

Mathew Carey: the Mind of an Enlightenment Catholic
(Carey in Ireland, 1760-1784)

Michael S. Carter
University of Dayton

A Paper Submitted to
“Ireland, America, and the Worlds of Mathew Carey”

Co-Sponsored by:
The McNeil Center for Early American Studies
The Program in Early American Economy and Society
The Library Company of Philadelphia,
The University of Pennsylvania Libraries

Philadelphia, PA
October 27-29, 2011

*Please do not cite without permission of the author

The work of scholars of the Enlightenment from Henry F. May in the 1970s to J.G.A. Pocock in the 1990s, among many others, has brought increasing clarity and nuance to current understandings of the complex variety of intellectual and cultural changes in the eighteenth century.¹ One can now speak of a multiplicity of Enlightenments: French, Scottish, and even American and Irish. Recent work has even focused on the importance of a Counter-Enlightenment mounted by French Catholic intellectuals who were appalled by the ideas and popular successes of their *philosophe* contemporaries.² All of these movements were made possible by the rise of print culture that first created and then transformed the emergent “public sphere” of Early Modern Europe.³

As David J. Denby points out, the particularly French incarnation of what are widely regarded as Enlightenment ideals – anti-clericalism, modernism, cosmopolitanism, as he identifies them – are generalized as representative for the entire intellectual movement. Yet Ireland has traditionally been viewed as falling outside the bounds of what might be called Enlightenment Europe, as the island’s mostly Catholic inhabitants ostensibly stood in opposition to its values. In short, they were, according to Denby, “backward, underdeveloped, priest-ridden... for much of the century, English views of Ireland held such sway in France that the country was viewed as a backward and benighted province reluctantly being dragged into the modern age by a benevolent and enlightened England.” Ireland’s republicans were not, for the

¹ [NB: This paper is an abridged version of a chapter from my book manuscript-in-progress, *Enlightenment Catholicism: Mathew Carey and the Emergence of the American Church, 1784-1839*. This chapter focuses on Carey’s early career in Ireland, while the rest of the manuscript is mainly concerned with his career in the United States.] The concept of an Irish Enlightenment, or even influence upon Ireland by the French Enlightenment, is not at all widely regarded. Ireland has long been viewed as an enclosed culture untouched by outside intellectual influences, though this is inaccurate. See Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan (eds.), *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700-1800* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999), xiii; Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, Volume I. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

² Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: the French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³ See Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

most part, anti-monarchist as were their French counterparts, but sought local control, direct representation, and increased religious toleration, all of which they viewed as compatible with the constitutional monarchy already in place in Great Britain.⁴

What were the origins of the arguments put forward by Irish republicans of the second half of the eighteenth century who sought varying degrees of Irish independence? As historian Nancy Curtin has observed, the great nineteenth-century political historian of Ireland W. E. H. Lecky saw Irish republicanism leading to the 1798 rebellion “as a product of the French revolution, which polarized public opinion in Ireland between radicals and conservatives.” As Curtin writes, the United Irish republicanism of the 1790s, for example, has been regarded wrongly as having been carried over directly from the anti-clerical and anti-monarchical outbursts of the early 1790s. Scholarship on eighteenth-century Irish republicanism has recently been shifting from nationalistically-driven history, and is being reconsidered in the wider context of transatlantic political radicalism.⁵ In addition, during the past half-century an internal and distinctively Irish approach to republicanism and civil liberty, which emerged in the last decades of the eighteenth century as “new or redefined radical and conservative ideologies,” has begun to receive increasing recognition from scholars.⁶

Ireland’s Enlightenment and the radical political movements that finally gave rise to violent rebellion in the revolution of 1798, was marked by opposition to British colonial rule, but in contrast to the French and American Revolutions, was not influenced by France’s anti-clericalism, though Catholics in Ireland were divided on what was the best course in their hopes

⁴ David J. Denby, “The Enlightenment in Ireland,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38.2 (2005) 385-391.

⁵ Nancy J. Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 2-5. See also Maire Kennedy, *French Books in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2001).

⁶ S. J. Connolly, “Varieties of Irish Political Thought,” in S. J. Connolly (ed.), *Political Ideas in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 12.

to secure full civil rights. Only a few decades later, in the early nineteenth century, it was Daniel O’Connell (1775-1847) who used their common faith as a basis to mobilize the Irish Catholic community in non-violent support of nationalism. O’Connell, while a pious Catholic, remained a liberal democrat and philosophical radical.⁷

It was this intellectual environment in Ireland that so attracted young Mathew Carey (1760-1839). This paper focuses on Carey’s early Irish career – with a previously undiscovered publication at its center – in order to focus more closely on some of the specific historical arguments used by Irish republicans of the 1770s and 1780s in calling for repeal of the Penal Code.

Carey’s early years have received even less scholarly attention than his adult career, which has never been the subject of a full-scale study.⁸ Mathew was born in Dublin on January 28, 1760 to Mary Sherridan Carey and Christopher Carey, a baker and onetime member of the British navy who, by receiving a lucrative contract to supply the army with bread, eventually

⁷ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Catholic Diaspora in America*. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1997).

⁸ Though Carey was one of the most widely known figures in the Early Republic, and while he is well-represented in the historical record, he has never, curiously, received comprehensive biographical treatment. I have published two articles focusing on Carey and Catholicism: see Michael S. Carter, “‘Under the Benign Sun of Toleration’: Mathew Carey, The Douai Bible, and Catholic Print Culture, 1789-1791.” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Fall 2007), pp. 437-69, and Michael S. Carter, “‘What shall we say to this *liberal* age?’: Catholic-Protestant Controversy in the Early National Capital,” *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Spring 2008), pp. 79-95, in addition to *Mathew Carey the Public Emergence of Catholicism in the Early Republic* (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2006). The only available biographical sources are Edward C. Carter II, “The Political Activities of Mathew Carey, Nationalist: 1760-1814” (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1962), and the following additional published sources: Earl L. Bradsher, *Mathew Carey, Editor, Author, and Publisher: A Study in American Literary Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912, reprinted New York: AMS Press, 1966); Mathew Carey, *Autobiography* (New York: Research Classics, 1942; this is a reprint of Carey’s biographical sketches originally published in *The New-England Magazine* (July 1833-December 1834, Vol. V, p. 404, 489; Vol. VI, p. 60, 93, 227, 306, 400; Vol. VII, p. 61, 145, 239, 320, 401, 481); Kenneth W. Rowe, “Mathew Carey: A Study in American Economic Development,” in *The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, Series LI, Number 4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1933); Eugene F. J. Maier, “Mathew Carey, Publicist and Politician, 1760-1839,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2 (June, 1928), 71-154; James N. Green, “Mathew Carey: Publisher and Patriot” (Philadelphia: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1985). Also of interest is William Clarkin, *Mathew Carey: A Bibliography of His Publications, 1785-1824* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984). The biographical information provided in this chapter is drawn primarily from Edward C. Carter II’s work, and from the published version of its first chapter, “Mathew Carey in Ireland, 1760-1824,” *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. LI, No. 4 (January, 1966), 503-527, in addition to the other sources listed here.

rose to middle-class rank and became financially independent.⁹ Three of Mathew's four brothers also achieved distinction in their chosen fields. These were John Carey (1756-1826), a classical scholar and editor of an 1803 edition of Dryden's *Virgil*, William Paulet Carey (1759-1839), an art historian, painter, engraver, and owner of an art store in London, and James, a newspaper editor and hot-tempered republican who later joined his brother Mathew in Philadelphia.¹⁰ The unusual spelling of Carey's first name was the result of his having decided as a teenager, after a discussion with his similarly academically-inclined brother John, that "Mathew," not "Matthew," due to its etymological origins, was in fact the more correct way of rendering the spelling.¹¹

The extant sources available on Mathew Carey's early life are scant. In fact, the only narrative source at all on his early life is the collection of autobiographical sketches, not always completely reliable in terms of dates, which take the form of a series of letters solicited from him and printed in installments in *The New-England Magazine* from July 1833 to December 1834, when Carey was in his seventies.

