

Irish Radicalism and the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec and Ireland, 1833-1834: O'Callaghan and O'Connell Compared

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Introduction

Recent historical studies on the Rebellion in the Canadas suggest that we need to look more closely at the crisis of 1837-38 and the years preceding it, as a “complex series of contingent events” rather than a one-dimensional act of criminal revolt. Historian Alan Greer maintains we can do this if we situate our historiography both in the microscopic context of the circumstances as well as in the larger international currents of the times. The latter, Greer says, will help us build some comparative framework within which to “construct an integrated account of the Canadian Rebellion” in both Upper and Lower Canada.¹ Greer observes: “Ireland provides a particularly striking parallel in many respects, and the Patriots were well aware of this connection; Papineau was proud to be known as the ‘O’Connell of Canada.’”²

One element deserving exploration is the affinity between Daniel O’Connell’s radical Irish goals and O’Callaghan’s views as expressed in his 1833-34 *Vindicator* editorials. Dr. Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan was the Irish Catholic *patriote* who became Papineau’s right-hand man in the Lower Canadian Legislative Assembly after the doctor’s election in the fall of 1834. Helen Taft Manning estimates that Papineau chose O’Callaghan as his lieutenant when he was elected to the Assembly because O’Callaghan was in contact with Daniel O’Connell. Papineau needed the votes of O’Connell and

¹ Allan Greer, “1837-38: Rebellion Reconsidered,” *Canadian Historical Review*, LXXVI, 1 (March 1995), p. 6, 10. On 1830s ideologies see Fernande Roy, *Histoire des idéologies au Québec aux XIXe et XXe siècles* (Montréal: Boréal, 1993), ch. 1. On the Jacksonian republicanism of the dissenting Upper Canadian editor, William Lyon MacKenzie, see J. E. Rea, *Bishop Alexander MacDonell and the Politics of Upper Canada* (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1974), pp. 138, 212; Lillian Gates, “The Decided Policy of William Lyon Mackenzie,” *Canadian Historical Review* XL (1959), pp. 185-208.

² Allan Greer, *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 134.

his thirty or forty Irish radical followers in any Canadian reform debate in the British Imperial parliament.³

After O'Callaghan's election in 1834 to the Lower Canadian Legislative Assembly, his discourse radicalized in response to the growing intransigence of the British. During the 1837 Rebellion, O'Callaghan escaped with Papineau across the American border where he later became New York State's first official historian. However, in 1833-34 the situation was still fluid. O'Callaghan's bi-weekly editorials during this time demonstrated similarity with the constitutional aims upheld in Daniel O'Connell's "Letters to the Irish people" reprinted in the *The Vindicator* during 1833.

According to the analysis of political scientists Bernier and Salée, the logic of the rebellion can be found in the social processes more than in the actions of a class or élite. One of the distorting effects of colonial rule, they say, was the absence of "an emerging industrial *bourgeoisie* that in self-sustaining developed societies was the spearhead of challenges to the landed aristocracy's economic hegemony and its sociopolitical order."⁴ In Lower Canada, the torch of liberalism was borne by the *petite bourgeoisie* separate from the interests of the merchant *bourgeoisie* allied with the large landowners. Bernier and Salée see the *patriote* discourse during the 1830s set within a precapitalist colonial environment governed by authoritarian structures and practices of power. They interpret *patriotes* goals as susceptible to failure because of the lack of an industrial middle class such as existed in England.⁵ In this respect, a comparison of O'Callaghan's editorials with Daniel O'Connell's "Letters to the Irish People" takes on added interest. Their words were embedded in Lower Canada and Ireland, precapitalist agricultural societies in a colonial relationship with a rapidly industrializing England. The realization of their liberal goals suffered from the same structural threat. Neither Ireland nor Lower Canada had an indigenous industrial middle class sufficient to impress their democratic aims upon the economy of their mother country.

Political Circumstances in Lower Canada

The first period of the *patriote* movement is situated between 1827-1834 when "the party was controlled by moderates."⁶ At this time, it was known

³ Helen Taft Manning, *The Revolt of French Canada, 1800-1835* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1962), p. 367.

⁴ Gérald Bernier and Daniel Salée, *The Shaping of Québec Politics and Society: Colonialism, Power, and the Transition in the 19th Century* (New York: Crane Russak, 1992), pp. 99-101.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

as the “popular” party. O’Callaghan wrote his first editorial in *The Vindicator* on 14 May 1833, toward the end of this moderate period. Some small hope was still alive that Britain would continue to attend to the democratic reforms requested in the Canadas since 1828. In 1828, a delegation had petitioned the Imperial Parliament that the Legislative Councils in both Lower and Upper Canada be made more representative of all parts of the province and less linked to the administration through the presence of members of the official class. After 1828, the Assembly voted a salary for a colonial agent of their own choosing to represent their interests in Westminster.⁷ Since 1828, the appointed members of the Legislative Council had been more co-operative with the elected members of the Legislative Assembly.

However, in the spring of 1832, the Legislative Council had suddenly become more aggressive, committing disastrous acts which ruined the co-operative process. Two Montreal editors, one of them Dr. Daniel Tracy, O’Callaghan’s Irish Catholic predecessor, had been imprisoned for criticizing the government. The patience of the popular party that the Assembly representing the people of Canada would be given greater weight in the government than the Legislative Council began to wear thin. The British Whig proposal to encourage better direct relations between the Assembly and the Governor, and to weaken the influence of the Legislative Council, was faltering. The Assembly had refused to allow its members to accept a seat on the Governor’s Executive or Legislative Councils due to the deep feelings of distrust which were re-emerging.

Within this context, O’Callaghan’s editorials between the spring of 1833 and the winter of 1834 present his Irish radical philosophy of government coupled to his analysis of the developing “popular” platform amidst worsening circumstances.⁸ Along with O’Callaghan, English-speaking members of the popular party included James Stuart and Robert Nelson of Montreal, Wolfred Nelson of Richelieu, Ephraim Knight of Missisquoi, Marcus Child of Stanstead, T.A. Young of Quebec City, and John Neilson and W.H. Scott, who represented francophone ridings in the Assembly.

The commentaries which I analyze were penned before the polarisation within the popular party in the Legislative Assembly during late January 1834. In that wintry season, the moderates definitively split from the *patriotes* over the latter’s formal demand for an elected Legislative Council. This demand became part of the *patriotes*’ platform solidified in the Ninety-Two Resolutions, passed in the Assembly and sent to the Imperial Parliament. John Neilson of Quebec City, the leading moderate, broke from the *patriotes*

⁷ See the evidence of James Stephens before the Canada Committee of 1828. *Parliamentary Papers*, 1828, vol. VII, *Report of the Select Committee on the Civil Governmem of Canada*, p. 248.

⁸ Manning, pp. 213-21.

because he believed that the Ninety-Two Resolutions would require formal changes in the Constitution of 1791. Neilson thought that a more representative system of appointment to the Legislative Council was all that was needed. He prophesied that if another act of Parliament were passed it might be less favourable to the Canadian cause for responsible government.

When O'Callaghan's wrote his sixty-nine editorials between May 1833 and January 1834, he expressed the hope that a broad interpretation of the 1791 Constitution might still be possible, allowing for an elective Legislative Council without the need for another act of Parliament. These editorials show the constitutional influence of O'Connell's Irish radicalism.

The Role of the Roman Catholic Church

While there are similarities in the tone, tactics, and themes of O'Callaghan's editorials and O'Connell's letters during 1833, there is one significant difference. O'Connell's Irish campaign was worked out in association with the unusually liberal and dispossessed Roman Catholic Church of Ireland. O'Callaghan's English editorials did not have the backing of the conservative, landed, and French Catholic Church of Lower Canada.

When Rome turned its attention to Ireland and Quebec in the first half of the nineteenth century, it felt a certain uneasiness because in both countries, nationalism was on the rise. Rome was committed to support the Metternich system of "legitimacy" of the Catholic nations of Europe, but it felt ambivalent in the cases of Belgium, Poland, Ireland, and Quebec, because the rulers of these majority Catholic nations were not Catholic. Gregory XVI took a legitimist line when Polish Catholics threatened revolution in 1831, yet was uncertain how to act when Belgian Catholics sought freedom from their Dutch Calvinist king in 1830. The Pope temporized when Daniel O'Connell allied himself with the Irish clergy for Catholic Emancipation and repeal of the union with Britain. When nationalism became an issue in Quebec, the Pope urged caution lest tension with the state might negate concessions the church had been granted by the British government.⁹ This ambivalence of Pope Gregory XVI was echoed within the local churches.

