

Carlin Hornbostel

Mr. Rutherford

Oxford Scholars

6 March 2018

Politics, religion, and language

Not only in our country, but in the world, people have been and are divided. It is human nature for people to become split and it doesn't help that according to in-group favoritism, it has been observed that people treat those in their "own group" better. For this essay I wanted to look back at history as to what has been the root of division in countries around the world. In doing so it will help me understand better the division in our world today. I am not talking about a simple disagreement or contrast in views, rather something that is rooted so deeply that it has the power to divide an entire nation. In my investigation I arrived at three main dividers: the political turmoil that has challenged America, the differences in religion that violently tore apart the island of Ireland, and the language barrier that troubles the nation of Belgium today; and further looked at how they relate to us today

As we all know, America is very divided right now over very difficult issues. Our country is no rookie at being divided, and a deeper division can be traced all the way back to the late 1800s. Had a few things gone differently during the Civil War, we may have seen a complete separation in the United States. This type of colossal division was rooted in the politics of the time, specifically to do with the view of the government's

power to regulate slavery. This power is a political issue of state's rights. To continue, the essence of the ideology of slavery, challenged the current political climate to consider what is right versus what is allowed in the constitution. There was further division when abolitionists claimed a "higher law" than the constitution. This is just one example of politics dividing people, as since "politics" is such a broad term, the division caused by it is readily seen today in our country. Views on issues like the economy and gun control challenge our nation today and spur from the idea seen long ago of a division of political views.

The next major divider I looked at is religion, specifically on the island of Ireland with the English. The history behind why Ireland became split traces back all the way to the 12th century when Henry the 2nd invaded Ireland from Britain and formed the Lordship of Ireland. A lot of the conflict that took place can be attributed to the division between Protestants and Catholics. Before the 16th century, although Britain had power on the Island, there was little major division, as both nations were Catholic and the British assimilated well into Irish culture. In the late 16th century however, Henry the 8th formed the Church of England after the Roman Catholic pope refused to annul his marriage. In 1609, under the reign of James the 1st, the English and Scottish took land away from the northern part of the island and formed the Plantation of Ulster, which would go on to thrive and become predominantly Protestant. However this did lead to my first finding of division, as in 1641 Irish Catholics in Ulster orchestrated a rebellion against the protestant settlers. This rebellion sparked the Irish confederate wars

between the Irish Catholic Confederation and the united Scottish and British settlers. All of the violence was simply over a difference in religions. When Protestant King William the 3rd took the throne in England, there was once again a conflict known as the Williamite war in which Ireland was led by Catholic James the 2nd. The division in Ireland slowly shifted away from religion and towards self-government, but the difference in religion on the island can still be seen today as The Republic of Ireland is predominantly Catholic while in comparison Northern Ireland tends to have more Protestant followers. In our country today, I have begun to understand that religious views will always play an important role in the division between us, and that in order to avoid violence and further separation, the voices of those who feel their views and religion are under represented need to be heard.

The final divider I looked at is language. Currently in today's world, the country of Belgium is on a cultural fault, and the languages spoken there have divided the country. Before it's independence, the land which is now Belgium was split between France and the Netherlands. This means when they did declare its independence in 1830, there was a strong linguistic divide between the Flemish/Dutch speaking north and the Walloon/French speaking south. This difference of language and culture has caused many problems in their country throughout history. During the Second World War for example, officers weren't able to give commands to some of their soldiers. To continue, this language barrier has also affected their politics, as parties were split in two between the two languages. This barrier has even resulted in a regional break up of the country

today; the north being Flanders, the south being Wallonia, and the Brussels capital region. Each of these regions have their own government and have caused further conflicts as the Flanders region pursues greater autonomy. The solution to this great division is currently unknown at this time but may result in two sovereign nations or the joining of some areas into neighboring countries. I draw parallels of this division to our own state between the Spanish speaking community and the English speakers. This language difference leads to division on ideas such as immigration, funding for schools, and an overall division of cultures.

The very essence of division is inevitable, as humans will always have contrasting views on important issues. However, in my inquisition of finding the deeper things that divide us, I realized that by learning about the conflict and troubles that have come before us, we are able to better handle the divisions we face today. I have examined three major things that have divided others in the past: politics, religion, and language; and in doing so have been able to see more clearly the importance and weight that these issues have in our society today.