Carey's memoirs are, of course, the product of his old age, represent his views late in life, and cannot be assumed to represent his state of mind at the time of the events he describes. Indeed, there are factual errors in the work. Either by a desire to accentuate the impression on his readers that he was a "self-made" man, in emulation of his hero Benjamin Franklin's autobiography (with which he was undoubtedly familiar), or less likely, through simple forgetfulness or a sense of modesty, Carey played down both his early intellectual precocity and the extent of his formal schooling. "Of my early days I have a very faint recollection, except on

⁹ The entry for Christopher in the 1778 Dublin City Directory lists him as "Cary, Christopher, Baker," and the 1791 directory gives his address as "2, Redmond's-hill." *The Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanac, Compiled by Samuel Watson, For the Year of our Lord, 1791* (Dublin, 1791).

¹⁰ Carter, *Mathew Carey in Ireland*, 505n.

¹¹ John H. Campbell, *History of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland* (Philadelphia: Published by the Hibernian Society, 1892), 368.

one point, the wonderfully-slow development of my faculties... I was in the rear of all the young people of my age and acquaintance,” Carey claimed. “I was, truly, an extremely dull boy.”

Nevertheless, “after about seven weeks hard study, without a master,” the young Carey “was enabled to read, and perfectly understand, French prose with great ease, and had little difficulty with the poetry of that language...” These statements belie Carey’s contention that he was a dull pupil. “I studied in the long days of summer, from sun-rise to sun-set, fifteen or sixteen hours, and scarcely allowed myself time for my meals.”¹²

As a one-year-old infant, Carey was dropped by a “careless nurse,” an accident which left him crippled in one leg for life. His handicap made him unfit for athletic activity, and the boy, having a great aptitude both for mathematics and languages, turned to reading and study in order to fill his leisure hours. Carey’s infirmity is more than a personal detail. It undoubtedly had a significant influence on the development of his character and personality, and encouraged him to adopt an “underdog” outlook throughout his life. “I was annoyed by the taunts and jeers and nicknames of my school and play-fellows, who, humanely, as is usual in such cases, omitted no opportunity of teasing [sic] me, and reminding me of a misfortune of which I have felt the disadvantage almost every day of my life.” The easily inflamed temper, sensitivity to slights, and marked pugnacity that were lifelong personal characteristics of Carey’s are probably at least a partial result of his handicap and its effect on his early social life and choice of activities.

It seems unlikely that Mathew’s father Christopher Carey, a man of means and an aspirant to the highest levels of society open at the time to Irish Catholics, would have neglected the education of his sons. The elder Carey was able to become a man of some means even in spite of the penal laws that restricted access to all levels of middle-class life for himself and for his family of boys. Catholics were excluded from admission to universities, were not legally

¹² Carey, *Autobiography*, 2.

permitted to be the guardians of children, and were not allowed to keep schools, act as private tutors, or to send their children abroad for their education. Though in 1733 charter schools were established for Catholics, and supported by public funds, they were “avowedly intended” to subvert the Catholic upbringing of students and to encourage them to convert to Protestantism. The legal options facing Catholic parents were, then, either acquiescence towards the state’s attempts to make apostates of their children, or to let them remain ignorant and unschooled. However, a network of Catholic tutors practiced outside of the law, and it appears likely that the Careys took advantage of it to educate their children.¹³

Though in his autobiographical sketches Mathew mentions no formal schooling, he received a brief letter that sheds light on the subject in 1807. John Darcy, who in passing calls himself Carey’s “Juvenile Schoolmate,” indicates having been a student at the school of the Jesuit priest Dr. Thomas Betagh (1738-1811), who did much to educate young Catholics and administer charity to the “depressed masses” of late-eighteenth century Dublin.¹⁴ However, it is unclear, as Edward C. Carter has written, whether or not Carey was also a student there. It is possible that, alternatively, Carey and possibly also some or all of his brothers were in some fashion private students of Betagh’s. Certainly, Carey’s education, if self-directed – as his written work from his late teenage years onward indicate – provided him with many of the elements of a traditional classical education, in addition to the aforementioned acquisition of French, to which was later added at least a reading knowledge of several other modern and ancient languages.

¹³ W. E. H. Lecky, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (abridged). (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 43-44.

¹⁴ John Darcy to Mathew Carey, July 6, 1807. *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (March, 1900), 69.

When Mathew reached his fifteenth birthday, it came time for him to choose a trade befitting his status as a middle-class Dubliner. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Dublin, the largest city in Ireland, contained somewhere between 100,000 and 120,000 residents. The options facing a young Catholic, however, were limited.

In early eighteenth-century Europe, established religion and laws restricting religious practice were the norm. Protestant England restricted enjoyment of full civil rights to members of the Church of England, and Catholic France and Spain limited the opportunities available to Roman Catholics. The Penal Laws in Ireland, where Catholics represented the vast majority of the population were, however, less stringent on the whole than their counterparts in England, where Catholics were a minority. However, the Irish Penal Laws were far more elaborate, and were modeled on French legislation against the Huguenots.¹⁵ The point, of course, was to discourage Irish Catholics, who represented about seventy-five percent of the population of the island at the beginning of the century, from holding to their faith, and from passing it on to their children. According to Thomas Wall, “[t]he masshouses and chapels remained open, except during spells of persecution, but they were shy and hidden away behind warehouses and taverns.” Furthermore, “there were no serious attempts to win over the Catholics to Protestantism. It suited the wealthy minority to have a propertyless majority.”¹⁶ At least one priest during the period, however – Fr. Nicholas Sheehy (1728-1766) – had been executed, perhaps unjustly, for his role in an attempted rebellion against the Penal Laws.¹⁷

¹⁵ Lecky, 38.

¹⁶ Thomas Wall, *The Sign of Doctor Hay's Head*. (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1958), 42.

¹⁷ Sheehy was seen as a martyr for the faith by many Catholics. See Richard Brennan, *Lives of the Irish Martyrs and Confessors* (New York, 1878).

In addition to the aforementioned restrictions on education, the English parliament decreed that Catholics were not to sit in the Irish houses of government, and were excluded from corporations, the magistracy, from practicing at the bar, at the bench, from grand juries, and from the vestries. They were barred from the army and navy, and prohibited from becoming sheriffs, solicitors, gamekeepers, and constables, and were forbidden to possess any arms. No Catholic was to possess a horse worth more than five pounds. In short, as was stated from the bench by a lord chancellor and chief justice, “the law does not suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Roman Catholic.”¹⁸

Yet the existence of the Penal Laws, which divided residents of Ireland into two groups, did not keep some among the aristocracy and gentry from holding onto family property – sometimes with the help of Protestant neighbors, though they were empowered in certain instances to confiscate the property of their Catholic countrymen. Penal restrictions encouraged the growth of a Catholic middle class including tradesmen (like Mathew Carey’s father), merchants (including booksellers), and large-scale farmers. Yet by the middle of the eighteenth century, the Catholic seventy-five percent of Ireland’s population owned less than ten percent of the country’s landed property.¹⁹ As early as the seventeenth century, the shift in property ownership was incredibly drastic. More than two-thirds of Ireland’s profitable acreage – 5.2 million acres out of a total of 7.5 million – was forfeited for redistribution among English Protestants, New English settlers, and Cromwell’s soldiers. Only two million acres were restored to Catholic hands with the accession of Charles II. The rise of the “Ascendancy” was complete.²⁰

¹⁸ Wall, 42

¹⁹ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *Ireland: from colony to nation state* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 17.