O'Connell's Catholic Emancipation campaign during the 1820s was supported by both Irish Catholic prelates and priests. Archbishop Daniel Murray, the new Catholic archbishop of Dublin in 1823, was one of the most liberal members of the Catholic hierarchy. He reversed the conservative tendencies of his predecessor, Archbishop Troy, who had been willing to

⁹ Desmond Bowen, "Ultramontanism in Quebec and the Irish Connection," *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada*, vol. 1, ed. Robert O'Driscoll and Loma Reynolds (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), p. 296.

accept a royal veto over episcopal elections in exchange for an annual state pension for the Irish Catholic clergy. Murray supported O'Connell's work for Catholic relief from the long list of penal laws against Catholics enacted between the reigns of Elizabeth I(1558-1603) and George II (1727-1760). With Archbishop's Murray's open support of O'Connell's popular campaign, there was a rejuvenation of Catholic church attendance in Ireland and a reduction in "leakage" of Catholics to the Protestant bible societies.¹⁰ Pledged to obtain emancipation for landed Irish Catholics by legal and constitutional measures, O'Connell's "Catholic Association of Ireland," founded in 1823, spread like "heather alight." Emancipation to the upper and middle classes meant admission to the army, parliament, government, and professions, but to the masses it meant the liberation of peasants from the local tyranny of their landlords.¹¹ O'Connell's successful "first agitation" for Catholic Emancipation in 1829 depended on his alliance with the Catholic Church against the exclusive privileges of the English propertied class in Ireland. The Catholic Relief Acts of 1779, 1782, and 1793, including Catholic Emancipation in 1829, left most of the old penal laws against Catholics untouched. What the Catholic Relief Acts did was to make exceptions for Roman Catholics from penal laws if they fulfilled certain conditions, such as taking a special oath. After Catholic Emancipation, O'Connell's "Letters" of 1833 written from London to the Irish people anticipated this continued backing of the Roman Catholic Church. After 1829, many disabilities remained for Irish Roman Catholics which related to worship, church buildings, tithes, use of offices, religious orders, marriages, bequests and charities, and the exclusion from certain offices.¹² O'Connell's alliance with the Roman Catholic Church provided massive organizational support, legitimated the Irish Catholic ideology of dispossession within an official moral discourse of the Church, protected free landholder voting, and actively enlisted the miserable peasants while discouraging their violence with landlords.

By contrast, O'Callaghan's 1833 editorials to give decision-making power to the Legislative Assembly, which was composed mainly of Catholics, did not have the official backing of the Roman Catholic Church in Lower Canada. As an English-speaking Irish Catholic, O'Callaghan was a member of a double-minority in a majority French Catholic Church and a dominant English Protestant society. For these three reasons, O'Callaghan's

¹⁰ Fergus O'Ferrall, *Catholic Emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the Birth of Irish Democracy—1820-30* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1985), pp. 46-7, 318-23; Gearoid O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine 1798-1848* (Dubin: Gill and MacMillan, 1972), pp. 58-60.

¹¹ Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland* (London: Methuen, 1936), pp. 358-9.

¹² O'Ferrall, *Catholic Emancipation*, pp. 319-20.

editorials could have neither the popular appeal nor the ecclesiastical influence of O'Connell's letters.

The Roman Catholic Church played a very different role in Lower Canada than it did in Ireland. Since 1791, the French Roman Catholic Church in Lower Canada benefitted from playing a neutral political role toward the British conquerors who had considerable sway over the Church. Every year, the Roman Catholic bishop was obliged to present the list of newly ordained priests to the Governor who possessed a veto over these appointments. After 1800, civil recognition was required for the creation of new Catholic parishes. In this arrangement with the British government, the French Roman Catholic Church retained its land and aristocratic privileges gained during the *ancien régime*. The Church in Lower Canada saw no advantage in supporting the liberalism of its French Catholic *petite bourgeoisie*, much less of an Irish-Catholic editor.

The French Roman Catholic clergy were fundamentally attached to the feudal society of the *ancien régime*. The profound traditionalism of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Lower Canada prevented it from supporting either moderate British parliamentarianism or libertarianism. Mgr. Plessis, the Bishop of Quebec during the 1820s, only accepted the parliamentary system in Lower Canada on the grounds that it promised him more facilities for the recruitment of French priests. Officially recognized by the British government as Catholic bishop of Quebec in 1818, Plessis was nominated by the Governor to the Legislative Council. Plessis envisioned the Legislative Assembly as no more than a consultative body to the Executive and Legislative Councils.¹³ Although formally neutral, the vested interests of the Roman Catholic Church lay on the side of the *status quo*.

The democratic ideas of the new professional Catholic laity supported the Assembly as a decision-making rather than a consultative body. Although these *bourgeoisie* demanded responsible government within the cadre of British constitutional law, their ideology put them fundamentally at odds with the Roman Catholic hierarchy of Lower Canada. Of the members of the Legislative Assembly in the pre-rebellion period of 1792-1836, 77.4 percent were merchants or professionals. When the *patriote* party was officially formed in 1834, their democratic platform was opposed by the Catholic Church of Lower Canada, which saw democracy as a machine producing mass atheism.¹⁴

Papineau, the speaker of the Legislative Assembly, concentrated his attacks on the great commercial capitalists. He defended the Church, Quebec

¹³ Fernand Ouellet, "Nationalisme Canadien-Français et laïcisme au xixe siècle," *Recherches sociographiques* IV, 1 (janvier-avril, 1963), pp. 47-70.

¹⁴ Jean-Pierre Wallot, *Un Québec qui bougeait: trame socio-politique au tournant du XIXe siècle* (Québec: Boréal Express, 1973), pp. 183-225.

civil law, and the seigneurial system as bastions of the “national” cause. However, the political system was increasingly paralyzed by constitutional deadlock between the Legislative Assembly on the one hand and the Executive and Legislative Councils on the other. This situation, and the frequent use of British garrison troops during elections, gravely concerned Church authorities. The clergy reminded their flock of the “good government” they enjoyed under British rule.¹⁵ The Quebec Church invoked the Catholic doctrine of submission to lawful authority.

From the third quarter of the nineteenth century and for another twenty years, the Quebec bishop welcomed Irish priests and clerics from the seminaries of Ireland. After completing their studies if needed in Quebec seminaries, these Irish clergy worked in parishes which began to experience problems of integrating the many Irish immigrants during the 1830s. St. Patrick’s church for the Irish was not established until 1847. Little is known of the role of English-speaking Irish Catholic priests among Montreal Irish Catholics during the 1830s but we know that their number was few. According to Brian Young, the Seminary of Montreal had only twenty priests in 1840.¹⁶

Serge Gagnon and Louise Lebel-Gagnon show that in general the physical presence of the Roman Catholic Church was in decline before the rebellions of 1837-38. From 750 Catholics per priest in 1780, there were 1,834 Lower Canadian Catholics per priest by 1830.¹⁷ In Montreal during the 1830’s, one third of adult burials were conducted without a religious ceremony. Historians Young and Dickinson have shown that only 36% of the parishioners at Montreal’s parish church during this decade bothered to take Easter communion, the most important religious service of the year. It was only after 1840 that the organization of the Roman Catholic Church expanded rapidly.¹⁸ Where there was conflict in Lower Canada between liberals and the official position of the Catholic Church, there was concert

¹⁵ John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993, 2nd ed.), pp. 160-2.

¹⁶ Marianna O’Gallagher, “The Irish in Quebec,” *The Untold Story*, vol. 1, pp. 256-7 and “Irish Priests in the Diocese of Quebec in the Nineteenth Century,” Canadian Catholic Historical Association, *Study Sessions* 50 (1983-84), pp. 403-13; Brian Young, *In Its Corporate Capacity: The Seminary of Montreal as a Business Institution, 1816-76* (Kingston and Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Serge Gagnon and Louis Lebel-Gagnon, “Le milieu d’origine du clergé québécois 1775-1840: mythes et réalités,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 37 (3 décembre 1983), p. 377.

¹⁸ Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, p. 176; the growing conflict between the Church and the parti canadien has been traced by Richard Chabot in his *Le curé de campagne et la contestation locale au Québec de 1791 aux troubles de 1837-38* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1975).

in Ireland.

The Role of the Press

In Lower Canada of 1833, the role of the press was essential in creating a climate of public opinion among voting male property-owners. *The Vindicator* was the only liberal English newspaper in Montreal. It worked in tandem with *La Minerve*, the official *patriote* French newspaper. Founded in 1828 to serve the needs of Irish Catholic immigrants and to support Daniel O’Connell’s Emancipation campaign in Ireland, *The Irish Vindicator* met with financial distress a year later. It was bought by members of the *patriotes* and changed its name to *The Vindicator*. When O’Callaghan took over as editor on 14 May 1833, it had 700 subscribers. Four years later, when O’Callaghan’s office was sacked by Tory members of the Doric club on 6 November 1837, its subscription list had risen to 2,000. This gives us some indication of the popularity of O’Callaghan’s editorials.¹⁹

The Irish Catholics were a double minority in the population of Lower Canada, which was approximately 550,000.²⁰ As Catholics they were a minority element in an immigration that was predominantly derived from the Protestant population of the British Isles. As English-speakers they were a minority within a predominantly francophone Catholic church. Their history was in part the story of a struggle to attain greater autonomy both within that church and within the English community. During 1832, historians estimate that 28,200 Irish Catholics came to British North America. During 1833, the number of Irish emigrants to British North America is estimated at 12,000. At that time, the population of Quebec City and suburbs is reckoned at 20,000; of Montreal, 27,000. Most of these emigrants were en route to the United States and Upper Canada. Between 1815 and 1851, some 50,000 did settle in Lower Canada.²¹ In 1831, The Quebec Emigrants Society, of which O’Callaghan became the President in 1833, entered a protest on the horrors

¹⁹ *The Vindicator*, 15 May 1829, p. 2, (hereafter cited as VIN); H. Clare Pentland, *Labour and Capital in Canada, 1650-1860* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1981), p. 104.

