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ABSTRACT

After human rights violations, states frequently employ the discourse of “closure” or “drawing a line under the past” as an exculpatory device that situates the wrongdoing in an ontologically discreet and normatively inferior past, a maneuver I term “performative temporal segregation.” Recognizing the United Kingdom’s 2010 apology for Bloody Sunday as an example of temporal segregation, I draw on interviews with relatives of Bloody Sunday victims and other stakeholders to examine how the apology’s recipients have variously resisted and embraced the performative segregating of time. Although many relatives remain enthusiastic about the apology, temporal segregation is challenged by others in three ways: (1) by deriding the apology, (2) by framing it as a stepping stone toward justice rather than an endpoint, and (3) by critically reassessing it over time. I thereby demonstrate that victims and governments can have irreconcilable conceptions of the purpose of apology as a transitional justice mechanism. Nevertheless, participants almost universally embraced closure as a desirable and achievable objective, primarily through prosecutions. This, ironically, entails recognizing that the colonial state can dispense justice and arbitrate on temporality.

Introduction

The Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry (henceforth the Report) runs to over 5,000 pages and enters into minute detail about the events of the day in 1972 when 13 innocent people on a civil rights march were massacred by the British army.¹ It is paradoxical to think that a detailed public account of an event might function to marginalize, rather than evoke, the past. Yet as Jacques Derrida (1998) ventured in relation to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “when I handwrite something on a piece of paper, I put it in my pocket or in the safe, it’s just in order to forget it.” To be clear, I do not find the terms “forgetting” or “amnesia” especially useful,² but Derrida had a point: There is something about placing it on record that compartmentalizes the past, puts a lid on it, partitions it from the present. In line with this, in offering a parliamentary apology for Bloody Sunday immediately following the Report’s publication, UK Prime Minister David Cameron (2010) expressed (or performed) an ontological segregating of the present from the past, declaring the need “to close this painful chapter,” “move on,” and “draw a line under what happened.”³

Theodor Adorno (1959/1998) offered a warning about those who intend to “close the books on the past”: It is a disposition “practiced by those party supporters who committed the injustice”

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(p. 89). And he was right. This is why those who apologize for their state's human rights violations so often, as Cameron did, use the language of closing chapters or drawing a line. Leaning on the work of Berber Bevernage (2012, 2015) on transitional justice and temporality, I term the exculpatory maneuver of discursively framing the past as ontologically discreet and normatively inferior as *performative temporal segregation*. Drawing on semistructured interviews I conducted with relatives of those killed and prominent members of the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign about Cameron's apology, this article asks: How do relatives respond to such hegemonic segregating of temporality? In asking this, I explore the different ways relatives both resist and embrace the notion of closure or "putting the past in the past."

From the seemingly euphoric immediate responses to the Report and apology, it is tempting to think that there was, as Cameron implored, a discernible break from the past. Writing in *The Guardian*, Simon Winchester (2010) went so far as to claim that the jubilation in Derry that day represented "a full stop" to Bloody Sunday and even "Britain's colonial experience in Northern Ireland." But some (though not all) of the interviewees paint a different picture: I demonstrate three positions that resist the government's temporal segregation: (1) skepticism about the Report and apology by some family members who consider them to be deficient, (2) the framing of the Report and apology as a conduit or stepping stone to justice rather than an end in themselves, and (3) "discoloration"—a more critical reassessment of the apology over time. In outlining these positions, I argue that government attempts at temporal segregation are likely to be met with significant resistance. The significance of this is to demonstrate that governments offering and victims receiving political apologies can have incompatible ideas about the functions of the ritual in respect to both temporality and justice: Whereas governments have a proclivity for casting apologies as the end of the road, victims may understand contrition as either redundant or another milestone on the road to justice.

Nevertheless, and this is where my work diverges most significantly from Bevernage's (2012, 2015), I demonstrate that even participants who are most critical of closure through apology still embrace it as a practical and achievable goal. This is to say that I did not find skepticism about the tenets of temporal segregation *per se*. On the contrary, I found an enthusiasm for it as a realistic objective that could plausibly be delivered by arms of the UK state. Ironically, in participants framing legal prosecutions as the route to closure, it is the colonizing state and its judicial system—a state and judicial system that have done so much harm to the families—that is ascribed with the capacity to provide the coveted break between past and present. In other words, temporal segregation is a hegemonic device used by governments, but it also is a counterhegemonic objective among victims in their demand for closure through legal justice. Nevertheless, even at the counterhegemonic moment of demanding justice, there is a recognition of the colonial state as the source of justice and arbiter of temporality.

The article proceeds as follows: The first section outlines existing literature on temporality and transitional justice and situates it alongside the academic literature on political apologies. Following an outline of the research methods, the second section examines why some participants criticize the apology and perceive it to be insufficient for closure. The third section outlines how temporal segregation is challenged through participants seeing the apology and Report as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The fourth section illustrates the trend for participants to become more skeptical about the apology over time, thereby dislodging the idea that a clear break is generated through contrition. The final section demonstrates how many participants consider prosecutions as the potential moment of closure and moving on. I discuss the implications of this, including the casting of the colonial state as an authority that may impart justice and preside over temporality.