²⁰ Marcus Tannner, *Ireland’s Holy Wars: The Struggle for a Nation’s Soul, 1500-2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 145.

Perhaps because he was aware of the dangers involved, Mathew Carey's father does not appear to have encouraged the first signs of his son's nascent political or intellectual ambitions. Though Mathew later commented on his own particular aptitude for mathematics and a general facility for working with numbers, "I was decidedly in favour of that [career] of a printer and bookseller," he wrote in his *Autobiography*, "which were then generally united. I had fixed my mind on them from the time I was five or six years of age." But Carey's father knew well the irascibility of the young man's temperament, and since printing was the one profession he did not want his son to enter, he refused to apprentice him to a master in that trade. Mathew, then, procured one for himself – to a bookseller named McDaniel, who during Carey's apprenticeship changed his surname to the "more respectable" McDonnell. Michael McDaniel or McDonnell, who was probably related to the several other McDonnells in the Dublin paper-making trade active in the late eighteenth century, won an award in the second best printing, medium paper category from the Royal Dublin Society in 1747.²¹ According to Carey's recollections late in life, "McDonnell was a hard, austere master, of most repelling manners. He never, in a single instance, expressed approbation of my conduct, however careful or industrious I was."²²

Carey had spent much of his early youth reading widely, and had secretly become a member of one of Dublin's private circulating libraries. This was against the wishes of and without the knowledge of his parents, who disapproved of Carey's choices in reading material. According to his autobiography, Carey had been "dissatisfied that I could not exchange books oftener than once a day," since he would sit up until midnight and beyond, "reading novels and

²¹ James W. Phillips, *Printing and Bookselling in Dublin, 1670-1800* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 160, 164.

²² Carey, *Autobiography*, 3.

romances.” It seems that Carey’s parents objected to his reading habits on moral rather than political grounds.²³

Carey wrote his first published essay when he was seventeen years old, on the subject of dueling, taking the view that dueling was an abominable practice. Statistics for the period 1776-1780 reveal that no less than fifty injuries are recorded for a sampling of eighty-one duels that are recorded as having been fought during that time in Ireland.²⁴ Carey’s essay was inspired by a duel between his fellow apprentice and the apprentice of a different printer, Patrick Wogan of Dublin, and was published in the *Hibernian Journal*. In the essay, Carey took the opportunity to defend his friend against Wogan, who had expected the young apprentice to show up for the appointed duel, something the young man refused to do. Carey was discovered as the author of the essay, was reprimanded, and as a result, the owner, Wogan, fired Carey’s friend.

In November 1778, the *Journal* also published a letter from Benjamin Franklin to the Irish people arguing that the American revolutionary cause and the cause of Ireland were one and the same.²⁵ Yet this first taste of politics was not to be young Mathew’s last. It was not long after that Carey became embroiled in a second print controversy, which was to be an event that would drastically alter the shape of his future career and would strongly influence his decision to immigrate to Philadelphia several years later.

In November 1781 (not November 1779, as he later wrote in his autobiographical letters), the teenage apprentice had focused his attention on “the horrible oppression of the Irish Catholics, and had read every book and pamphlet I could procure, respecting the tyranny exercised on them, and the calumnies with which, for the purpose of justifying that tyranny, they

²³ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴ James Kelly, *‘That Dam’d Thing Called Honour’: Duelling in Ireland, 1570-1860* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), 120.

²⁵ Carter, *Political Activities*, 10.

were overwhelmed.” With his “mind filled with their sufferings” and his “indignation aroused,” Carey wrote a pamphlet entitled “The urgent necessity of an immediate repeal of the whole Penal Code against the Roman Catholics, candidly considered; to which is added an enquiry into the Prejudices entertained against them; being an appeal to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, exciting them to a just sense of their civil and religious rights, as citizens of a free nation.”

In a highly dramatic (and perhaps overwrought) style that would become characteristic of Carey as a writer, he included an incendiary motto in the broadside advertisement for his anonymously written pamphlet. It read:

“Beware, ye Senators. Look round in time;
 Rebellion is not fixed to *any* clime;
 In *trade, religion, ev’ry way oppress’d,*
 You’ll find – *too late* – such wrongs *must* be redress’d
Seize quick the time – for now – consider well –
Whole quarters of the world at once rebel. – Lady Lucan.”²⁶

As Carey recalled much later in life, he advertised the pamphlet when it was nearly finished at press, a few days in advance of its release date in November 1781.²⁷ The text of the broadside advertisement was published in the newspapers, and this was enough to ignite what was to become a major controversy and headache for the Irish Catholic leadership of Dublin. Publication of the advertisement “excited a considerable alarm,” wrote Carey, but in fact while he believed the plan for the pamphlet was a good one, its execution was “quite puerile,” reflecting the youth and relative inexperience of its teenage author.

While in its author’s view the body of the pamphlet was “wholly inoffensive, as it consisted principally of extracts recriminating the charges made against the Roman Catholics,

²⁶ Carey, *Autobiography*, 4.

²⁷ My own examination of copies of the *Hibernian Journal* for 1779 at the National Library of Ireland, Dublin, reveal that no such advertisement was printed that year. The *Dublin Evening Post* does contain the advertisement in its 1781 issue, however.

with interlocutory matter,” the young author’s timing in planning to release the pamphlet could not have been worse. Both houses of the Irish Parliament were not only then in session, but were considering a relaxation of the legal restrictions imposed upon Irish Catholics. The advertisement was brought before them by the Duke of Leinster in the House of Lords, and by Sir Thomas Connolly in the House of Commons, and “adduced as full proof of the seditious and treasonable views of the Roman Catholics, and made use of by their enemies... to show how unworthy they were” of the tolerant legislation then on the table. “These pretended favours [toleration] were some not very important relaxations of the cruel chains which had been accumulating for nearly a century – a relaxation solely the result of the terror incited by the revolt of the American Colonies – the French war – and the [Irish] Volunteers.”²⁸

Scholars of late-eighteenth century Ireland are largely unaware of Carey’s pamphlet and the role that the announcement of its publication played in provoking change in Irish policy in the late 1770s and early 1780s during the period of the American Revolutionary war. This author has seen no reference to the publication whatsoever outside of secondary works that focus specifically on the career of Mathew Carey. As a result, the ideas expressed within the pamphlet, as well as the references it includes and the light it sheds on the mind of its author, who would become a significant figure in Irish politics in the early 1780s, have never been discussed. In fact, the pamphlet is recorded in all of the existing secondary literature as either having never actually been printed, or as having been printed either in part or in full and then every copy destroyed prior to release, or thirdly in vague terms that leave the fate of the printed pamphlet itself unknown.²⁹ This chapter evidently acknowledges the existence of and examines the

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁹ A single original copy of the *Urgent Necessity* is in the catalog of the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the pamphlet is bound, along with an original copy of the broadside advertisement, inside of a volume of Carey’s own works that he had compiled into a set of volumes late in life, presumably for his own use. Both copies bear signs of

contents of Carey's *Urgent Necessity* for the first time within any of the extant scholarly literature.