²⁰ See David A. Wilson, *The Irish In Canada* (Ottawa, The Canadian Historical Association, 1989), pp. 3-21; Maureen Slattery, “Les Irlandais catholiques de Montréal – Introduction historique et méthodologique,” *Société, culture et religion dans le Montréal métropolitain*, ed. Guy Lapointe (Montréal, V.L.B., 1994), pp. 26-57.

²¹ Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 170-5; Donald MacKay, *Flight from Famine: The Coming of the Irish to Canada*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), pp. 146-8; Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, p. 113. I am using the most conservative figures provided.

of the passage and on the terrible consequences of landing so many people possessing no money or means of survival.²² In 1832 alone, 7,000 died of cholera in all parts of Lower Canada due to the appalling conditions of the emigrant ships.²³

Jean-Paul Bernard estimates Anglophone representation within the *patriotes* at 25% for Montreal, a significant percentage. English-speaking support rested on shared desires for a more representative government and on the convergence of middle-class interests. Anglophones in the *patriote* leadership came from members of the *petite bourgeoisie* – lawyers, doctors, notaries, and store-owners – the same social strata as their French counterparts. There were several Irishmen among these leaders, including Dr. O’Callaghan. During the 1830s, Anglophones constituted an absolute majority of Montreal.²⁴ English-speaking Catholics were a swing population.²⁵

In the west ward of Montreal, where Dr. Tracey, the first editor of *The Irish Vindicator* had been elected to the Assembly in 1832, and where Papineau was to be re-elected in 1834, Irish-Catholic voters held the balance of power between the French *canadiens* and the English Protestants. French *canadiens* constituted only 43% of that ward’s vote, the Irish Catholics 16%, the Anglo-Scots 33% and the Americans 8% of the total. It is estimated that this translated into no more than 250 voting Irish Catholics in the ward. When Tracey was elected, he garnered the support of 150 of the 210 Irish Catholics who cast votes. Securing this Irish vote for the popular party during the next election was one of O’Callaghan’s objectives in his 1833 editorials.²⁶ Moreover, Jack Verney estimates that between Quebec city and

²² Manning, p. 201.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 201, 199.

²⁴ Jean-Paul Bernard, *Les rébellions de 1837-1838* (Montréal: Boréal, 1983), p. 323. For the *patriotes* leaders, including the Irish, see: Aegidius Fauteux, *Patriotes de 1837-1838* (Montréal: Les Editions des Dix, 1950), pp. 172-391; Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers: A History of English-Speaking Quebec* (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1980), p. 63

²⁵ Slattery, “Les Irlandais catholiques de Montréal,” pp. 35-63. In 1830, 25,000 Irish Catholics are estimated as residents in Lower Canada: Pentland, *Labour and Capital*, p. 236, n. 40. Enumerations during the 1830s did not divide the population by country of origin. By 1844, before the massive emigration of 1847, enumeration did list country of origin: the Montreal population of Irish Catholics is quoted at close to 25%: 9,795 out of 43,000: Olivier Maurault, *Marges d’histoire* (Montréal: Librairie d’Action Canadienne-française, 1929), p. 86.

²⁶ Jack Verney, *O’Callaghan: The Making and Unmaking of a Rebel* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994), pp. 56, 81-2; France Galarneau, “L’élection partielle du quartier-ouest de Montréal en 1832: analyse politico-sociale,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 32 (mars, 1979), pp. 565-84; Fernand Ouellet, *Lower Canada 1791-1840* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), p. 141.

Montreal, the Irish Catholic “swing vote” accounted for as many as eight out of the eighty-eight seats in the Legislative Assembly. O’Callaghan also directed his editorials to this population.²⁷

Like other papers of the day, *The Vindicator* reached more than the one in ten adults who could read. The literate read the papers to their illiterate neighbours, while some towns established “reading rooms” where audiences gathered to hear the news. In Montreal, the working-class Irish congregated in districts like “Little Dublin” and “Griffintown,” establishing themselves in work sectors such as canal labouring and carting.²⁸

The Influence of O’Connell

The Vindicator featured Daniel O’Connell’s letters to the Irish people as well as some of his speeches. The paper was filled with poetry, book summaries, letters to the editor, pungent editorials, and reports on liberal advances and reversals around the world. On a bi-weekly basis, Dr. O’Callaghan diagnosed the ills of the province. He praised Daniel O’Connell as a “great and good man” who works “legally and safely” for liberal reform in Ireland.²⁹

In 1833, O’Connell led the Irish Radicals in the British House of Commons. Self-government, not separation from England was O’Connell’s aim. With a lawyer’s respect for the law and a horror of armed rebellion, O’Connell pledged his followers to obtain repeal of the union with Britain only by legal and constitutional means.³⁰ Having successfully won the right for Catholics to be elected to the British parliament, O’Connell was a hero to Irish Catholics around the world, and an inspiration to French Catholic liberals in France and Lower Canada. In France, Montalembert’s famous address to O’Connell extolled his work for its universal liberal significance. In Lower Canada, Papineau hailed O’Connell as a great leader.³¹

The French Catholic *canadiens* were aware of their common cause with the Irish Catholics. Daniel O’Connell was their hero. Nathaniel Gould observed that the *canadiens* hung O’Connell’s picture on their walls at home:

²⁷ Verney, *O’Callaghan*, p. 57.

²⁸ Claude Galarnau, “La presse périodique au Québec de 1764 à 1859,” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 4th series, 22 (1984), p. 154; Bryan Palmer, *Working Class Experience: Re-Thinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto: McClelland Stewart, 1992), p. 53.

²⁹ VIN, 28 May 1833, p. 2.

³⁰ Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-9* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), p. 16.

³¹ O’Ferrall, *Catholic Emancipation*, p. 284.

It is astonishing how much the name of Daniel O'Connell is known and used among the Canadians. I have seen in the most distant situations little framed engravings of "O'Connell the man of the People" suspended on the walls in juxtaposition with the Virgin and the Crucifix in the Bedchambers of the French Canadians.³²

In the *patriote's* Ninety-Two Resolutions of 1834, the eighty-seventh and -eighth were declarations of gratitude and confidence to Daniel O'Connell and Joseph Hume for their support of the Assembly's petitions to the British parliament. Daniel O'Connell, along with Roebuck and Hume, supported these Resolutions in their three-day debate in the British House of Commons.³³

After the rebellion of 1837, French-Canadian Catholic identification with O'Connell as a successful Catholic leader in a Protestant world continued. In 1840 Viger, the well-known editor of *L'Aurore*, a nationalist newspaper of Lower Canada, advocated the "O'Connell-tail system" for Lower Canadian Catholic liberals in the United Parliament of Upper and Lower Canada. Viger argued that Lower Canadian Catholic liberals should ally themselves with Upper Canadian Protestant liberals to form a double majority in the United Parliament, just as O'Connell had allied his Catholic Irish radicals with Protestant English radicals in the House of Commons.³⁴ In the early twentieth-century, Henri Bourassa, the grandson of Papineau and nationalist leader of Quebec, proudly quoted Daniel O'Connell's famous nationalist saying in the name of Catholics against ultramontanist: "I take my theology at Rome, but I take my politics at home."³⁵

In 1833 O'Callaghan took Daniel O'Connell as his inspiration. To O'Callaghan, the goal of the popular party to gain constitutional power for the majority Catholics in the Legislative Assembly was on a par with O'Connell's constitutional mission to emancipate Irish Catholics to sit in the House of Commons and repeal the union with Britain. In both Lower Canada and Ireland, four-fifths of the population were Catholics ruled by aristocratically constituted bodies composed mainly of Protestants. O'Callaghan described Lower Canada as "the Ireland of North America."³⁶

³² Quoted by Manning, *The Revolt of French Canada*, p. 206. Gould wrote this in his "Memoir on French Newspapers," 24, C.O. 42: 240. He was one of a committee organized by merchants and others interested in Canada in London.

³³ Mason Wade, *The French Canadians – 1760-1945* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1955), pp. 143, 157.

³⁴ Jacques Monet, *The Last Cannon Shot: A Study of French-Canadian Nationalism 1837-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 206-7.

³⁵ Wade, *The French Canadians*, p. 618.