Political apology and the performing of temporality

Academic literature on public apologies for human rights violations has undergone a boom in the last two decades (key works include Celermajer, 2009; Daase et al., 2016; Dolan, 2021; Gibney

et al., 2008; Lind, 2008; Nobles, 2008; Smith, 2008, 2014a). This work has taken fascinating directions, including addressing such disparate issues as its intersection with religion (Celermajer, 2009; Smith, 2014a) and political ideologies (Cunningham, 2016), as well as scrutinizing the diplomatic wrangling between vested parties over the issue (Boehme, 2020). Not surprisingly, however, the research question that permeates most of the literature is whether apologies can facilitate reconciliation between communities. Those who champion apology claim the ritual can affirm human rights, clarify contested narratives, give dignity to victims, build trust, and offer catharsis to all involved (see Andrieu, 2009; Augoustinos et al., 2011; Edwards, 2010; Marrus, 2007; Murphy, 2011; Nobles, 2008; Páez, 2010; Verdeja, 2010). There is a tendency in some of the more optimistic literature to provide a template or “theory” of apologies, thereby implying that apologies succeed if they contain certain characteristics (for a critical analysis, see MacLachlan, 2014). Others, by contrast, have framed apology as a tool for extending state power or recycling existing hierarchies (Bentley, 2016; Corntassel & Holder, 2008; Gibney, 2002; Muldoon, 2017a; Smith, 2014b).

There are notable problems with both the apology optimist and sceptic camps. First, it is rare for work to draw on the opinions of the apology’s recipients (for a recent exception, see Bentley, 2021). This is especially ironic for work that frames itself as postcolonial (see Celermajer & Moses, 2010). Second, there is often the assumption that apology is a kind of instant snapshot; it is either felicitous or infelicitous, redemptive or problematic.⁴ I address both these issues: For one, this article engages in-depth with the positions of the primary recipients of an apology. Drawing on such positions, I challenge the binary notion that apologies either sink or swim. I instead demonstrate considerable divergences of opinion and ambivalence over the ritual. Moreover, I emphasize the importance of a temporal dimension in victims’ positions, demonstrating how opinions change and, at least in the case of Bloody Sunday, have largely become less favorable over time.

And it is the issue of time and its compartmentalization that is central to this article. In one sense, separating or atomizing is pivotal to apology: According to Goffman’s (1971, p. 113) formulation, “apology is a gesture through which an individual splits himself into two parts, the part that is guilty of an offense and the part that dissociates itself from the delict.” We cannot overlook the temporal dimension of such splitting: In Yamazaki’s (2006, p. 128) words, apology projects an idea that, “although our forefathers did bad things, we are different today and we can claim a new moral identity.” Similarly, for Gustafsson (2020), apologies can be a process of “temporal othering” that highlights fundamental differences between the state’s contemporary identity to its previous incarnations. But apologies are not just about fashioning the offender’s new identity, rather that they are also about changing both the relationship between perpetrator and victim and the relationship between the parties and the wrongdoing. They, at least in theory, create and demarcate a shift from one type of relationship before the ritual to another type of relationship after the ritual.⁵

There is a widespread recognition that such temporal distinctions are desirable: According to a report by the International Center for Transitional Justice, “at their best, apologies can help to mark a before and after, acting as a symbolic turning point” (Carrazana et al., 2015, p. 4). Edwards (2010, p. 63) discussed the potential of apology to indigenous peoples to “close the chapter on one door of history by opening a new one.” Rotberg (2006, p. 33) writes that, “apology can usefully create the possibility of closure in post-conflict transitions.” In relation to Bloody Sunday, Rigney (2015) asked if “apologies end events,” largely concluding that they can. In many respects, the so called age of apology is itself marked in temporal distinction to previous eras, with Barkan (2000, p. ix) discussing an age of “a new international morality.” From this perspective, like Fukuyama’s (1989) “end of history” thesis, the age is supposedly both ontologically distinct and normatively superior to previous eras.

There are, however, those who have critiqued the concept of closure in political apologies and transitional justice more generally. Like Adorno's warning presented in the introduction, Ahmed (2012) critiques what she calls "overing"—the idea that dominant actors declare an issue resolved, thereby positioning those who continue protesting as outdated (see Bentley, 2021). In respect to both Ahmed and Adorno, the critique is primarily normative rather than of the logistical difficulties of segmenting time. James et al. (2018), on the other hand, highlight the practical difficulties of apologies generating closure, pointing to the possibility of new information coming to light and the ritual energizing further activism. Milam and Don (2020) even suggest repeated, "regularized" political apologies, thereby signaling that a single ritual is insufficient. Drawing on interviews with apartheid victims in South Africa, Mueller-Hirth (2017) illustrate how victims and nations undergoing transitional justice processes have different temporal rhythms: Nations emphasize a linear and swift moving on, whereas victims may "not always distinguish between past and present," with their requirements frequently being elongated and cyclical (p. 203; see also Mueller-Hirth & Oyola, 2018). Focusing on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Davidović (2021, p. 26) demonstrates that "contemporary transitions cannot only be understood as breaks in linear time in which the past is 'dealt with.'" Instead, personal and cultural processes of transition tend to outlive official transitional justice projects (Davidović, 2021, p. 27).

The most detailed work on temporality, transitional justice and human rights violations, however, is offered by Berber Bevernage. In his 2012 book *History, Memory, and State Sponsored Violence*, Bevernage is preoccupied by rival conceptualizations of time, namely the *reversible*, the *irreversible*, and the *irrevocable*. The reversible is whereby a wrong is "still wholly present and able to be reversed, annulled or compensated by the correct sentence and punishment" (Bevernage, 2012, p. 2). In this sense, the event remains retrievable and can be presided over and judged by our contemporaries, especially in a judicial context. Irreversible time, by contrast, frames events as "irretrievably gone" (Bevernage, 2012, p. 2); it emphasizes a past that has elapsed, is distant, and—certainly in a judicial sense—can no longer be mastered. Finally, leaning on Vladimir Jankélévitch, Bevernage (2012) conceives of the irrevocable; a conception that "does not condemn that past to an inferior ontological status that facilitates its neglect. By referring to a past that got 'stuck' and persists into the present, the concept of the irrevocable indeed breaks with the idea of a 'temporal distance' between the present and the past" (p. 4).