Historians of the American Revolution such as Bernard Bailyn have written extensively on the role that pamphlet literature played in garnering popular support for the revolutionary cause, and on the role that print played in shaping early republican ideology. The most common, typical middle-length pamphlet was, as Bailyn has noted, of the perfect size to allow the development of an argument but remain readable by a wide audience used to sermon literature of roughly the same length, and it also conformed to eighteenth-century literary norms without becoming “ponderous.”³⁰ Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* of 1776 is a prime example of this genre. No

staining, trauma and unusual creasing, which suggest that at one time they had been surreptitiously stored or handled. The pamphlet is not recorded in the *English Short Title Catalog* or in any other bibliography that covers eighteenth-century Ireland. Carey himself reprinted the advertisement for the pamphlet (see Mathew Carey, *Miscellaneous Essays*, Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1830) but never the pamphlet itself. In his explanatory footnotes to the reprint (p. 452), he claims that “The pamphlet announced in the above advertisement, was not published.” Yet, the advertisement “created a great sensation, and a handsome reward was offered in the papers for the discovery of the writer; in consequence of which, the pamphlet was suppressed.” It seems clear that Carey must have used the word “published” – as distinguished from simply “printed” – as meaning “released to the public,” since he explains that “The preface, and four pages at the end of it, although in type and ready for press, were not printed off; so that a complete copy was never procurable.” In his memoirs of 1836, he records that “the types of those parts not yet printed off, viz. the preface, introduction, and four pages of peroration, were distributed, and of course, never worked off. To the Catholic committee an offer was made of burning the edition, provided the idea of a prosecution was determined on” (*Autobiography*, 5-6). R. Kenneth Bussy, in *Two Hundred Years of Publishing: A history of the oldest publishing company in the United States, Lea & Febiger, 1785-1985* (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1985), states that “At 21, [Carey] advertised an indiscreet pamphlet, which was never published, attacking the Penal Laws, and this angered the British overlords of Ireland and some of the Catholics of Dublin as well.” (3). In *Mathew Carey, Nationalist*, Edward C. Carter II writes that “Christopher Carey was dumbfounded to learn that the author was his son; moving rapidly, he suppressed that part of the pamphlet which had not been printed and was still locked in the press. Through a third party, an offer was transmitted to the Committee that the printed half of the edition would be burned if the Committee would abandon its plans. But this was rejected, ‘and a fierce prosecution was determined on.’” James N. Green, whose vast knowledge about Carey has been most helpful, does not mention the fate of the pamphlet itself in *Mathew Carey, Publisher and Patriot* (Library Company of Philadelphia, 1985), but mentioned to this author that he was already aware of the existence of the copy in the Library Company's collection. Thomas Wall in *The Sign of Doctor Hay's Head* (1958) writes that “Carey's father, the respectable baker, who did not wish to expose himself to expense and trouble, took measures to have the publication suppressed, and bundled his son off to Paris, to stay there until the storm had blown over.” Earl N. Bradsher (1912) and Kenneth Rowe (1933) are vague, and both seem to have drawn their information solely from Carey's autobiography. Rev. Eugene F. J. Maier in “Mathew Carey, Publicist and Politician, 1760-1839 (Records of the American Catholic Historical Society, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2, June 1928), writes “[Carey] composed and had published anonymously a pamphlet, *The Urgent Necessity for a Repeal of the Penal Code against Roman Catholics* [sic], but no source is given for the author's assertion that the pamphlet was published.

³⁰ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

concrete evidence exists to suggest that Carey had read *Common Sense* by 1781, but it is probable that he did. Carey's *Urgent Necessity*, perhaps influenced by American revolutionary pamphlet literature, follows in this mold.

The broadside advertisement for the *Urgent Necessity* - evidently a quarto sheet divided in half, with one octavo-sized text on each side - announced that the work would appear on Monday, the 12th of November, "precisely at 12 o'Clock," and would be sold for a British shilling. The publisher was given as A. Johnson on High-Street, and the sellers as Johnson and Patrick Wogan, whom Carey had recently antagonized in his anti-dueling essay. The fortunes of Irish Catholics in Dublin were, at the time, dim enough that animosities between compatriots were unlikely to affect business exigencies.

The broadside pledged itself to "Exciting [Irish Catholics] to a just Sense of THEIR CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS RIGHTS, as CITIZENS of a FREE NATION." The second part of the advertisement was addressed "To the Roman Catholics of Ireland." Carey took an extremely Whiggish, inflammatory, and rhetorically grandiose tone in the four-paragraph text, and it is easy to see why it was a cause for concern to anti-emancipationists in the Irish Parliament, as it contains overt references to the American revolutionary struggle and the recent intervention in the struggle by Catholic France, Britain's archenemy. "At a Time when America, by a *desperate Effort*, has nearly *emancipated herself* from Slavery; when, laying aside ancient Prejudices, a Catholic King," by which Carey must mean Louis XVI, "becomes the *avowed patron of Protestant Freemen*," meaning the more than ninety-nine percent of American colonists who were Protestants, and "when the *Tyranny* of a British Parliament over Ireland, has been annihilated by the intrepid Spirit of Irishmen; - it is a most afflicting Reflection, that you, my

Countrymen, *the Majority of that Nation*, which has shaken off an unjust ENGLISH YOKE, remain still enchained by one *infinitely more galling...*³¹

What is interesting about both the advertisement and the actual pamphlet is that Carey takes an *historical* approach towards exposing what he regards as the injustice of English colonial policy towards Ireland. He announces his intention to reveal the “REAL CAUSES” of British oppression of Irish Catholics, and in his project he has not, as he says English historians have done, “*ransacked the History of all Nations and Ages*; he has confined himself to the English History *alone*, in which... he has *more than equalled* the Charges Protestants make against your Body; and has given Extracts, *verbatim*, from *Protestant Historians*, to put the Matter *beyond Possibility of Doubt*.” Peace, he claimed, something unattainable between “tyrants and slaves,” was his only goal.³²

What exists of Carey’s octavo *Urgent Necessity* is seventy-six pages in total, and appears complete except for the section between the first (unnumbered) page and the twelfth page. While most of the material contained in the two parts of the advertisement gives the impression that the pamphlet would be strictly politically-oriented, in fact the piece is a long editorial composed mostly of historical arguments.

In essence, Carey’s argument, which will be explicated here, is that throughout history since the Reformation, Roman Catholics in Great Britain have been no more so – and in some cases even less so – oppressive or violent towards Protestants than vice versa. Additionally, Carey argues that the notorious 1641 Irish “massacre,” the uprising of Catholics against Protestant landlords for which Cromwell retaliated several years later upon his rise to power, and

³¹ [Mathew Carey], “*Advertisement, To the Roman Catholics of Ireland...*” (Library Company of Philadelphia).

³² *Ibid.*

which was used as the justification for future penal laws, was grossly exaggerated in the accounts of Protestant historians.

The young pamphleteer sought to make his case using only the works of Protestant historians, citing internal consistencies among their works in order to demolish their assertions. The 1641 uprising was a theme Carey would return to continually throughout his career. In 1819 he wrote and published a defense of the Irish that was essentially a drastic expansion and revision of the material contained in the 1781 pamphlet.³³

Carey opened the *Urgent Necessity* with some brief commentary that unfortunately is cut short, since in the only known extant copy of the work, what is either the second page of a preface, or the second page of the actual text, is missing until page fourteen. At this point, Carey prepares to begin his history of the Reformation in England, having assured his reader in the previous paragraph that “I shall studiously decline every thing which might, in the most distant degree, involve a religious contest.”³⁴ Carey acknowledges that in the course of European history, several popes had, through the “folly and weakness of kings,” usurped authority in civil affairs. As a result, “kings became alarmed; and resolved to ease themselves of the galling yoke [at] the first available opportunity.” The writer implicitly acknowledges that civil and ecclesiastical affairs belong to their own spheres, and that claims of secular or religious authorities to the contrary violate a pre-existing and higher law. This places Carey within the “natural rights” school of political philosophy. This idea had a venerable place in the tradition of

³³ Mathew Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae; Or, Ireland Vindicated: An Attempt to Develop and Expose a Few of the Multifarious Errors and Misrepresentations Respecting Ireland, In the Histories of May, Temple, Whitelock, Borlace, Rushworth, Clarendon, Cox, Carte, Leland, Warner, Macauley, Hume, and Others: Particularly In the Legendary Tales of the Pretended Conspiracy and Massacre of 1641*. (Philadelphia, 1819; revised and reissued in 1823 and 1837). Carey regarded the writing of this book as one of his most important accomplishments, and presented copies of the book at his own expense to libraries and distinguished individuals, such as John Adams, across the nation. One of the first editions I have examined, at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, bears an inscription in Carey’s own handwriting on the flyleaf, indicating that particular copy was a gift from the author to the Boston Athenaeum.