³⁶ VIN, 14 April 1837, p. 2.

When Reason was Revolutionary

We may have forgotten how earth-shaking it once was to assert that human beings were worthy of equal respect because they were human, not because they were Protestant British or the son of a minor British lord. In 1797, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan was born to a Catholic merchant family near Cork, Ireland, into the end of the Enlightenment era, one of the great revolutionary epochs of human history. With a reverence for Reason and a belief in universal truths, democrats like O’Callaghan threatened those who lived on traditional privileges. The time was one of widespread upheaval throughout the western world. Democratic reform movements can be seen as analogous phenomena despite significant differences between countries. Believers in a democratic society resisted constituted bodies which had been formed on aristocratic principles: parliaments, councils, assemblies, and magistracies of various kinds including Lower Canada’s appointed Legislative Council and Britain’s House of Lords. In historian R.R. Palmer’s view, the struggles after the 1760s occurred between democrats and aristocrats, rather than between democrats and monarchs.³⁷

The desire to change aristocratic governing bodies along democratic lines inspired O’Callaghan. The youngest of six children in a prosperous family from Mallow, the young Edmund was well educated in Ireland. His biographers believe that he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from an Irish college.³⁸ The bilingual O’Callaghan then studied medicine for two years in Paris during the early 1820s at a time when Lamennais was exerting great influence among liberal Catholic intellectuals. O’Callaghan emigrated to Montreal in 1823. Serving as an apothecary at the Montreal General Hospital until he received his medical licence in 1827, he went to work in Quebec City at the Emigrants’ Hospital.³⁹ He took an active part in church activities for the many Irish Catholic emigrants, a Mechanics Library for workers and “The Society of the Friends of Ireland” which supported O’Connell’s

³⁷ R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 21, 515-6.

³⁸ James J. Walsh, “Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan of New York – Physician, Historian and Antiquarian-A.D. 1797-1880,” *American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia Records XVI* (1905), p. 12; Francis Shaw Guy, *Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan: A Study in American Historiography (1797-1880) – A Dissertation* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, Studies in American Church History, 1934), p. 4.

³⁹ Guy, *Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan*, pp. 1-12; Maureen Slattery, “Dr. Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan – His Early Years in Medicine, Montreal, 1823-1828,” *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Study Sessions 47* (1980), pp. 23-40.

Emancipation campaign.⁴⁰ In 1833, he became editor of *The Vindicator* in Montreal. He replaced his compatriot, Dr. Daniel Tracey, who had died of cholera the previous summer while tending the sick Irish immigrants who had fled the scourges of famine, disease, and impoverishment in Ireland only to contract cholera on board ship.

Like other liberals, O'Callaghan was opposed to despotism and forms of government which were the preserve of an élite or a powerful individual. On the whole, nineteenth century British liberalism was a creed of amelioration not transformation.⁴¹ British liberals accepted the settled institutions of Church and State, working for a cautious re-adaptation of the balance of power between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

However O'Connell and O'Callaghan were also radicals. They came from outside a Protestant Ascendancy system which had ruined Ireland. Irish Catholics had been entirely excluded from parliament on the basis of their religion, and many Catholic liberals were radicals. The Irish Radical party gradually took shape during the 1830s when massive pauperism was growing in Ireland. Known as O'Connell's "tail," it shared aims with the British Radicals, England's third political party. The Radicals pressed for a fully democratised House of Commons on a system of equal manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, and frequent renewal of the electoral mandate.⁴² Speaking for people excluded from parliament, the Radicals held that British institutions needed reform by "pressure from without." For the first half of the nineteenth century, they concerned themselves with the removal of specified abuses or restraints on liberty and equality, using extra-parliamentary measures.⁴³

The Irish and British Radicals were supporters of responsible government in Lower Canada. The colonial agents for the Legislative Assembly in

⁴⁰ See *Le Canadien*, 31 August 1832 for the role played by O'Callaghan in St. Patrick's Church, Quebec; at the Emigrants' Hospital, consult the historical note, initialed P.-G. R.: "L'hôpital des émigrés du Faubourg Saint-Jean, à Québec," *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques* 44 (1938), pp. 200-02; on O'Callaghan's role in the Mechanics' Library: *Quebec Gazette* 20 Dec. 1830; on work in the Friends of Ireland see the work of his friend, John Gilmary Shea, "Obituary – Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, M.C., L.L.D. – Historian of New Netherland and New York," *The Magazine of American History* 50 (1880), pp. 77-80.

⁴¹ Seamus Deane, "Edmund Burke and the Ideology of Irish Liberalism," *The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions*, ed. Richard Kearney (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985), pp. 144-5.

⁴² Seamus Deane, "Edmund Burke," *The Irish Mind*, 141; Edwin C. Guillet, *The Great Migration: The Atlantic Crossing by Sailing-Ship – 1770-1860* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1937), pp. 4-5; S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1832-1852* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1935), p. 8.

⁴³ John Belchem, "Republicanism, popular constitutionalism and the radical platform in early nineteenth-century England," *Social History* 6,1 (Jan., 1981), p. 2.

Lower Canada, D.B. Viger and A.N. Morin, stayed in touch with the Radicals elected to the House of Commons. After the passage of the Ninety-Two Resolutions in 1834, Papineau wanted the agent for the Legislative Assembly to be an elected member of the House of Commons. This agent became J.A. Roebuck, the protégé of Joseph Hume and the first Radical member chosen for the city of Bath by the larger electorate enfranchised in 1832. On matters of Lower Canada, Roebuck received the solid support of O'Connell and the Irish Radicals. Roebuck's friend, Henry Chapman, later acted as special agent for the canadiens and Lower Canada's Irish Catholics to their supporters in the House of Commons. Chapman's letters were published by O'Callaghan in *The Vindicator*.⁴⁴

To this British Radical platform, the Irish Radicals added their own agenda. As Liam de Paor observes of Ireland, the significant divide was religion. More than language or ethnic origin, it sealed off master from servant. Economically, socially, politically, and culturally, Catholics were born on the downside of power. As the Catholic religion was the source of their exclusion, it fuelled their desire for justice. British landlords were considered Biblical tyrants, and the Irish people thought of themselves as Israelites in Egyptian bondage. This "propaganda of the dispossessed" marked all Irish radicalism, as de Paor points out. He holds that in its ideological history, Irish radicalism stemmed from "an aristocratic ideology, an aristocratic grievance, an aristocratic rage" of universal dispossession. This deep sense of the illegitimacy of the British régime was deeply engrained in the Irish. Only O'Connell came close to persuading the people that accommodation with the British might be desirable.⁴⁵ This assumption of Catholic dispossession by Protestant conquerors coupled with legal resolve to undo the injustice strongly coloured O'Callaghan's editorials during 1833.

In a predominantly agricultural country, the land question was vital. Between 1595-1600, under Hugh O'Neill and Red Hugh II O'Donnell most of Ireland was restored to Catholics. During the final conquest of Ireland by the English Protestants between 1603-90, these lands were seized so that Catholics owned two-thirds of all Irish land before 1640, and less than one-fifth after the Cromwellian revolution.⁴⁶ Because of dispossession, Catholics worked as landless peasants for Protestant landlords, the lands of the Irish Catholic Church had been confiscated, and the Catholic aristocracy disinherited. In common grievance, Catholic clergy, aristocracy, and peas-

⁴⁴ Manning, pp. 367-8; *Public Archives of Canada, Chapman Papers, Scrapbook*; *Public Archives of Canada, Roebuck Papers*.

⁴⁵ L. de Paor, "The Rebel Mind," *The Irish Mind*, p. 159.

⁴⁶ Lord Killanin and Michael V. Duignan, *Ireland* (London: Ebury Press, 1967), p. 42; S. J. Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660-1690* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 15; Curtis, *A History*, p. 233.

ants shared a desire to unseat the Protestant Ascendancy. This made Ireland the only liberal outpost of the Roman Catholic Church in the age. When de Tocqueville dined with Irish bishops and priests of the time, he was astonished at their democratic feelings and their distrust of the great landlords.⁴⁷ O'Callaghan's radical Catholicism, which strongly influenced his editorials, was infused with a deep sense of grievance against the British.

As the poet William Allingham observed in 1852: "In Ireland, the mass of the people recognize but two great parties, the one, composed of Catholics, patriots, would-be-rebels – these being interchangeable ideas; the other, of Protestants, Orangemen, wrongful holders of estates, and oppressors in general – these also being interchangeable ideas."⁴⁸ O'Callaghan brought this radical sense of the 'Catholic divide' into his editorials.