Why do such conceptions matter to issues of transitional justice and political apologies for human rights violations? It is because, as Bevernage (2012, p. 15) shows, "history can be *performative*" and "the distancing of past and present does not simply result from the passing of time but is something that must be actively pursued". In this sense, those involved in designing transitional justice programs and offering (and receiving) apologies perform a sense of time. For the perpetrator, this frequently entails positioning wrongdoings in a past that is ontologically discreet or, in the parlance of the contrite politician, "closed." Bevernage (2012) demonstrates that, challenging the supposed pastness of wrongdoings, victim groups tend to employ an irrevocable understanding of time. This entails discourses and symbolism whereby, for instance, the disappeared are spoken of in the present tense, there is an absence of public mourning, there is an emphasis on the continuities between past and present, and all notions of closure are resisted.⁶

Bevernage does not analyze Northern Ireland or Bloody Sunday, but it is not difficult to see how the performative situating of an event within a particular idea of time is pertinent here. To highlight some passages from Cameron's (2010) apology:

For someone of my generation, Bloody Sunday and the early 1970s are something we feel we have learnt about rather than lived through.

There will be no more open-ended and costly inquiries into the past.

There were many terrible atrocities. Politically-motivated violence was never justified, whichever side it came from. And it can never be justified by those criminal gangs that today want to draw Northern Ireland back to its bitter and bloody past.

I hope what this report can also do it is mark the moment where we come together in this House and in the communities we represent to acknowledge our shared history, even where it divides us. And come together to close this painful chapter on Northern Ireland's troubled past.

That is not to say we should ever forget or dismiss the past, but we must also move on. Northern Ireland has been transformed over the last 20 years and all of us in Westminster and Stormont must continue that work of change, coming together with all the people of Northern Ireland to build a stable, peaceful, prosperous and shared future.

It is notoriously difficult to discern the intentions of an apologist, and I do not wish to pass judgment here on whether such temporal segregating emerged out of malevolence or mere conformity to the style of the genre.⁷ Whether malevolent or otherwise, that it is a form of temporal segregation is indisputable. Not only is there the classic discourse of closure and the determination for no more “costly inquiries into the past,” but we also see “the Troubles” framed as firmly in the past and in juxtaposition to today’s “transformed” Northern Ireland.

The focus of this article, then, is not on the temporal segregation performed by the government. Rather, the focus is on the victims and justice campaigners and how they have variously resisted and embraced such categories. The intention, however, is not merely to add another case study to Bevernage’s work. First, I demonstrate three specific ways that the resistance to such temporal segregation occurs: the rejection of the apology and Report; framing them as a stepping stone to justice; and their reevaluation over time. More importantly, I demonstrate that it is too simple to say that victims critique temporal segregation entirely and commit to an irrevocable notion of time. Rather, participants repeatedly emphasized a desire for Bloody Sunday to be closed and disconnected from the present. In other words, there is a counterhegemonic commitment to temporal segregation. This, I show, is through a drive for judicial prosecutions.

Such positions are based on a series of semistructured interviews I undertook with relatives and justice campaigners in the summer and autumn of 2018. In total, I interviewed 12 immediate relatives of those killed, a wounded survivor, four nonrelatives who have been on the board of the Bloody Sunday Trust,⁸ and Mark Durkan MP (who responded to the apology in Westminster). I used snowball sampling to recruit participants, with Julieann Campbell, a former chairperson of the Bloody Sunday Trust, essentially acting as gatekeeper for the project. Almost all of the interviews were over an hour in duration. Participants had the option to be anonymized, but almost all wished to be named. Neither I nor the participants used the term *temporal segregation*, but I did ask about, and participants spoke about, such issues as closure and forgiveness. Moreover, as demonstrated below, participants frequently used such terms and metaphors (in positive and negative ways) as “moving on,” “done and dusted,” still being “on a path,” putting “it to bed,” and justice campaigns being “finished.” I explore such sentiments, and many others, in detail below.

Deriding the apology

Not every participant rejected the apology. Far from it; as I show elsewhere (Bentley, 2021), some participants were actively enthusiastic about the statement. Tony Doherty, son of Patrick Doherty, for instance, said, ‘I saw justice in the Saville Report, I saw it in Cameron’s apology and our family were happy to say, “That’s enough for us”’ (Interview, August 22, 2018). As he previously said:

The vast majority of the families felt that ... what we had achieved on 15 June, with the Saville Report as an exoneration, with the words of David Cameron, with apology and accepting political responsibility for the atrocity of Bloody Sunday, that it was now time for us all to consider moving on. (BBC, 2012)

We see in such sentiments as “that’s enough” and “moving on” an allusion to a temporal disjuncture that chimes with Cameron’s. It is worth noting that Mr. Doherty is one of the few participants who has stated he is not seeking prosecutions of soldiers. Another relative, Kay Duddy, sister of Jackie

Duddy, was not alone in using the pathetic fallacy to highlight a significant shift that day. In her words:

Cameron made his speech and made that apology; you would have nearly felt that a black cloud was lifting. Not just from us but from the whole town. Let's not forget, our whole town, everybody that gave evidence [to the initial 1972 Widgery Tribunal], was under that black cloud because they were all called liars. (Interview, August 1, 2018)