³⁴ Carey, *Urgent Necessity*, 14.

the Catholic Church, but had in fact been weakened, as he wrote, by monarchs who, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, sought an increasing consolidation of power under themselves that is famously expressed, apocryphal as the saying may be, in Louis XIV's (1638-1715) statement that *l'Etat, c'est moi*.

Carey, perhaps wishing to demonstrate that he is no Catholic partisan but a fair-minded historical observer, indicates that he finds at least some justice in Henry VIII's decision to break from Rome. He states that in response to papal "usurpation," the Tudor monarch "cast off the pope's power, just as well as unjust." While Henry may have continued as a Catholic at least in practice, he "committed the catholics, who denied his supremacy, to the flames, with the reformists." After the succession of Edward, "the court-lords, having, in the preceding reign, tasted the sweets of church plunder, were eager to gain possession of the whole. Every means were employed to render the clergy and religion of Catholics ridiculous and contemptible... [t]hey were successful."³⁵

While Carey acknowledges Mary Tudor to have been "bigotted," and "sanguinary," he adds that the laws enacted under her that persecuted heretics, this time against Protestants, were "enacted merely by the civil power, and that not until novel opinions became prejudicial to the state." Again Carey blames avarice among those in power for the appropriation of Catholic property. After Mary's death, Elizabeth I's "favourites, having an eye to the church-lands, restored by her sister [Mary], had recourse to the old arts; with the old success. The conduct of many catholics afforded too much pretence for the slander."³⁶

As for James Stuart, he was unused to ruling a kingdom as large as England was at the time, and "alarmed the commons of England, who, in his reign, first conceived the idea of

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

abridging the royal prerogative.” They used Catholicism as the scapegoat, writes Carey, and thereafter “Plots, conspiracies, and the old calumniating charges, were revived against the catholics anew... From a thorough detestation of the idolatry, as they termed it, of popery, they had precipitated themselves into fanaticism.” Carey then compares the behavior of English adventurers in Ireland during the early seventeenth century to “the European plunderers in America and the East Indies...” In his view, fault was to be found on both sides of the Channel. “The English and Irish, even anterior to the reformation, behaved to each other with a barbarity, shocking and incredible.”³⁷

Long passages from contemporary Protestant newspaper writings attacking Catholic doctrine and practice are quoted in footnotes to the subsequent passages in which Carey attacks “the most formidable to the interests of harmony,” who he identifies as “the anniversary-preachers.” The “prejudices” of these writers, which the author intends to address specifically, were chiefly concerned with four themes. These included “the deposing power,” “persecution,” “violation of faith,” and, most importantly for the purposes of the *Urgent Necessity*, since so much space is devoted to this subject, “the massacre of 1641.” Carey made a point, as he promised he would in his introductory section, of faulting both the Catholic and Protestant parties wherever he deemed appropriate. True to his enlightened sensibilities, the author celebrated reasonability and fair-mindedness over partisanship and polemicism. “Catholics seek not,” he wrote, “to palliate the irregularities or cruelties of their ancestors.”

Catholic injustices, as Carey saw them, from European history could not be excused. The crusades, the war against the Albigensians, the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, the Smithfield executions, inquisitions, and the *auto da fes* of Portugal were all “sanguinary and barbarous;

³⁷ *Ibid*, 15.

directly repugnant to the spirit of religion and humanity; and eversive of the inherent right every man has to judge for himself, and exercise his own free will.”³⁸

Another section of the *Urgent Necessity* covers what its author calls “Protestant and Presbyterian Inquisitions.” Carey details Elizabeth I’s formation of ecclesiastical commissions appointed to uproot heresy, which he argues was the equivalent of an inquisition. Likewise, in Scotland in 1617 and 1668, the Church of England had performed excommunications and executed Scotsmen who had refused to conform. Carey quotes David Hume, who recounted that in 1680, Charles II “‘allowed several priests to be put to death, for no other crime, but their having received orders in the Romish church.’” He continues with an examination of William and Mary’s treachery against the Catholics who agreed to the Treaty of Limerick in 1691, and ends with the statement that enough similar examples were available to fill a folio volume.

Before moving on to the subject of the rebellion of 1641, he writes:

But this is sufficient to prove, that intolerance can be publicly preached; that inquisitions can be established; that croisades can be entered into for the extermination of heresy; that heretics and idolaters can be burned; that kings can be, not only deposed, but even brought [to] the scaffold; and that faith can be most infamously violated; -by protestants and Presbyterians, who so vehemently declaim against those practices and *imputed* principles of popery.³⁹

The remainder of the *Urgent Necessity* – which makes up fully half of the entire pamphlet – focuses on the events of 1641 and the Penal Laws that were enacted in their aftermath. What was known in Carey’s day as the “massacre” of 1641 began when Old English (who remained Catholic) and Irish Catholic forces came together to take advantage of the situation of the English Civil War then raging between King Charles I and Parliament, which ended several years later with the execution of Charles and the ascension of Oliver Cromwell to power.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

By early in 1642, the Catholics had regained control of all Ireland with the exception of Dublin, Cork City and large portions of ten counties including Drogheda, Belfast, Derry, Cork, and Donegal. Though by October of 1642 a provisional government had been created by an alliance between the Old English and the Irish, which had the support of the Catholic bishops, clan chiefs, and the leaders of the Old English colony, trouble was on the horizon. The provisional government was committed to primacy of individual conscience, freedom in choosing one's church, Irish national independence, and loyalty to the king of England, with its motto as *Pro Deo, pro rege, pro patria Hibernia unanims*.⁴⁰

The Old English, considering themselves more English than Irish despite their loyalty to the faith they shared with their neighbors, continued to be intensely loyal to the Jacobite cause while fighting to regain their former position of influence in the Irish Parliament. The Irish Catholics, however, were in favor of a complete revolution that would restore the pre-Elizabethan order, though they had never enjoyed any position of power in the Parliament and had already lost the greater part of their properties. The two groups, who were traditionally antagonistic to one another, were united by their common Catholic faith in the aftermath of the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland at the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁴¹

During the evening of October 22, 1641, armed men seized several forts, castles, and manorial houses throughout the Irish countryside, making use both of force and trickery to achieve their ends. Their plan was to seize control of Dublin Castle and other important strongholds by surprise rather than by violence, but this plan was foiled when key actors were arrested after a Protestant informant got word to authorities in Dublin.⁴² This marked the

⁴⁰ McCaffrey, *Ireland*, 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 8.