Irish Radicalism

The first plank in O'Connell's Irish Radical platform was Catholic Emancipation. For Ireland's 80% Catholic population, the British parliament was the voice of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy only.⁴⁹ The Catholic Emancipation victory in 1829 was a political reform largely beneficial to the Irish Catholic middle-class, but its symbolic meaning was enormous. Emancipation restored to Roman Catholics the right to sit in parliament and to be eligible for the highest offices of the state.⁵⁰

O'Connell's second Irish Radical plank was to reduce the onerous tithe which Catholic peasants had to pay to maintain the established Anglican church. Twenty-two Protestant bishops drew £150,000 a year while the rest of the Established Church was receiving £600,000 more, largely from Roman Catholics who were supporting their own church as well and in no position to contribute to any. In this, O'Connell was backed by the British Radical

⁴⁷ Curtis, *A History*, pp. 353-69. On the role of parish priests, see Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Great Dan: A Biography of Daniel O'Connell* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), chs. 8-10. Morley Ayearst, *The Republic of Ireland: Its Government and Politics* (London: University of London Press, 1970), pp. 1-18; O'Ferrall, *Catholic Emancipation*, p. 279.

⁴⁸ O'Ferrall, *Catholic Emancipation*, p. 288.

⁴⁹ O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine*, p. 59. During the 1820s, "over 80% of the population of Ireland were Catholics..." In 1834, 81% of the population in Ireland were Catholics according to the "Irish Religious Distributions' Chart" in Appendix A of Donald H. Akenson, *Small Differences – Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, 1815-1922: An International Perspective* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), p. 154.

⁵⁰ O'Ferrall, *Catholic Emancipation*, p. 3.

platform passed under Joseph Hume in May, 1832.⁵¹ During 1833, abject Irish peasants staged violent night-raids in protest against this title.

In 1832-33, O'Connell's third plank proposed Repeal of the Union with Britain. By this, Ireland would regain a separate domestic legislature. O'Connell saw it as a first step towards undoing the social and economic ills of Ireland. Parallel with the land problem was a cultural division of labour. Many Catholics had been pushed out of towns and almost all Irish business and commerce had been taken over by Protestants. Until the late eighteenth century, Catholics had been banned by law from being judges, military men, educators, lawyers, or traders. A few jobs had remained open: medicine, brewing, agriculture, and the linen trade. The native Gaelic language had been suppressed.⁵² While the Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782 had restored some of these rights to Catholics under certain conditions, Catholics still found themselves virtually excluded from the mesh of privilege and procedures which surrounded the Establishment.

Historian O'Ferrall shows that anti-Union sentiment was fuelled by the fact that "formal exclusion was hardly more galling than 'virtual' exclusion."⁵³ Because Catholics felt their way impeded by the Protestant monopoly of power in the cities and towns, leaders of the middle and upper classes, both clerical and lay, had developed a political ideology which can best be described as liberal Catholicism. In turn, the Catholic lower classes, composed of tenant farmers, occupiers, artisans, shopkeepers, and landless labourers, had their own degrading economic and social experiences of injustice. O'Ferrall concludes:

In essence the Irish Catholic leadership adopted the constitutional terms of their oppressors and wielded and expanded them in a novel way to evolve a distinctive political ideology unique in terms of contemporary European Catholicism, which was highly reactionary in the wake of the French Revolution.⁵⁴

O'Connell's fourth Irish Radical plank was the use of extra-parliamentary "agitation" in concert with the Catholic Church. "Agitation" the Irish radical way was a moral and religious affair. It included everything short of force: "monster meetings," local political unions, newspaper letters, moral

⁵¹ Edwin Guillet, *The Great Migration*, p. 4; S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1832-1852*, p. 67.

⁵² On the relationship between the cultural division of labour and ethnic solidarity in Ireland, see Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 311-40; Ayearst, *The Republic of Ireland*, p. 6.

⁵³ O'Ferrall, *Catholic Emancipation*, p. 266.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

black-mail, and threats of revolt. The latter worked well with the British in O'Connell's Catholic Emancipation campaign. Most of O'Connell's Emancipation campaign of the 1820s was locally manned by priests at the parish level. After 1829, it was priests who accompanied £10 Irish Catholic freeholders to the polling stations to support their first votes for Catholic candidates despite the threats of eviction from their land by Protestant landowners.⁵⁵ This mobilisation of the peasantry into a major force allied with the Church was a great stroke in O'Connell's "agitation" tactics.

O'Connell aimed to channel the frustrations of the Irish Catholic peasants into a non-violent political campaign with a strictly limited objective. Historians agree that without the voting protection and moderating control of parish priests who influenced the peasants, this non-violence would likely have been impossible due to the history of violent interchange between Catholic peasants and their Protestant landlords.⁵⁶ This supportive and moderating influence of a liberal Roman Catholic Church did not exist for O'Callaghan or the *canadiens* peasants.

In Ireland, 'agitation' breathed a fiery Catholic language with its ideology of dispossession and moral discourse calling on God to bring a Chosen People out of exile. From the Westminster standpoint, O'Connell's "agitation" combined an astonishing mixture of Radicalism with "Popish superstition."⁵⁷ We hear the definite tone of Irish Catholic moral 'agitation' in O'Callaghan's writings from the time of his arrival in Lower Canada. For example, when a French writer in Quebec described the Irish as these "self-styled Roman Catholics," O'Callaghan wrote a two column letter to the *Quebec Gazette* on 19 September 1832 giving a full historical explanation of all the Irish had suffered for their religion and implying that by comparison the Canadians were lukewarm Christians, undeserving of the rewards reserved for martyrs.⁵⁸

O'Tuathaigh points out that O'Connell's agitation methods were so successful during the 1820s that they "served as a model for many subsequent pressure groups" within the British Empire.⁵⁹ This includes Lower Canada. We can best understand the editorial work of O'Callaghan as an "agitation" tactic in the Irish radical sense. The popular party proposal to

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 278. For the involvement of Catholic priests in Irish politics during the struggle of the 1820s, consult O'Ferrall: "'The Only Lever...?' The Catholic Priest in Irish politics in 1823-29," *Studies* vol. LXX, 280 (Winter, 1981), pp. 308-24 and 280.

⁵⁶ S. Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1786-1832: From Paine to Cobbett* (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955), p. 414.

⁵⁷ O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine*, p. 27; Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1786-1832*, p. 424.

⁵⁸ Manning, p. 204.

⁵⁹ O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine*, p. 76.

hold a national convention in Lower Canada during 1833 also reflected Irish radical influence. The Irish Catholics of Ireland had held a national convention as early as 1783. Moreover, the popular party move to form local political unions throughout Lower Canada during the summer of 1833 paralleled the distinctive history of political unions under O'Connell's leadership in Ireland.

Irish Radical Characteristics Shared by O'Callaghan and O'Connell

Like contemporary British Radicals in 1833, O'Callaghan and O'Connell both described liberal reform as the removal of specific restraints on people's natural rights as well as on constitutional rights. As Irish Radicals, both men expressed religious motives for parity. When compared with O'Connell's letters, O'Callaghan's editorials appear as an O'Connellite "agitation" for the radical cause of Catholics in Lower Canada. Each of his editorials began with the political motto: "United We Stand, Divided We Fall," expressing his conviction that Irish-Catholic interests were best served with the French Catholic popular party rather than with the English Protestants. Each issue of O'Callaghan's newspaper was printed under the slogan: "Justice to all Classes – Monopolies and Special Privileges to None." Like O'Connell, O'Callaghan accepted the existence of classes while working to abolish economic and social prerogatives.

O'Connell's 1833 "Letters to the Irish People" were public letters printed in Irish newspapers and written to counteract the tough Coercion Bill introduced during 1833 by the Whigs for Ireland. By this Bill, the British government banned all public meetings and suspended trial by jury as well as *habeas corpus* in Ireland due to peasant riots against the tithes. The Coercion Bill paralyzed O'Connell's "second agitation" campaign for Repeal of the Union, exactly what the British Government had in mind. Despite their different circumstances, O'Callaghan's editorials shared the assumptions of O'Connell's letters.

O'Connell and O'Callaghan were sure that they were called to a vast movement for democratic reform in the western world. As Catholics, they believed they were religiously commissioned to reverse the vicious power of privileged classes over Catholics. They were convinced that they were called by God to lead His people out of exile and they saw their work as a vocation.

In a May 1833 editorial, O'Callaghan situated the reform movement within a wide geographical area affected by the old feudal order. He described the liberal war of opinion "shaking the institutions of the old world to the center" because the people were acquiring a sense of their rights against an "oligarchy" long in possession of power exercised more for "personal or family aggrandizement" than for "the benefit of all." He pledged to resist those in the administration who, as elsewhere, "encroach upon the

constitutional and inherent rights of the people.” In June, he connected representative government by the people for the people with progress from the dark feudal “tyranny” and “oppression” by kings and emperors, governors, and councillors into the light of a “new order.”⁶⁰ O’Callaghan opened one editorial with the verse: “Oh Liberty! the God who throws Thy light around, like his own sunshine, knows How much we love thee, and how deeply hate All tyrants.”⁶¹

This discourse reflected O’Connell’s fourth letter of 1833, reprinted in June in *The Vindicator*. O’Connell wrote of progress as a supra-national advance of liberty against the aristocratic power of the old feudal order: “at this great period of change, when the great movement is going on rescuing mankind from the last remnants of the chains long since inflicted on the nations of Europe by the feudal system, and also scattering into thin air the selfish and sordid pretensions of aristocratic power – at such a period as this, Ireland ought to be represented by men worthy of the high destiny to which they are called.”⁶² Both men saw their writing as extra-parliamentary moral agitation for the democratic cause of Catholics under God.