As well as employing the cloud metaphor, John Kelly, brother of Michael Kelly, said, “[W]hat Saville did, by the apology from David Cameron, I think to a degree it helped . . . cure a type of disease in the city in relation to the thinking against the British” (Interview, July 31, 2018). Julieann Campbell, former chairperson of the Bloody Sunday Trust and niece of Jackie Duddy, emphasized a distinction between her position and family members who were alive in 1972 but gave a nuanced position on closure:

Closure is a word the family throw back at you, “there is no such thing as closure,” but resolution, the coming to an end of something, you know, I don't think there will ever be closure on a matter like this, but you can certainly put it to bed, or learn to deal with it, or learn that it's not all part of your life any more. (Interview, July 31, 2018)

A difficulty, however, with apologies for human rights violations is that they tend to be offered to multiple people. And when you have multiple people, there will inevitably be contrasting opinions about an issue. In this sense, in terms of the government's temporal segregation, the significance is not so much that some people largely embraced the apology but that some people rejected it. Unlike an interpersonal apology in which the wronged may accept the contrition and agree that the matter is resolved, it is, in other words, not clear how a line can be drawn through the past when even a few people outwardly have disdain for the apology.⁹ To give examples of such disdain, when I asked Linda Nash, brother of William Nash, about her immediate response to the apology, she said, “I thought, the dirty bastards” (Interview, August 1, 2018). Similarly, her sister, Kate Nash, said, “We were very angry because we caught onto the whole—we realized then that we were being manipulated” (Interview, August 1, 2018).

There are several reasons why some participants expressed disdain for the Report and apology and felt manipulated. Clearly not every participant had the same reasons, but let me unravel some of them: First, there is criticism that Cameron did not use the word “murder.” Repeating the Report and Cameron's (2010) stand out phrase of “unjustified and unjustifiable,” Kate Nash said, “[O]f course it was unjustified and unjustifiable, but it was also murder. Why did he not use the word ‘murder?’” (Interview, August 1, 2018). Liam Wray, brother of James Wray, offered an almost identical point, critiquing “the fact that he didn't go as far to say it was murder, which he was quite entitled to do” (Interview, August 1, 2018).

Second, there was criticism that neither the apology nor the Report adequately held individuals further up the military or governmental chain of command accountable for their role in the massacre. Kate Nash, for instance, criticized the “bad apples” narrative whereby it in “no way would blacken the name basically of the rest of the British Army who are brave, and all of that” (Interview, August 1, 2018). Although critical of locating blame solely on the soldiers who did the immediate killing, Liam Wray did not seem surprised by this. As he described,

The British government were never ever going to criticise the upper echelons of the British Army. They weren't going to criticise [Robert] Ford, the Commander of the Land Forces, they weren't going to criticise who was then Captain [Michael] Jackson, Colonel Jackson, who was then going on to be the Chief of the General Staff of their army. That's the last thing they were going to do (Interview, August 1, 2018).

Even Tony Doherty, perhaps the most effusive participant about the Report and apology, recognized that the report was “heavy on innocence and light on guilt” (Interview, August 22, 2018).

Geraldine Doherty, niece of Gerald Donaghey, expressed clear reasons about why she is angry about the Report and apology. Although both Cameron (2010) and the Report recognized that none of the killed or wounded were “posing any threat of causing death or serious injury” (Saville et al., 2010, Chap. 3.70), the Report stated, “Gerald Donaghey was probably in possession of the nail bombs when he was shot” (Chap. 145.25). Geraldine Doherty explained to me that, because of this, the day felt “like a death. Another death, reliving it over.” She also described how she promised her then dying mother that she would “fight on Gerald’s case” (Interview, October 17, 2018). She has elsewhere stated that, for her family, “it’s still not finished. We have to keep fighting on and do whatever we have to do to get Gerald’s name cleared.” In her words, “I’ll highlight Gerald’s case at every opportunity. If it takes another 38 years, I’ll do it. We’re not going away” (BBC, 2012). We see here a strong challenge to temporal segregation. First, in describing it as “another death,” the emphasis is on the similarity between the massacre and 2010 rather than the differences. Second, notions of “fighting on,” “not going away,” and it not being “finished” clearly represent continuation rather than closure.

Many of the positions that challenge the apology and Report pertain to enduring disappointment and anger regarding prosecutions of those responsible.¹⁰ I discuss prosecutions in more detail later, but I want, for the moment, to capture some of the specific comments by participants that identify the government’s maneuver of temporal segregation and directly demonstrate its inadequacies in relation to justice. Conal McFeely, former chairperson of the Bloody Sunday Trust, for instance, noted:

There may well have been a view that because of the willingness and the generosity that was displayed by the people of Derry, that the British establishment had done enough with the apology, and then they thought, “This is done and dusted.” And what they didn’t plan for was that people still wanted justice. (Interview, October 17, 2018)

Mr. McFeely also spoke of how, through the apology, British politicians “thought that they could close it down” (Interview). Here, through the notions of Bloody Sunday being done and dusted and closed down, he critically identifies the government’s temporal segregation. Moreover, in pointing to people’s demands for justice, he highlights resistance to, and the inadequacy of, the government’s position.