⁴² Robert Armstrong, *Protestant war: the 'British' of Ireland and the wars of the three kingdoms* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2005).

beginning of the uprising of 1641, an event that would haunt the Irish people and bring political repercussions for at least the next two centuries – it was the most important among the justifications used in enacting and maintaining the Penal Laws in years to come. What exactly had taken place during the uprising, however, was not clear even to those in power in Dublin – whether it was a small-scale conspiracy involving Lord Conor Maguire and sympathetic rebels, or a “general revolt” involving the entire kingdom. It was clear, however, that the conspiracy was a threat to the entire “government and kingdom’ of Ireland.”⁴³

The British characterization of the uprising as a “rebellion” was key. As Nicholas Canny has recently argued, the supposed barbarity of the native Irish people was used by the English as a pretext in using violence to subjugate them to English law after the Elizabethan settlement.⁴⁴ To define a political condition as a rebellion had long been the signal that the state had permission to use any means whatsoever at their disposal to crush it – essentially, extreme force was now not only permissible, but even necessary. In the words of Robert Armstrong, it was “a notion, too, which had a dangerous potential to categorize people as loyal or rebellious, categories which could overlap with pre-existing religious or national divisions within Ireland.”⁴⁵

Ultimately, what had been intended as a bloodless seizure of what the English and Irish Catholics believed what was rightfully theirs began to quickly unravel into a violent assault upon the Protestant English population. Significantly, English and Irish Catholic perceptions of the event began to diverge. Depositions of the events of the uprising were collected from witnesses as early as 1642, forming thirty-two volumes of testimonies. One reported how the Irish Catholics were “deflowring many of the women, then cruelly murdering them and pulling them

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁴ Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British: 1580-1650* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14.

⁴⁵ Armstrong, *Protestant war*, 15.

about the streets by the haire of the head and dashing their childrens brains out... and tossing their children on pikes... saying that those were the pigs of the English sowes.”⁴⁶

Nobody was sure of how many had died during the uprising, however. Estimates ran from the English Parliament’s 1643 opinion that at least 150,000 Protestants must have been killed, to Patrick Adair’s c. 1690s assertion in *A True Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* that the number could not have been less than 300,000. This number was repeated in Sir John Temple’s 1646 *Irish Rebellion*, a work reprinted many times throughout the eighteenth century and cited repeatedly as testament to the purported barbarity and cruelty of Irish Catholics. Needless to say, these figures were grotesquely exaggerated. The entire Protestant population of Ulster, for example, was not much more (by modern estimates) than about 34,000.⁴⁷

One of the key purposes of Mathew Carey’s *Urgent Necessity* is to attack contemporary Protestant histories, citing their inflated numbers of dead and exaggerated accounts of violent killings as propaganda tools used by the British to justify Irish subjugation. After acknowledging how harmful the internecine war was to the interests of the Irish Catholics who participated in it, Carey writes that he would produce extracts from historians proving “beyond a possibility of a doubt, that they received every provocation, which can rouse the spirit of man to resistance.” After all, as he continues, “If any nation ever preserved a consistency of conduct for a series of years, England surely did in her treatment of Ireland, from the invasion to that period, so fatal to the characters and property of Irish catholics, when they sought to expel the tyrannical invaders from the island.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Tanner, *Ireland’s Holy Wars*, 135.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁸ Carey, *Urgent Necessity*, 43.

In fact, as Carey argued, the war itself and its immediate aftermath were hardly more damaging to the Catholic population than the state of affairs that provoked it. “They were robbed, and plundered, and murdered, and massacred.” Even Protestant historians admitted the extent of English offenses against the Irish. Carey cites Sir John Temple himself, who he says wrote that “It was no capital offence to kill any of them (the Irish.) The law did neither protect their life, nor revenge their death...” Carey goes on to quote the *Historical Relations* of Sir John Davis, that “If the king would not admit them to the condition of subjects, how could they learn to acknowledge and obey him, as their sovereign?”⁴⁹

The War of 1641 was, depending on one’s point of view, either the first episode in a glorious history of Irish nationalism and patriotism that would reach new heights with the formation of the Volunteers in 1778, or the first major outbreak of a barbarism endemic to the character of all Irish Catholics, and a warning sign to their colonizers that their freedoms must be heavily restricted to prevent such violence in the future. “I glory in the war of 1641,” wrote Carey, “and hope the day will soon arrive, when all Irishmen will look up, with equal veneration, to all its victims, as the English to a [John] Hambden, or a [Algernon] Sidney.” “They will,” he continued, “then be esteemed, as IRISH HEROES, martyrs to their COUNTRY’S FREEDOM, against the tyranny of Britain; and not as papistical rebels, deserving the vengeance of the law.”

Furthermore, it was not the Irish Catholic rebels who had instigated the violence plaguing the island. “The favourite object of both Irish government and English parliament, was the utter extirpation of all the catholic inhabitants of Ireland,” Carey quotes David Hume as writing in his *History of England*. “By continuing their violent persecution, and still more violent menaces, against priests and papists, they confirmed the Irish catholics in their rebellion. By disposing

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

before-hand of all the Irish forfeitures to subscribers, they rendered all men of property desperate; and seemed to threaten a total extirpation of the natives.”

The author of the *Urgent Necessity* points to Temple’s *Irish Rebellion* as an excellent example of a history made unreliable by questionable evidence. Half of the “witness testimonies” Temple provides, Carey points out, are “merely hearsay,” as many of the “affidavits” given regarding the rebellion of 1641 were sworn by people who received the information second-hand. “After an impartial reflection on these depositions, I may, without fear of censure, confidently assert, that there never was a body of people more cruelly and unjustifiably calumniated than the Irish catholics. Hearsay evidence has been accepted, in courts of injustice, against them, and thence invariably copied into history.”⁵⁰

The surviving portion of the *Urgent Necessity* appeals to the English to compare the behavior of the Irish under their political hardships to that of the Americans. How is it that a Catholic people, Carey asks, are more restrained in the face of oppression than the Protestant Americans – especially when their grievances are much greater? “To conclude, I beseech the reader to reflect attentively on the affairs of America, and contrast her behavior with that of Irish catholics,” the author writes in the last existing paragraph. “[A]nd if he perceive not, in the latter, a loyalty which transcends all returns the most prodigal gratitude can make, he cannot behold the sun at noon-day.”

* * *

Reaction to the announcement for publication of Carey’s *Urgent Necessity* was quick and decisive. Parliament was not the only group that took notice of the newspaper advertisements and was interested to know the identity of the anonymous author. Carey faced opposition from a quite unexpected quarter – a group of prominent Roman Catholics. “There was, at that period, an

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

association in Dublin elected by the Roman Catholics, to manage their concerns, and to plead their cause with the government,” Carey writes in his autobiographical sketches.

The group to which Carey referred was the “Catholic Committee,” which was formed in 1773 in order to promote gradual repeal of the Penal Laws through careful diplomacy and negotiation. The Committee was conservative and cautious in the extreme, and it was not until 1791 that control of the group was finally wrested from the ineffectual Catholic gentry.⁵¹ This organization, which Carey disparagingly called “the most servile body in Europe,” was in his opinion a product of the depressed outlook of the Irish Catholic leadership of the period, used as they were to oppression and what Carey called a “servile spirit.”

A letter denouncing Carey’s *Urgent Necessity*, addressed “To the Public,” was published in the *Hibernian Journal*, dated November 11, 1781 (the day before the scheduled release of the *Urgent Necessity*), and signed by the printer Patrick Wogan, for whom Carey worked. “My name having appeared in an Advertisement... as one of the Sellers of a Pamphlet concerning the Roman Catholics of Ireland, to be published on Monday the 12th,” Wogan wanted to inform the public that “when I purposed to take a Share in the Sale of that Pamphlet, I had not seen the said Advertisement, nor had I the least Notion of its being an inflammatory, seditious Publication, calculated to disturb the Peace of Society, and injure the Roman Catholics of this Kingdom...” It is clear by his own words that Wogan had not seen the pamphlet itself, but was driven by fear of the possible repercussions of its publication, since its seditious and harmful nature was “in which Light it has been since represented to me by several most respectable Roman Catholic Gentlemen, on which I immediately withdrew my Name, and renounced all Concern in a work of such mischeivous Tendency.”⁵²

⁵¹ Curtin, *United Irishmen*, 47.

⁵² *Hibernian Journal, or, Chronicle of Liberty*, No. 138 (November 12-14-1781).