Six Common Irish Radical Themes

Sharing the tone, the tactics, and the assumptions of the Irish radical movement, O’Connell’s letters and O’Callaghan’s editorials also back six common themes: 1) democratic legislative independence and fiscal control within constitutional means for Catholics; 2) a free press viewed as moral counsel to the Catholic people; 3) local political unions in each country to organize populist extra-parliamentary “agitation”; 4) as a religious foundation, the use of moral not physical force; 5) a non-partisan society in which all male individuals have civic equality, and in particular, in which Irish Catholics gain civic and legal equality with Protestant British; and 6) the unseating of the Protestant Ascendancy to correct the inequality in the distribution of administrative, judicial, and financial posts.

1) Democratic Representation for Catholics

In the spring of 1833, the two democrats backed constitutional reform for greater representation for their respective Catholic populations. They urged greater self-government, legislative independence, control over expenditures, and local ministerial responsibility. Both O’Callaghan and O’Connell believed that good government meant representative government

⁶⁰ VIN, 14 May 1833, p. 2; VIN, 14 June 1833, p. 2.

⁶¹ VIN, 21 June 1833, p. 2.

⁶² VIN, 21 June 1833, p. 2.

and the more immediate the link of representation, the healthier the society. As Catholics, they wanted assurance that the Catholic population of their respective societies was given its proportional place in a democratic legislature.⁶³

In his editorials, O'Callaghan backed the radical principle of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" in a more equitable system of government. The greatest number in Lower Canada were Catholics, approximately 80% of the population. O'Callaghan approved "the popular party" proposal sent to the British Commons in March 1833, requesting a popular convention so that the people could examine the current composition of the Lower Canadian Legislative Council, whose members were appointed for life and composed mainly of Protestants from "the English party."

By the Canada Act of 1791, each of the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada had a Legislative Council of life-long appointed members. This arrangement was inspired by a characteristic eighteenth century idea that nobility was necessary to free government.⁶⁴ O'Callaghan presented a plan for "an elective legislative council." He reasoned that such a change was the only way for the people's representatives in the elected Legislative Assembly to have any effective democratic control. He explained that in 1833, the Executive had two vetoes over the elected Assembly of eighty-eight men: one veto by the Legislative Council of sixteen members; and a second veto by the Governor sitting with his Executive Council of eight or nine members.⁶⁵ In effect, elected representatives from an eighty percent population of Catholics were controlled by nominees from the other twenty percent of the population, mainly Protestants.

In the spring of 1833, O'Callaghan, like O'Connell, optimistically took a moderate constitutional position. He recalled that Charles James Fox, the esteemed British parliamentarian from the 1790s, had interpreted the Constitutional Act of 1791 to allow for an elected Legislative Council in the Canadas.⁶⁶ The editor anticipated in a June editorial, that the Assembly request for a convention would "be met with a spirit of liberality and justice" when "our constitutional liberties" will occupy the attention of the Imperial Parliament, in contrast to the "short-sighted local government." In August, when the Whig government was in a weak situation, O'Callaghan favoured the Radical position being debated in the British House of Commons to make the House of Lords elective.⁶⁷ As the Upper House of the British Legislature,

⁶³ O'Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine*, pp. 160-9.

⁶⁴ Palmer, *The Age*, p. 176; on the Irish history of a "convention," p. 303.

⁶⁵ VIN, 21 June 1833, p. 2.

⁶⁶ VIN, 14 May 1833, p. 3.

⁶⁷ VIN, 18 June 1833, p. 2; VIN, 23 Aug. 1833, p. 2; Oliver MacDonagh, *The Emancipist, Daniel O'Connell, 1830-1847* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 19.

the House of Lords was the body with which the Legislative Council in Lower Canada had been at least symbolically twinned.⁶⁸ As O'Connell supported an elective British House of Lords, O'Callaghan backed an elective Legislative Council in Lower Canada.

In September, O'Callaghan robustly reported that Mr. O'Connell had announced his intention in the British House of Commons to submit "the propriety of separating the Legislative from the Executive council in the Canadas."⁶⁹ This additional proposal would have made it impossible for the membership in the two appointed Councils to overlap as had often been the case in the past. Since the Legislative Assembly was dominated by elected members of "the popular party" and the two Councils were dominated by appointed members of "the English party," there was great resentment among democrats at this flagrant discrepancy in the distribution of power. The fact that most members of the popular party were Catholics while most people in the English party who sat in the two upper houses were Protestants only added fuel to the fire.

O'Callaghan's constitutional optimism did not endure. In October 1833, O'Callaghan heard that Stanley, the new Colonial Secretary, had proposed the charter for the British American Land Company and arranged that it be presented through an independent member to the British House of Commons. The Legislative Assembly had voted in majority against the granting of this charter, which would donate large tracts of land in the Eastern Townships to a British company. By overriding the Assembly vote, Stanley poured salt on the wounds in Lower Canada. O'Callaghan expressed disgust that Stanley's act made the Assembly decision worth no more than "waste-paper."⁷⁰

O'Connell's struggle against Protestant aristocratic privilege in Britain was translated by O'Callaghan into resistance against the privileged official Protestant class in Lower Canada. Like Catholics in Ireland, Catholics in Lower Canada enjoyed no more than token representation in administrative offices. O'Callaghan's support for the legislative independence of Lower Canada from British control through the executive corresponded with O'Connell's plan for the legislative independence of Ireland from British executive power. The Irish Reform Bill of May 1832 bettered representation in Scotland and Britain in the British House of Commons but worsened conditions in Ireland. Ireland was to return 105 members to a Commons of 658, even though the population of Ireland was nearly one third that of the United Kingdom.⁷¹ Both O'Callaghan and O'Connell wanted representative

⁶⁸ Manning, *The Revolt*, pp. 25-6, 218.

⁶⁹ VIN, 17 Sept. 1833, p. 2.

⁷⁰ VIN, 11 Oct. 1833, p. 2.

⁷¹ Maccoby, *English Radicalism 1832-1852*, p. 51.

legislative power for Roman Catholics in their respective lands dominated by Protestants.

O'Connell's first letter to the Irish people, reprinted in May in *The Vindicator*, announced his "second agitation." It was to repeal the Union with Britain. He depicted his goal as the legislative independence of Ireland from Britain "by legal and constitutional means." He wrote that it would not be "separatist" and it would preserve links with the "golden" crown. He argued that through this "restoration" of a domestic Irish legislature, he would be able to redress the grievances of the Union and "liberate Ireland from her present thralldom."⁷² He added: "it is worse than folly to imagine that the affairs of Ireland can be attended to with the requisite knowledge of facts, and cordial sincerity of intention, in any other than in an Irish Parliament." The "great Dan" proposed a domestic legislature for each country, Ireland, Scotland, and England, with one imperial parliament and an elected House of Lords.⁷³

In the eyes of both O'Callaghan and O'Connell, their respective societies' land, law, and business were controlled by English Protestants maintained by privileges which formed an alien world of its own. Protestants were the Catholics' landlords, magistrates, political leaders, soldiers, judges, bankers, administrators, and officials. Both Irish reformers viewed legislative independence from British Protestant control as a first step out of gross injustice for their respective societies. In 1833, both men argued for peaceful, gradual, and constitutional means to this end.

2) *The Free Press is Moral Counsel for Catholics*

Like the British Radicals, both Irish leaders supported a free press.⁷⁴ As Irish Radicals, they believed it filled an indispensable role for Catholics because Roman Catholics were barred from powers which Protestants possessed. In June, amidst news of the Coercion Bill, O'Callaghan praised a free press as an essential political tool in a life and death struggle of good against evil: "we shall acquit ourselves as good soldiers in the sacred struggle which is now going on throughout the civilized world, of freedom against oppression, of the majority against the minority, of the rights of the many against the pretensions and usurpations of an exploded oligarchy." With Biblical language, he deplored the ascendancy of the few in Lower Canada as "old leaven," and proclaimed a good editor to be someone "power cannot purchase and persecution cannot break."⁷⁵ O'Callaghan attached a pastoral

⁷² VIN, First Letter to the Irish People, 28 May 1833, p. 2.

⁷³ Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1832-1852*, p. 137.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷⁵ VIN, 12 June 1833, p. 2.

quality to his use of the free press which we also hear in O’Connell’s letters. For both Irish Radicals, the free press was God’s instrument in human hands.