Like Conal McFeely’s observations, Liam Wray noted:

To say that it was “unjustifiable and unjustified” cemented in a way what we’ve been saying for 40-odd years. But what it didn’t do is it didn’t bring a resolution to the reality that my brother was callously murdered [and], there was someone responsible. Now we have an inquiry that said that his killing was unjustified and unjustifiable but that wasn’t enough. That’s like a, “Okay, we’ve done that for you, go home now.” (Interview, August 1, 2018)

The phrase “go home now” recognizes the temporal segregation and places it in juxtaposition to his expression that “it didn’t bring a resolution.” Mr. Wray also used a similar phrase later in the interview, describing how, “we got the easiest thing, and the idea was that we’d all go home quietly and joyously and happy” (Interview, August 1, 2018). Interestingly, Eamonn McCann, another former chairperson of the Bloody Sunday Trust, used a similar expression, sarcastically depicting how, “everybody can be happy. Nobody is entitled to feel aggrieved” (Interview, August 21, 2021). Such insights reveal skepticism for the placatory and patronizing idea that the massacre has now been resolved. The central point is that disdain or skepticism of the Report and apology challenge the performative casting of a new beginning or a break in time emerging through such transitional justice tools. Although some participants have embraced the apology, it is not clear how temporal segregation holds when its attributes are identified and, in many cases, actively derided by the people the state addressed in its apology.

Apology as a stepping stone

Whereas the literature tends to frame apologies in binary terms as either successful or problematic, I found considerable ambivalence about Cameron's apology. When I met Leo Young, brother of John Young, he was highly dismissive of the apology but later called it "the best day ever" (Interview, August 21, 2018). Eamonn McCann, one of the strongest critics of the Report, said, "The day of the publication of the Saville Report was quite literally one of the greatest days of my life" (McCann, 2010). Even those who are the most enthusiastic about the Report and apology recognize that there were shortcomings, not least surrounding the aforementioned smearing of Gerald Donaghey. One of the difficulties, then, for those in power who seek closure through apology is that such ambivalence does not provide a definitive response to the contrition. That is, closure requires certainty—the opposite of ambivalence. Temporal segregating, in other words, performs a compartmentalization between before and after, but this requires a level of conviction that was not borne out in my interviews.

But I do not want to portray the ambivalence as a kind of indecision or hesitancy among all relatives. Instead, the UK government and some relatives seem to be at cross-purposes about what it is apologies do and what they wish to strategically achieve from them: Where the government framed apology as the end of the line, many relatives see apology as a stepping stone toward a further destination—namely, prosecutions. To illustrate this point, Liam Wray repeated to me several times that in the Report and apology they "got 5%" (Interview, August 1, 2018). I initially took the 5 percent to be an expression of disappointment, but Mr. Wray's analysis of why it was important was more nuanced than this. In his words, "[It] was a major victory, as far as I was concerned, in the sense that it was the first time that the onus was now being put on there was something wrong done, that our relatives were innocent." He explained:

We couldn't not have celebrated that day because, basically ... the Bloody Sunday Inquiry conclusions said emphatically that the Derry people weren't liars. That for 40 years they had maintained that there wasn't a conspiracy of republicans or whatever, that they had told the truth. (Interview, August 1, 2018)

He also articulated the significance of a shift in narrative:

The reality is when you have a relative who is murdered and the state has taken no action against the perpetrators and, worse than that, they criminalise the dead in the sense that they try to associate some as being gunmen at the time, or associated with gunmen, or handled guns before and after, the history books—and I've looked at that over the years: initially, it was gunmen and nail-bombers or petrol-bombers that were shot dead. Then the history books, after 10 or 12 or 14 years, changed to that 14 people were shot dead in a civil rights march in controversial circumstances. Then it was 14 civilians were shot dead. So, the whole dynamic is changing towards the truth. (Interview, August 1, 2018)

Most importantly, he clarified, "[T]he 5% made it clear that he was murdered, and we would be looking for the next step in the process" (Interview, August 1, 2018). And here is the key point in terms of temporal segregation: For the government, the case meant closure or moving on; for Mr. Wray, the Report and apology were another part of an almost inexorable process over many years toward truth and the larger goal of prosecutions.

Chiming with Mr Wray's "5%," another participant spoke of a "semi-result":

We got a semi-result from Saville. I'm quite open to settle for that because I think that will lead on to whatever has to be led on, and I think to ignore it would be an injustice to people that were shot fucking dead, and people that have died since. I think we have to, no matter what the obstacles are, we have to keep at them. Literally, what they are doing is patronising. (Interview, August 1, 2018)

In this quote, it is possible to see a contrasting understanding of apology and its relationship with time to that of the UK government: The idea that the semi-result will lead to something illustrates their understanding that, rather than closure, it is a gateway to the next level of justice: prosecutions. Likewise, the insistence that "we have to keep at them" is defiance at the idea of closure and a demand to continue campaigning.

John Kelly offered a similar analysis. When I asked him about the importance of the apology, he said:

It's part of the importance of seeking justice for Michael and all those who died. It's part of the equation, if you want to call it that. With Cameron doing what he did, it's more or less signalling to us a wrongdoing happened, so therefore, to me, the wrongdoing should be rectified. The only way it can be rectified is prosecution of the killers. (Interview, July 31, 2018)

The idea that the report and apology are part of an equation that leads to prosecutions again challenges the notion that they are a key temporal marker. Instead, Mr. Kelly frames a strong temporal continuation between the atrocity, the apology, and the hope, finally, for prosecutions.

