils of Archbishop Mannix and Catholic convents were broken up and the speaker assaulted.