These Catholics were completely unlike the patriots of 1798, Carey later wrote, and equally dissimilar to “the glorious and immortal band” who had signed the American Declaration of Independence in 1776. The “cringing body” who made up the Dublin association called a meeting headed by the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, and by Lord Kenmare. The assembled group, including nearly all of the influential Catholics in Dublin, “to make fair weather with the government, and to clear themselves of any participation in the seditious publication,” decided to offer a reward for the discovery of the *Urgent Necessity*’s author, and even hired lawyers to deal with the case once the author was identified.⁵³

On November 15, 1781, a letter appeared at the top of the front page of the *Dublin Evening Post*, signed by fifty-seven prominent Catholic Dubliners, dated the same day as Wogan’s letter of November 11, and printed above another copy of Wogan’s own disavowal identical to that printed simultaneously in the *Hibernian Journal*. The advertisement for the *Urgent Necessity*, which was “of a very alarming nature,” was, in the view of the clearly worried signatories, “calculated, as we apprehend, by some enemy of the interests of that people.” Perhaps thinking of incidents such as the 1678 Titus Oates incident, a false rumor of a popish plot calculated to bring fame to the ostensible “discoverer,” the Irish Catholics of Dublin were familiar with pretended pro-Catholic publications that were in reality designed to cast suspicion on them. “We, the undernamed Roman Catholics... express our detestation and abhorrence of the disloyal and seditious tendency of said advertisements, it being our most anxious desire to continue and cultivate that harmony and good understanding which happily subsist between us and every denomination of people in this kingdom.” Furthermore, the Catholics promised to aid in the discovery of the pamphlet’s “libellous and inflammatory” author.⁵⁴ A comparison of the list of

⁵³ Carey, *Autobiography*, 5.

⁵⁴ *Dublin Evening Post*, No. 592, Thursday, November 15, 1781.

signatories with the 1780 Dublin City Directory reveals that all of the names for which entries can be found were either professionals (apothecaries), artisans (bakers, chandlers, hosiers), or, as the largest category, merchants, placing them all within the middle and upper-middle class ascendancy of the city.

Mathew Carey's father, having no idea that teenage Mathew had anything to do with the controversial pamphlet, became extremely alarmed upon making the discovery. Christopher Carey, as his son relates, "took measures to have the publication suppressed – and the types of those parts not yet printed off, viz. the preface, introduction, and four pages of peroration, were distributed, and of course, never worked off."⁵⁵ This explains the missing portions from the Library Company copy of the pamphlet. Why was Carey so vague about whether or not any part of the pamphlet was actually printed? No rational explanation is apparent. His lengthy quotations from at least the beginning of the work suggest that he had it at hand when composing his autobiographical sketches, but nowhere does he directly acknowledge that a copy was in his possession, or that any in fact still existed.

Carey, his father, or both of them together proposed to the Catholic Committee in Dublin that any extant material from the pamphlet be burned, upon the condition that any plan to prosecute the printer's apprentice be abandoned. The offer, however, was rejected, and in Carey's words, "a fierce prosecution was determined on." Therefore, Carey was hidden for about four or five days before being put on a packet for Holyhead. In his pocket he had a letter of introduction to a Roman Catholic priest whose name is not recorded. The priest then introduced the young man to Benjamin Franklin – a move which would have extremely important consequences for Carey's subsequent career.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

Franklin was evidently impressed by the young Irishman, whom he put to work in his small printing press in Passy, where he was having his dispatches from America reprinted. After “officiating” in Franklin’s office where, after several months, the American diplomat “not having occasion” for him any longer, he went to work with the famous printer Didot the Younger, who was involved in printing English books.

After a total of twelve months in exile, Carey decided that the storm caused by the *Urgent Necessity* was over, and he returned to his native Dublin. Besides the experience he gained while working at the two printing presses and what he must have learned in the company of Benjamin Franklin, Carey picked up a great deal of political information while in France. During the time he was there, the French were contemplating an invasion of Ireland. The Marquis de Lafayette, who was then in Paris and who according to Carey was likely involved in the planning of the proposed invasion, asked him to “make inquiries on the political state of that country.” But the younger man “was utterly unable to give any information on the subject, as I had lived in a state of total seclusion from public affairs, of which I knew little or nothing.” This seems unlikely, however, as Carey’s writing from the time shows a remarkable familiarity with Irish political events of his day.⁵⁷

During Carey’s yearlong absence from Ireland, the remaining term of his apprenticeship had been bought from the printer McDonnell, presumably by Carey’s father.⁵⁸ Upon his return home, the young man, now in his very early twenties, became “conductor” (editor) of the nationalistic newspaper, the *Freeman’s Journal*, which was later an extremely important organ of the politics of the next few decades, and the most important Irish daily newspaper of the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁸ Carter, *Mathew Carey, Nationalist*, 16.

nineteenth century.⁵⁹ In the interim period, for unknown reasons – perhaps in reaction to the treatment his son had received at the hands of the Catholic Committee - Carey’s father had a change of attitude about his son’s career as a printer. On October 13, 1783, at age twenty-three, Christopher Carey provided his son with the means to establish a new political paper, called the *Volunteer’s Journal*.

In his own opinion, Carey was, at the time of the *Journal*’s establishment, “miserably qualified” for the job, owing to his extreme lack of tact, prudence, and experience with the world. The young editor and publisher had plenty of energy and zeal, and a facility for speedily composing his own material for publication, but that was all. The purpose of the paper was to promote native Irish commerce, industry, and political rights against the “oppositions and encroachment” of Great Britain. The paper reflected the personality of its young, irascible editor, and probably owing to its overtly radical politics and controversial nature, became in a short time the best-selling paper in Dublin, having a circulation wider than any other of the time except the well-established *Evening Post*.⁶⁰

The *Volunteer’s Journal* took its name from the Volunteer movement that had begun in Ireland in the 1770s. This movement, popular in origin, was partially due to the overtaxing of British military resources during the era of the American Revolution. This was especially a problem in Ireland, where no less than four thousand troops had been sent to help deal with the American crisis. Ireland was, therefore, left open to foreign invasion, and as information in Carey’s writings reveals, the British had good reason to fear such attacks at the hands of the French, who had joined forces with the Americans by 1778.

⁵⁹ McCaffrey, *Ireland*, 80.

⁶⁰ Carey, *Autobiography*, 6.

The Volunteers were a civilian army formed in March 1778 in order to fill the vacuum left by the mass departure of British military personnel. The officers of this militia were paid by the government, received commissions from the British Crown, and paraded through the streets of Irish cities dressed in colorful uniforms. At its height the Volunteer army numbered as many as 100,000, and was an immense source of national pride for the Irish. One of its most important features was its ecumenical and democratic character. Made up of both Catholics and Protestants – with a large contingent of Presbyterians – many companies of the Volunteers decided to admit Catholics to their ranks, which was a decision about which the Crown could do nothing, since the movement, though loyal to the Crown and nominally directed by it through appointment of officers, was outside of its control.⁶¹

The Volunteers, in Carey's words, "whose zeal and determined resolution to assert and defend the rights of their country, struck terror into the British Cabinet, and forced the ministry to knock off chains that had bound down the nation for centuries, and blasted the industry, the energies, and manifold blessings bestowed by nature on that highly-favored island." The *Journal*, which had committed itself to, in Carey's words, "fanning the flame of patriotism," could be ignored by the Irish Parliament no longer after an incident that occurred in early April 1784. Carey published and then reprinted two days later a front-page article, complete with a woodcut of John Foster (1740–1828), the ultra-loyalist new Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, being hanged from a gallows set up in front of the Irish Parliament building. The caption read "Thus Perish all *Traitors* to their Country."