Likewise, Kate Nash, although skeptical about apologies for such serious crimes, recognized that there was a declaration of innocence and, “[T]hey are saying it out publicly that this happened ... they'll go to court now” (Interview, August 1, 2018). In a similar way, Linda Nash repeated the three initial demands of the Bloody Sunday Justice Campaign—namely, the overturning of the Widgery Report, the declaration of innocence, and the prosecutions of those responsible. In her words, “[W]e are still on that path” (Interview, August 1, 2018). The notion of still being on that path is an interesting counter-metaphor to closure; temporal segregation demands the end of the path, whereas Mrs. Nash is insisting that the apology and its declaration of innocence are not the end of the road.

Discoloration

Muldoon (2017b, p. 142) suggests that victims should “withhold recognition of the identity claims within an apology.” He argues that immediate recognition of the purported new identity of the wrongdoer relieves the perpetrator of the obligation to make substantial changes to the structures and traits that caused the harms. In this sense, it is vital that apologies “function as a *step toward* reconciliation rather than the *achievement of* reconciliation” (Muldoon, 2017b, p. 142). Muldoon's advice seems sage: What if victims change their mind? What if, as James et al. (2018) warns, new information comes to light? What if the apologizer does not live up to the identity claims forged in the apology? To this extent, Mark Durkan, MP, told me that, although he maintained a positive opinion of the apology, “[T]here may be some discoloration since around what has and hasn't happened” since 2010 (Interview, October 18, 2018). When I asked John Kelly if he accepted the apology, he struck a similar chord, saying, “Oh yeah, of course I did. My family did, but since then, people have changed their mind” (Interview, July 31, 2018). Julieann Campbell also retains a positive disposition about it but similarly noted, “[A]fterwards, opinions changed, but on the day it really was an absolutely electric atmosphere” (Interview, July 31, 2018).

As Julieann Campbell described, there certainly seemed to be a euphoria around the day in question, and video footage shows crowds outside Guildhall cheering Cameron's speech as it was broadcast on a giant screen. Moreover, the famous thumbs up given by relatives inside Guildhall to the crowd after being presented with the report does indicate an immediate acceptance of the findings (see Sky News, 2010). On one hand, clearly euphoria is not sustainable, and inevitably reactions will dull over time. But there is more to it than simply the dimming of euphoria. Here is an extract of an interview that illustrates reassessments of the apology:

Kate Nash: Now, Cameron did sound genuine that day. It really came across as genuine.

Researcher: Eight years later, does it seem genuine?

Kate Nash: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. It has to be followed by justice. (Interview, August 1, 2018)

Eamonn McCann, who, as previously mentioned, described it as one of the greatest days of his life, noted:

Cameron was very popular immediately after he said that. In fact, there's never been an occasion when a British Conservative Prime Minister has been so popular here in Derry as Cameron was at that moment. Didn't last all that long, but nevertheless it was there at the time. (Interview, August 21, 2018)

When asked how long it took him to adjust his perspective, he said, "Certainly it was within a couple of weeks, maybe even quicker. About three days after, I think." He described how it was sitting down to read the Report that soured his perception, describing some of Saville's judgments as "fucking perverse." Like other participants, McCann was critical of the lack of interrogation of the chain of command, saying, "[W]e don't just want the shooters called to account, we want the people who gave them their orders, we want the people who sent them in in the first place" (Interview, August 21, 2018).

Liam Wray told me that "Cameron's apology [was] brilliant on the moment," but articulated why an instant snapshot is not useful. In his words:

If I wronged you today or if I was in a company or a group or an organisation that done you some harm or wrongdoing, I would think, if I was being honest, I would apologise. But I would do that in a way that I'd apologise if I was sincere, then I would take action to support that apology. (Interview, August 1, 2018)

For him, the failure to take action that supports the apology relates to prosecutions. As he described:

Because Cameron had the ability, had he chose, to say, "I want the PSNI [Police Service of Northern Ireland] now to investigate with expediency, because these people have waited too long, the possible prosecutions into the people who have done this. And if there's a problem with funding, we will assist." There are many ways he could have done that, but he didn't. Then we ended up in the situation which proves the quality of the apology in my view, we ended up in the situation where we had a stop-start police investigation into the deaths and attempted murders on Bloody Sunday, where it stopped at a time because it had no funding. They hadn't the resources to do it. So, Cameron's apology was just another political stunt. (Interview, August 1, 2018)

Here, then, we see a detailed exposition of how an apology, at least among some of its recipients, shifts from "brilliant at the time" to "another political stunt." In Liam Wray's words, "[A]n apology without recourse is like beef without mustard, it's nothing" (Interview, August 1, 2018). To spell out what this means in relation to the research question: Temporal segregation demands a clear resolution and a splitting of time to create a past that is now distinct and impermeable. By contrast, the discoloration of views about the report and apology presents a challenge to the idea that there is a clear before and after. As Mr. Wray articulated, the apology cannot be judged in snapshot isolation but must be considered in the context of proceeding events. In particular, any "after" moment, for many of the participants, seems to be only fleeting and, in James et al.'s (2018) words, "impermanent." Given such impermanence, it does not seem possible to draw distinct lines through events.

Embracing counterhegemonic temporal segregation

This article has, thus far, demonstrated that some relatives offer resistance to the notion that Bloody Sunday is somehow located in a distinct past, thereby challenging the foundations of the temporal segregation that permeated the state apology. Although this article has specified how this plays out in relation to a political apology, Bevernage (2012), too, demonstrates that that victims in transitional justice projects elsewhere also resist notions of a time characterized by its pastness. An interesting finding from my interviews, however—and a finding that Bevernage has not considered—is that the relatives were not critical of the compartmentalization of time *per se*, just the notion that the Report or apology represented a type of closure. Interesting, almost every interviewee emphasized the importance of closure and putting Bloody Sunday in the past, with participants framing it as a desirable and practically achievable goal. Time and again, relatives specifically pinpointed prosecutions as the route to closure. As one participant said to me in a

way that both critiqued the apology and underlined the commitment to an end goal, “[C]losure will come when they are treated by the law the same way as the law treats everybody else. If I’m not equal within the law to the man that shot me ... then what sort of law is it? How can it be guided? How can the Prime Minister stand up there and say, ‘apologies?’” (Interview, August 1, 2018).