O’Connell declared in his first letter to the Irish People that during the Coercion Bill, he would rely on newspapers for correspondence, individual to individual: “we can direct and regulate our conduct by correspondence, especially through the newspapers,” so that our volunteers can, one and all “continue their exertions to elucidate the evils Ireland has incurred by and from the Union.”⁷⁶ In his third letter, reprinted in June, O’Connell lamented the “harsh, cruel, and despotic” Bill by which the government has lost “all moral weight.” O’Connell’s fourth letter regretted the censoring of the press. Stating that “anything is a libel which a prerogative judge or prejudiced jury may think fit to call by that name,”⁷⁷ he referred to the Irish colonial office’s prosecution of Barrett, the editor of the Irish newspaper, *The Pilot* on 6 April 1833 for publishing O’Connell’s letter on his allegedly “seditious” plan to undo the Union. He thanked the liberal and “only independent paper” – The True Sun – “which affords me the means of agitating for that electoral organization which alone remains as an irresistible inducement to rescue Ireland from her present state of political degradation.”⁷⁸

3) Local Political Unions for Extra-Governmental Agitation

O’Callaghan gave written support for the formation of “political unions” in every county, town, and parish of Lower Canada to petition the government on the “evils” of the present system. The purpose, he wrote, is to have the people’s complaints heard by all parties concerned: the Governor and the Legislative Council as well as the Assembly. The language of “political unions” places O’Callaghan in the Irish Radical tradition wherein the middle and working urban classes organized themselves into “political unions” for reform.⁷⁹ In June, O’Callaghan hailed the Irish Trades Political Union organized by O’Connell, and news from the Birmingham Political Union which had taken the *modus operandi* of Irish Catholic agitation for its model.⁸⁰

In 1831, O’Connell had taken over the radical artisans’ Dublin Trades

⁷⁶ VIN, 28 May 1833, p. 2.

⁷⁷ VIN, Fourth Letter to the Irish People, 21 June 1833, p. 3.

⁷⁸ MacDonagh, *The Emancipist*, p. 93; Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1832-1852*, p. 67.

⁷⁹ Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1832-1852*, citation from J. S. Mill’s letter, p. 31.

⁸⁰ VIN, 4 June 1833, p. 2; VIN, 21 June 1833, p. 1; on its model, O’Tuathaigh, *Ireland Before the Famine*, p. 76.

Political Union and converted it into the National Trades Political Union supporting a collaborationalist policy between the working and middle class and enabling him to form the Irish Radical party in Ireland. When all public meetings were forbidden in Ireland, O'Connell's third letter stressed the need for "the aid of a few honest and active men in each locality" to organize what he calls the "new agitation." His second letter calls for the organization of "the elective franchise in every county, city, town and borough of Ireland."⁸¹

4) *The Use of Moral Force, the Refusal of Physical Violence*

Like O'Connell, O'Callaghan backed the use of moral force over physical violence as an essential trait of their Catholic activism. In May, O'Callaghan gave written support to the "gradual introduction" of the elective system of government, declaring that the *patriotes* could accomplish their reforms "much more rationally and quite as effectively" by confining themselves to those "powers with which they are invested by the boasted British Constitution." In this vein in May, O'Callaghan praised O'Connell for "legally and safely" evading the Coercion Bill. In June, he warned any Irish peasant "Whitefeet" emigrants to end violent ways in Lower Canada because, he wrote, we are a country of "peace, industry and respect for laws."⁸²

In his first letter, O'Connell morally repudiated physical force to seek political or any other ends. He stressed the importance of putting down all violent groups like the Catholic peasant "Whitefeet" who were protesting the tithe. He insisted that Irish Catholics must "legally and peaceably" accomplish their object without shedding a drop of blood.⁸³

5) *A Non-Discriminatory Society for Catholics*

Drawing on a pulpit culture, both Irish leaders not only defended but passionately attacked ethnic, racial, and religious discrimination. O'Callaghan stressed that more than Frenchmen supported the elective system of government in Lower Canada: "as a matter of course, Leslie, Dewitt, Neilson, Stuart, Young and the others with 'English names' are not French deputies except so far as they are representatives of a peaceable and loyal class of men who speak the French language." What was important, O'Callaghan declared, was that the French or popular party "ardently desire the prosperity of the country, and the fair and full establishment of the

⁸¹ MacDonagh, *The Emancipist*, p. 59; VIN, Third Letter to the Irish People, 28 May 1833, p. 2; VIN, 7 June 1833, p. 2.

⁸² VIN, 28 May 1833, p. 2; VIN, 28 May 1833, p. 2; VIN, 4 June 1833, p. 2.

⁸³ VIN, 28 May 1833, p. 2; MacDonagh, *The Emancipist*, p. 19.

representative form of government, whilst, on the contrary, what is denominated par excellence, the English interest” wants “the majority to be governed and dictated to by the minority, the said minority to be permitted, at the same time, to monopolize all places of honor, profit, emolument and trust within the province to the exclusion of the people.”⁸⁴

In August, O’Callaghan asked if linguistic or religious discrimination might have been the cause of a delay in the granting of a charter for Ste. Hyacinthe College because McGill College had no problem when it asked for comparable letters patent. He queried in his editorial: “why is there one law for us who speak the English language and another for those who speak the French?”⁸⁵ In November, O’Callaghan responded to a letter from an English clergyman who had attacked Irish Catholics for being too numerous in the Canadas and possessing “insubordinate habits.” Accusing him of slander, O’Callaghan declared that Irish Catholics were considered too numerous because they joined the *Canadiens*’ reform party. Catholics were called insubordinate because they did not support the ‘monopolists.’ O’Callaghan congratulated his fellow Irishmen “who have adhered to their political faith with their accustomed fidelity.” He counselled them: “we may safely be persuaded that our cause as yet, has been correct since our opinions have received the countenance and advocacy of the Great Liberator of Ireland, Daniel O’Connell.”⁸⁶

In a comparable way, O’Connell promoted a non-partisan society as a form of virtue. O’Connell’s first letter to the Irish people asked “to conciliate all classes and persuasions of Irishmen towards each other... of Irishmen, Protestants, Orangeman, and Catholics, towards each other.” In his reprinted letter appearing in May, O’Connell counselled his readers “to bury in eternal oblivion, the dissensions between Protestants, Catholics, and Orangemen, showing to all that they have a general as well as individual, and an equal interest in the regeneration of our own unhappy, impoverished and, alas, most grossly insulted and oppressed country.” He railed against the Coercion Bill based on “the vulgar assumption of the superiority of English over Irish.”⁸⁷

6) *Unseat Protestant Ascendancy for Catholic Participation*

⁸⁴ VIN, 14 May 1833, p. 3.

⁸⁵ VIN, 20 Aug. 1833, p. 2.

⁸⁶ VIN, 1 Oct. 1833, p. 2. On anti-Irish feeling in British North American public life consult J. R. Miller, “Anti-Catholicism in Canada,” *Creed and Culture: The Place of EnglishSpeaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930*, ed. Terrence Murphy and Gerald Stortz (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), pp. 36-7.

⁸⁷ VIN, 28 May 1833, p. 2.

Both Irishmen reserved their vilest venom for the privileges of the Protestant official class. In this, they agreed with the seventh principle adopted under Joseph Hume for the British Radical party in May, 1832: “the abolition of all useless offices and repeal of unmerited pensions.”⁸⁸ As an Irish Radical, O’Connell attacked the discriminatory “patronage,” useless offices, and financial rewards of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland.⁸⁹ Like O’Callaghan, he used the word “monopolists” for the British Protestant oligarchy’s political and economic control over people’s labour, land, wages, and industry. His third letter to the Irish People implored members for Ireland “to abate every monopoly – to correct every abuse – to encourage industry – to promote manufacture – to lessen taxation – to increase the national resources.” The “great Dan” called for “the abolition of useless offices, the reduction of the expensive and unnecessary establishments” as well as “the extinction of burthensome and oppressive taxation.”⁹⁰

In his editorials, O’Callaghan explicitly backed Irish Radical plans for Ireland: “the working classes, if they know their own interests and their strength, will insist on ... the abolition of all monopolies, cheap food and cheap knowledge.” The editor supported “a thorough, searching radical reform which abolishes pensions, sinecures and useless places.” Once these advantages are done away with, this “will oblige every man to live on his rent roll or to earn his bread, and to provide for his children, by bringing them up to some trade or profession, instead of billeting them on the public, either at home or in the Colonies, as is now, everyday, shamelessly the case.”⁹¹ O’Callaghan championed the working classes as the real source of wealth in a country and a model of honest work for all classes.

O’Callaghan’s arguments to abolish the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland paralleled his *patriote* stand in Lower Canada. The editor opposed the “artificial aristocracy” and “the monopolists” of Lower Canada. He saw his editorial role as “a faithful watchdog... to a certain class of society” whom he named as those in control of this “rotten, irresponsible system of Colonial government.”⁹² The editor detailed the inequitable distribution of political power which favoured the creation of a corrupt social and economic “aristocracy” who lived on the people’s labour. He demonstrated how this “Château clique” ran Lower Canada.

⁸⁸ Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1832-1852*, p. 67.