Referred to as "the arch traitor, Jacky Finance, whom, amidst the execrations of thousands [was] led to a gallows..." Foster was condemned in the mock story by "an innumerable body of

⁶¹ Thomas Bartlett, Kevin Dawson, and Daire Keough, *The 1798 Rebellion* (Colorado: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1998), 16-21.

starving manufacturers.” Before his execution, “Jacky Finance” declares to the crowd his crimes. “By being long hacknied in the ways of corruption, I became callous to every feeling of humanity. To this must be attributed the opposition I gave to the business of the protecting duties, for which I so deservedly suffer this ignominious death... I die a member of *no* church, and hope for forgiveness from all my enemies, and that my untimely end may be a warning to my brother criminals.”⁶²

Foster, as one of the members of the unofficial “Irish cabinet,” was a politically skilled Protestant with deeply conservative political ideas – highly sympathetic to London’s opposition to any kind of Parliamentary reform, and unfriendly to the idea of increased civil rights for Catholics. The situation of the Irish establishment of the 1770s and 1780s, deeply riven over the idea of toleration for Catholicism, ensured the political stability of Foster and his supporters for some time to come.⁶³

On the day the edition of the *Volunteer’s Journal* containing the reprint of the infamous illustration and text appeared, Wednesday, April 7, 1784, Foster himself introduced a motion into Parliament. As that day’s edition of the *Volunteer’s Journal* itself reported, “Mr. Foster said, that... the inflammatory VOLUNTEERS JOURNAL had republished the *obnoxious* paragraphs, with circumstances that still aggravated the *offence*, if possible, and moved for leave to bring in a bill for SECURING the liberty of the press by RESTRAINING it!” Freedom of the press in British Ireland was more of an ideal than reality, though it seems clear that young Carey was intentionally goading Parliament into pursuing him, perhaps thinking that the time had arrived for a popular confrontation between the newly energized native population and its leadership.

⁶² *Volunteer’s Journal; Or, Irish Herald*. Dublin, Wednesday, April 7, 1784; see also James Green, *Mathew Carey*, 4.

⁶³ Bartlett, Dawson, Keogh, *The 1798 Rebellion*, 24.

The Irish *Parliamentary Register* reported later that the day after the initial publication of Carey's cartoon and commentary skewering John Foster, "an outrageous mob... broke into the House... and behaved riotously and abusively to several of the members." This was mentioned along with the Lord Mayor's report that the Secretary "had information of an intended tumult in the city on that day; and that the Lord Mayor had seen, on Sunday evening last, one of the seditious hand-bills, which were dispersed throughout this city on Monday last."⁶⁴ It seems clear based on the proximity of the reports that there was some connection between Carey's arrest and the threat (which became at least a partial reality, according to the records) of mob activity.

"Mr. Foster," the *Journal* reported in the same edition of April 7, "after some consultation with Mr. prime serjeant, said, he had full and sufficient evidence, that Mr. Matthew Carey was the real proprietor and publisher of the Vol. Journal; he therefore moved, that Mr. Carey should forthwith be brought, IN CUSTODY, of the serjeant at arms to the bar. Motion was carried."⁶⁵

The printing of the cartoon soon became a *cause celebre* in Dublin. Mathew Carey's response to the report that a warrant had been issued for his arrest was to make sure the *Volunteer's Journal* continued to operate, and to retire to his room for a few days, with "a bar across the door." But early one morning he "imprudently" ventured into the newspaper office, and was apprehended by a policeman. After being arraigned, Carey was handed over to the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons, Mr. L'Estrange, who took Carey as prisoner to his own house, where the printer was treated "with considerable rigour." He was not allowed the free use of pen, ink, and paper, or to converse with his friends, and armed guards with "drawn

⁶⁴ *The Parliamentary Register: Or, History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons of Ireland. The First Session of the Fourth Parliament in the Reign of his present Majesty, Which met the 14th of October, 1783, and ended the 14th of May, 1784.* Vol III. Dublin: P. Byrne and W. Porter, 1784, 147-149.

⁶⁵ *Volunteer's Journal*, Dublin, April 7, 1784.

bayonet” stationed inside and outside Carey’s room in the house, along with one outside at the street door.⁶⁶ Mob interference clearly loomed large in the imagination of the Dublin leadership.

Carey complained of this treatment when he was brought before the House of Commons on April 19, but the Sergeant defended his conduct, stating that “from the time of his bringing Mr. Carey home to his house, he was in continual apprehension of his being rescued by a mob; that he considered himself in a very dangerous situation while he had him in his house; as to denying admission to the friends of Mr. Carey, he confessed... that this was on account of the great confusion which the concourse of persons assembled about Mr. Carey, occasioned in his family...” He was, he added, “every moment in apprehension of a mob assembling to rescue Mr. Carey.”⁶⁷

The Sergeant-at-Arms was acquitted of any wrongdoing in his treatment of Carey, and the printer was ordered to be sent to Newgate Prison, where despite his incarcerated state, he enjoyed celebrity status “and lived joyously – companies of gentlemen occasionally dining with me on the choicest luxuries the markets afforded.” Here Carey remained until May 14, 1784, when Parliament adjourned for the year and had no more power of detention. On this date, Carey was “triumphantly liberated” by the Lord Mayor of Dublin. However, the publisher of the *Volunteer’s Journal*, although freed from prison for the moment, was still liable for criminal prosecution for his libel against John Foster. Because of the popular sympathy for Carey’s case, it was obvious that no neutral jury could be procured for the case. As a result, the Attorney General issued a bill against Carey *ex officio*, so that no grand jury would be required in the case.

Fearing almost certain conviction, on September 7, 1784, Mathew Carey, disguised in female dress, sneaked aboard the vessel *America* bound for Philadelphia, where he arrived on

⁶⁶ Carey, *Autobiography*, 7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

November 1, 1784. He had already sold the *Volunteer's Journal* to his brother for five hundred pounds sterling, though he would not see any of the money until after his arrival in the United States. Two or three times government agents came aboard the ship as it sat in the harbor at Dublin, but did not find the printer who was hidden in the bowels of the ship.

Mathew Carey's upbringing and background in Ireland reveal a young man intoxicated by the possibilities that print held to galvanize popular efforts at political reform, and a mind that believed firmly in the Enlightenment concept that reasonably (as well as passionately) argued writing could overcome what he regarded as prejudices fueled by histories written in bad faith and according to old prejudices.

For Carey, history was the battleground upon which the political wars of his time would be fought, and he turned his energies toward recasting the role of Catholics in English and Irish history in order to make his case. Indeed, the Protestant Irish leadership of the 1780s were very much aware that repeal of the Penal Laws, though necessary to mollify many of the currents of unrest in the country at the time, would necessarily undermine any pretext for the continued denial of full civil rights – including the franchise – to Irish Catholics.⁶⁸ *The Urgent Necessity*, examined here for the first time, reveals the specific concerns of interest to the young republican printer, and shows how early he believed that the American and Irish revolutionary causes were similar.

Unlike many French anti-Enlightenment authors who were committed not only to orthodox Roman Catholicism but also to the preservation of the *ancien regime*, as an “enlightened” Catholic, the young Carey formed his positions in the milieu of a traditionally Catholic people – a majority within their own country - who learned to unite with non-Catholics in resisting colonial rule by a Protestant empire. Carey's loyalty to Catholicism was not in conflict with his

⁶⁸ Bartlett, Dawson, Keogh, *The 1798 Rebellion*, 24.

support for interdenominational unity in resisting political oppression, but as was the case for later Irish leaders, a basis upon which to build political unity. The lessons he drew from his Irish background and brief exile in France would inform Carey's subsequent career in the United States, where the public emergence of the Catholic Church coincided almost precisely with Carey's arrival in that new nation.