For his part, Liam Wray noted:

It becomes nearly a duty. I can’t get the right words for it. Not your reason for living, but if you didn’t do it, you’d find it hard to live with yourself in the morning. You’d feel you let your brother down. So, if I get the conclusion of it, these people have been prosecuted and brought to answer for their crimes, it will be a sense of accomplishment and a sense of I can look at the photograph of my dead brother and say, “Finished.” (Interview, August 1, 2018)

Kate Nash, in similar terms, said prosecutions “would be a release” and “will take the weight off” (Interview, August 1, 2018). Linda Nash described how they will be able to “go to bed and sleep at night.” Referring to the extensive work the sisters do with other justice campaigns, she said, “When we get justice for ourselves, we walk away from all those other injustices that are around the world. We would be really selfish” (Interview, August 1, 2018). Capturing the significance of this in terms of continuity and the absence of closure, Linda Nash heartbreakingly later said on the decision not to prosecute the soldier that killed her brother, “I feel let down by a law and justice system that is supposed to protect us,” and that now “my children have to carry this on when I die” (BBC Radio Foyle, 2019).

Kate Nash, Linda Nash, and Liam Wray are among those who are most critical of the Report and apology. But similar aspirations are also held by those who are more sanguine about them. Kay Duddy, for instance, said of prosecutions, “[P]lease God, we’re that close, that close. It would just be lovely to get closure on it. As I say, I know he has been buried all these years, but we need to lay him to rest” (Interview, August 1, 2018). John Kelly said, “I want to get on with my life as best I can and the fulfillment of the last demand [prosecutions] will hopefully help me move forward” (Interview, July 31, 2018). We see in all these sentiments—the distinction between being buried and laid to rest, moving forward, finished, closure, sleeping at night, being released—the discourse of temporal segregation. This time, however, the discourse is not employed by a hegemonic actor evading accountability but as a demand and aspiration by the victims.

There is something particularly ironic about prosecutions being regarded as the route to closure. For one, my interviews took place in 2018, before the March 2019 decision to only charge one soldier with murder (a decision that was a great disappointment for many of the relatives; see BBC, 2019) and the trial’s subsequent collapse. But there is something even beyond this about the role of the state, a colonizing state in particular: Bloody Sunday was itself an outcome of the state’s colonial occupation and violent suppression of the nationalist community in the north of Ireland. The state itself, through the Widgery Tribunal in 1972, subsequently essentially exonerated the army and blamed the civil rights protestors for their own deaths. In Father Daly’s famous words, this was a “second atrocity” in that “the guilty were found to be innocent. The innocent were found to be guilty” (*The Irish Times*, 2010). To spell it out: The great hope for this elusive closure is, ironically, the very entity that is the source of so much tragedy. Liam Wray recognized this in relation to the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, saying:

Why would I want to get involved in a mechanism that in 1972 had failed? It’s like you going to a second-hand cars salesman and then, 30 years later, going along to the same boy and expecting a different result. If you got a pup the first time, I didn’t expect more than to get a pup the second time (interview, August 1, 2018).

And this, unfortunately, is exactly it. The state has harmed these families and failed them time and again, yet the state and its judicial arm are also considered a means to achieve the “release.” This says interesting things about the state: First, it imbues the state with the time-splitting

powers of temporal segregation; finishing it, coming to the end of the road, moving on, and so forth. Second, it frames the colonizing state (and if one is to critique temporal segregation, one must recognize that colonialism of the north of Ireland did not simply end with the 1998 Good Friday Agreement or the 2010 Report) as the appropriate entity to provide justice. Indeed, this has been a central argument of many of the families in pursuit of justice—that they are UK citizens and want justice for the killing of their loved ones, just as any other citizen would expect (see Bentley, 2021). In Linda Nash's words, “[T]reat my brother equally. Equally, the way any other citizen would be treated” (Interview, August 1, 2018). The underscoring of UK citizenship has an uneasy resonance when the victims were killed exactly because they were framed as the colonial “other,” and many within the nationalist community, of course, never desired UK citizenship in the first place.

Finally, prosecutions come with their own problems and perhaps will not be the panacea that many relatives desire. A prosecution in relation to Bloody Sunday now looks increasingly unlikely, but, were it to happen, perhaps a trial would dig up rather than close the past. Perhaps witnesses would again be framed as unreliable or liars by a Ministry of Defence-sponsored legal team. Perhaps, like the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, proceedings would take longer than anticipated and continue after the deaths of even more relatives. I want to make clear that this is certainly not a criticism of the families and their entirely understandable and justified quest for prosecutions. Moreover, it is undoubtedly the case that these issues have been considered by the relatives themselves. After all, what other avenues do relatives have in their search for justice? It is intriguing, however, that many relatives frame prosecutions as containing deeply emancipatory powers in respect to the coveted goals of “closure” and “moving on.” There is an irony that the colonial state, despite all its stacking of the cards and subterfuge, is cast as the potential disseminator of justice to the almost hyperbolic extent that it holds the potential for segregating time.