⁸⁹ VIN, Third Letter to the Irish People, 21 June 1833, p. 2; MacDonagh, *The Emancipist*, pp. 19, 63.

⁹⁰ VIN, First Letter to the Irish People, 28 May 1833, p. 2; Second Letter to the Irish People, 7 June 1833, p. 2; VIN, Third Letter to the Irish People, 21 June 1833, p. 2.

⁹¹ VIN, 28 May 1833, p. 3.

⁹² MacDonagh, *The Emancipist*, p. 63; VIN, 21 June, 2; 28 June, p. 2.

In editorial after editorial, O’Callaghan attacked the unchecked power of this “artificial aristocracy”,⁹³ in a manipulation of the official inquest report on the criminal death of the *canadien*, Barbeau;⁹⁴ a steamship monopoly on the St. Lawrence river between Quebec and Montreal;⁹⁵ a tight Tory monopoly of the banks through the fraudulent election of Directors in the new City Bank;⁹⁶ a cover-up of military violence;⁹⁷ glaring linguistic and political prejudice in the appointments made by the Legislative Council to the Justices of the Peace throughout the province;⁹⁸ the monopoly of trade on articles sold at the quarantine station on Grosses Isles;⁹⁹ the plan to charter the British American Land Company at the insistence of the Colonial Secretary in direct contravention of the Assembly majority vote;¹⁰⁰ illegal public land sales to members of the Legislative Council;¹⁰¹ and excessive and fraudulent salaries for members of the two Councils through the collection of hidden taxes unvoted by the Assembly.¹⁰²

One of O’Callaghan’s hardest-hitting editorials appeared in October. He printed a table of thirty-four powerful inter-related office-holders whose basic rule was: no person can get in except by the consent of those who are already in possession of an office. Comparing the situation to that “system of nepotism which prevails in Upper Canada” documented by William Lyon Mackenzie, he opened his table of office-holders with Chief Justice Jonathan Sewell who was also Speaker of the Legislative Council, Judge of the Court of Appeals, Lessor of the public offices and Trustee of the Royal Institution, and received 3,338 pounds 17s.9d annually. O’Callaghan showed how each of these thirty-four office-holders came from the same families, held multiple offices, and rewarded members of their own family with other posts. The editor revealed that large tracts of public land were monopolized by some of these office-holders in the Eastern Townships through an illegal scheme devised by Sewell when he was attorney-general. Using a Biblical image, O’Callaghan compared Lower Canada to Egypt during the Plague of the locusts.¹⁰³ His metaphor echoed the popular Irish Catholic theme of a Chosen

⁹³ VIN, 14 May 1833, p. 2.

⁹⁴ VIN, 6 Sept. 1833, p. 2; 10 Sept. 1833, p. 2; 22 Nov. 1833, p. 2; 3 Dec. 1833, p. 2.

⁹⁵ VIN, 24 May 1833, p. 3.

⁹⁶ VIN, 9 July 1833, pp. 2,3; 23 July 1833, p. 2.

⁹⁷ VIN, 3 Dec. 1833, p. 2.

⁹⁸ VIN, 26 July 1833, p. 2.

⁹⁹ VIN, 30 August 1833, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ VIN, 18 June 1833, p. 2; 11 Oct. 1833, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ VIN, 1 Oct. 1833, p. 2.

¹⁰² VIN, 9 August 1833, p. 2; 1 Oct. 1833, p. 2.

¹⁰³ VIN, 1 Oct. 1833, p. 2.

people in exile from their natural rights.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

O’Callaghan’s 1833-34 editorials illustrated an affinity with the assumptions, tone, tactics, and themes of Daniel O’Connell’s “Letters to the Irish People” printed during 1833 in *The Vindicator*. A comparison of these writings encourages us to think further along the lines of a broader interpretative analytical framework suggested by Greer, Bernier, and Salée. Situating O’Callaghan within currents of contemporary Irish radicalism opens avenues for further comparison of *patriotes* reform goals in Lower Canada to those of Irish radicals. We need further research on the way in which Irish radical goals shared by O’Connell and O’Callaghan resonated with the *patriotes*’ platform, with Papineau’s views on Lower Canada’s resemblance to Ireland,¹⁰⁵ and with the Irish-Catholic “swing population” of Montreal. It would be useful to compare the nine-year role of *The Vindicator* in Lower Canada’s reform movement with the role of the Irish press in Upper Canada’s reform movement researched by Lepine.¹⁰⁶

The Irish radical connection in O’Callaghan’s 1833 editorials widens the parameters within which the *patriotes* have been traditionally conceived as two nations warring within the bosom of one state. It loosens the stereotype which divides the reformers into radicals who looked to France or south of the border for inspiration, on the one hand, and moderates who espoused British values on the other hand.¹⁰⁷ In 1833, O’Callaghan was a radical who espoused British constitutional values. We need to know more about the social make-up of the Irish-Catholic community in Montreal itself during the 1830s, comparable with our knowledge on the 1850-1880 period gained through the research of David Hannah and Sherry Olson on Montreal’s three distinct societies of Irish-Catholics, English-Protestants and

¹⁰⁴ L. de Paor, “The Rebel Mind,” *The Irish Mind*, p. 160.

¹⁰⁵ On Papineau’s comparison of Lower Canada to Ireland and his diagnosis of their common problems as the fault of “an aristocracy of banks, government and trade,” see Fernand Ouellet, *Le Bas Canada, 1791-1840* (Ottawa: Editions de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1976), pp. 341-2.

¹⁰⁶ J.J. Lepine, “The Irish Press”; Murray Nicolson, “Irish Tridentine Catholicism in Victorian Toronto: Vessel for Ethno-religious Persistence,” *Prophets, Priests and Prodigals*, ed. Mark McGowan and David Marshall (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), pp. 117-62.

¹⁰⁷ See Philip Buckner’s observations in *The Transition to Responsible Government: British Policy in British North America, 1815-1850* (London, England: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 159-60, 192-7.

French-Catholics.¹⁰⁸

Our comparison of O'Callaghan's editorials with O'Connell's popular letters shows that similar to early nineteenth-century radical thought, their goals took the shape of "freedoms from." They attacked specific political, fiscal, social, economic, and ideological hegemonies of the old feudal order in terms of their constraints upon individual liberties. O'Callaghan, like O'Connell, argued against aristocratically constituted bodies in the government, banks, and trade as constraints on freedom. As the evidence on the extent of these constraints mounted during 1833 in both Ireland and Lower Canada, O'Callaghan's constitutional position gradually radicalized.

Living in precapitalist agricultural countries under distinct forms of British rule, O'Callaghan and O'Connell pursued civic equality and legislative independence for Catholics. Both wanted equitable representation of excluded majorities among a minority of privileged men with British ties who held the power, property, and privileges. Social, cultural, economic, religious, and political cleavages within each of their societies prompted O'Connell's and O'Callaghan's re-thinking of ties with Britain. The healing of the cleavages was primary to their aims but because these divisions reinforced each other and because their respective political systems did not deal with them, a dangerous dissatisfaction existed in both societies.

While there are similarities in the content of O'Callaghan's editorials and O'Connell's letters during 1833, we have pointed out that there is at least one significant difference in their respective ecclesiastical contexts. O'Connell's successful "first agitation" depended on his alliance with the Church against the exclusive privileges of the English propertied class in Ireland. His "Letters" of 1833 anticipated this continued support. Irish nationalism and the Irish Catholic Church worked hand in hand.

By contrast, O'Callaghan's 1833 editorials did not have the official backing of the Catholic Church in Lower Canada. Organizationally, morally, legally, and socially, this distinguished the context of O'Callaghan's from O'Connell's "agitation." In Lower Canada on the whole, the Roman Catholic Church was allied with propertied interests. Well-landed under the French regime, the Catholic Church after the British Conquest distrusted liberal reform, and played a role of "loyal neutrality" with the government. Unlike the Irish Catholic Church's "propaganda of dispossession" in the 1820s, the Church in Lower Canada invoked the Catholic doctrine of submission to lawful authority.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ David Hannah and Sherry Olson, "Métier, loyer et bouts de rue; L'armature de la société montréalaise, 1881-1901," *Cahiers de géographie du Québec* 27 (1983); Sherry Olson, "The Tip of the Iceberg: Strategy for research on Nineteenth-century Montreal," *Shared Spaces/Partage de l'espace*, no. 5 (June, 1986).

¹⁰⁹ Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Religion and French-Canadian Mores in the early

Nineteenth Century,” *Prophets, Priests, and Prodigals*, p. 70; P. Sylvain, “Quelques aspects de l’antagonisme libéral-ultramontain au Canada français,” *Recherches sociographiques* VIII (1967), pp. 275-97; Mason Wade, *The French-Canadians*, p. 140; Brian Young, “Positive Law, Positive State: Class Realignment and the Transformation of Lower Canada, 1815-1866,” *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada*, ed. Allan Greer and Ian Radforth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 51.