Conclusion

The current UK government has a long proposed legislative goal of protecting army veterans from what they call “vexatious claims and the cycle of re-investigations” (Ministry of Defence, 2020). This goal became a step closer when, in July 2021, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis announced plans to introduce legislation that would effectively create an amnesty for state and paramilitary violence occurring before the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Alongside the recent collapse of the trial of Soldier F for two murders and four attempted murders on Bloody Sunday, it is thereby clear that the state no longer considers violence in “the Troubles” to be temporally reversable, in the sense that alleged murders can be presided over by judge and jury. And in the textbook parlance of performative temporal segregation, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said this move would “draw a line under the Troubles” (Andrews, 2021). We see here a double bind for the Bloody Sunday relatives: From one direction, the temporal segregation of Cameron's apology functions to put the massacre in a compartmentalized past that is detached and considered normatively alien to the present. From another direction, this is compounded by the proposal that the UK judicial system is to no longer pass judgment on unjustifiable killings that happened in front of still alive witnesses in broad daylight on UK streets.

But the state is not the only actor that performs an understanding of time, and this article has highlighted how many family members resist notions of temporal segregation displayed in the Bloody Sunday apology. They do so by variously showing disdain for the Report and apology; framing them as a stepping stone toward justice rather than an endpoint; and demonstrating the prerogative to reassess the apology, thereby undermining the idea that the past is hermetically sealed. A central contribution of this article, then, is to demonstrate that governments offering and people receiving apologies can have incompatible ideas about what the ritual actually does: If governments perceive it as a placatory device for victims to “move on” and “go home quietly,”

this article has shown that, especially in the longer term, the opposite can be the case: Victims show the agency to reject an apology, reassess it in light of the state's subsequent behavior, and use it to demand further moves toward justice.

I have, nevertheless, demonstrated that, at least in this case study, victims overwhelmingly subscribe to the notion that the state, through its judicial processes, can provide an end point, disjuncture, or finality in the quest for closing such wrongdoings. In other words, albeit in counterhegemonic ways, victims also demand and aspire to temporal segregation. This might not be through apologies or historical inquiries, but it is through legal prosecutions. It is considered by victims themselves that the state does not just provide a form of justice but, in doing so, inscribes a form of temporality that has all the characteristics of temporal segregation. Further research is required to see if this finding is applicable to other cases of injustice in both Northern Ireland and globally.

A tragedy (among many) in relation to Bloody Sunday is that the very state that colonized, abused human rights, and killed is also seen as the vehicle to closure. Victims' counterhegemonic demand for temporal segregation, then, simultaneously attributes to the colonial state a capacity to adjudicate over time. Central functions of the state include protecting its citizens and providing justice in cases of the illegitimate use of violence. Ironically, at the very time of victims turning to the colonial and contested state to provide justice, the government is proposing that the state abdicate its capacity to preside over such killings, even when they occurred on territory over which it claims sovereignty.

Notes

1. A 14th person, John Johnston, later died of injuries attributed to wounds received on Bloody Sunday.
2. I offer a critique of the notions of forgetting and amnesia in Bentley (2016, pp. 60–61).
3. The imploration to “draw a line” under Bloody Sunday was not offered in the main apology speech, but the Prime Minister repeated it twice in answers to parliamentary questions immediately following the apology (Hansard, 2010).
4. Drawing on Foucault's notion of the Christian confession, my previous work has reproduced an “all or nothing” approach to apology (Bentley, 2020). Derrida (2001), likewise, saw forgiveness as pure or entirely compromised. Even the great Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2000), in terming the ritual “abortive,” framed the effects (or noneffects) of apology as something instantaneous. See Smith (2008) for an extensive critique of the binary notion that apologies succeed or fail.
5. For the starkest illustration, including diagrams, of such a before-and-after relationship, see Kampf and Löwenheim (2012).
6. In a subsequent article on the relationship between past, present, and future in approaches to historical injustice, Bevernage (2015) developed the term “temporal Manichaeism” to denote an understanding of the “structure of historical time” (p. 337) that “posits that the past is evil, but also tends to treat evil as anachronistic or as belonging to the past” (p. 333). Like “temporal segregation,” Bevernage was emphasising a conceptualization of the past that is considered ontologically discreet and normatively inferior (“evil”). Bevernage (2015), too, recognized that this has an exculpatory aspect to it, in that “the past is charged with the worst of all evil, while the present becomes morally discharged by simple comparison” (p. 337). In contrast to his 2012 book and, indeed, the focus of this article, by temporal Manichaeism, Bevernage (2015) was referring to a widely held “philosophy of history” rather than the particular performative representations of a given actor. Thus, although the notion of temporal Manichaeism has been influential in shaping this article, “performative temporal segregation” clearly has a heightened focus on politicians and victims' active depictions of a compartmentalized past. I am grateful to Berber Bevernage for our discussions on this topic and his feedback on earlier drafts of this article.
7. See Smith (2008, pp. 239–240) for a discussion of the significance of intentions and sincerity in collective apologies.
8. The Bloody Sunday Trust is an organization comprising relatives and civil society actors to represent the families and uphold the memory of the massacre. Some relatives I interviewed have also been on its board and/or chairperson.

9. Interpersonal apologies are fraught with complexity, and I do not want to portray them as overly simplistic. Nevertheless, apologies and their responses become far more complicated in cases of contrition between groups.
10. In March 2019, it was announced that just one soldier, Soldier F, would face prosecution for murder on that day. The trial collapsed in July 2021 due to a technicality. There have been no other prosecutions in relation to Bloody Sunday.

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