

Mathew Carey, Ireland and the “Empire for Liberty” in America

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Not for the first time, Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1826 of an American “empire for liberty” which would also be animated by the integrity of its citizens rather than by the hierarchical polities and territorial ambitions of the Old World.¹ The extent to which Americans could eschew any lingering attachments to that abandoned world was a test of their civic virtue and a measure of their worth as the decisive drivers of republican government. This was a particular challenge for immigrants not least because as John Adams put it in 1780, once arrived, they should promote “*our language, our laws, our customs, and [the] humours of our people*”.² To do otherwise would recognise a level of cultural dependence on the Old World which was incompatible with republican virtue.³ It would also indulge the persistence of foreign metropolises, something that was also anathema to “Jefferson’s empire”. Nonetheless, Irish immigrants, especially those who were Catholic, inevitably brought their own particular metropolises as they came to settle their adopted country. One was informed by universal Catholicism, another formed after the Act of Union was passed in 1800 as a result of which “national grievance” in Ireland was focused on London. In America, an “Irish diaspora” gave these metropolises continuing life and energy, especially as increasing numbers

1. Although the term was used in 1780 to refer to the physical expansion of America, it also suggested a particular type of polity. See the following by Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire. The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, 2000), 2, 7 *et passim*, and “‘Empire for Liberty’: Centre and Peripheries in Postcolonial America” in Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy eds., *Negotiated Empire: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500-1800* (New York & London, 2002), 301-29. See also John M. Murrin, “The Jeffersonian Triumph and American Exceptionalism” in *Journal of the Early Republic (JER)* xx (Spring, 2000), 2-3.

2. John Adams to the President of Congress, 29 Jun. 1780, as in Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams* 10 vols. (Boston, 1850-1) vii, 209. The italics are mine.

3. For the concept of virtue, Richard K. Matthews ed., *Virtue, Corruption and Self-Interest. Political Values in the Eighteenth Century* (Bethlehem, Pa., 1994). For a wider discussion, see Daniel T. Rogers, “Republicanism: The Career of a Concept” in *The Journal of American History (JAH)* lxxix (June, 1992), 11-38.

of Irish streamed into the country after 1783.⁴ However, in trying to incorporate universal Catholicism and the continuing “corruption” of the British empire in Ireland into their rhetoric and actions as Americans, many of these immigrants were perceived to put private loyalties before the objective interests of the United States. Influential Irish-born writers such as Mathew Carey (1760-1839) did not agree and in doing so, he was often influenced by what he had experienced in Ireland before sailing for Philadelphia in 1784.

Oligarchy in Ireland: An Explanation

Well before he arrived in America on 1 November 1784, Mathew Carey had become a powerful opponent of “oligarchy” and the political systems which supported and promoted it. It was particularly “wretched” in Ireland, not least because it was defined by religion, what he later called a “Protestant Ascendancy”.⁵ As a Catholic Irishman, Carey could not justify such

4. For Irish immigration into late eighteenth-century Philadelphia, see Maurice J. Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-Invention of America 1760-1800* (Dublin, 2009), 94-139.

5. Mathew Carey, *Sketch of the Irish Penal Code, Entitled “Laws to Prevent the Growth of Popery:” but Really Intended, and with Successful Effect, to Degrade, Debase, and Enslave the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and to Divest them of their Estates* (Philadelphia, 1823), 3-4. For the use and significance of the term “Protestant Ascendancy”, see the debate between W.J. McCormack, James Kelly and Jacqueline Hill as discussed in the following: W.J. McCormick, “Eighteenth-Century Ascendancy: Yeats and the Historians” in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland (ECI)* iv (1989), 159-81 (which also includes a bibliography on the exchange as it stood at that time); James Kelly, “Eighteenth-Century Ascendancy: A Commentary” in *ECI* v (1990), 173-87; and Jacqueline Hill, “The Meaning and Significance of ‘Protestant Ascendancy’, 1787-1840” in Lord Blake (introd.) *Ireland after the Union* (Oxford, 1989), 1-22 where she regards the term as “a slogan to defend the retention of privilege in Protestant hands [and as such] ... a selfish, negative and reactionary concept”, *ibid.*, 2. For the most influential use of the term by Richard Woodward, lord bishop of Cloyne (1781-94) in 1787 in the context of defending the “Protestant interest” from the challenges of the Rightboys as well as more recent reflections, see James Kelly, “Defending the Established Order: Richard Woodward” in James Kelly, John McCafferty and Charles Ivar McGrath, eds., *People, Politics and Power* (Dublin, 2009), 143-74. For the context in which the term appeared, see James Kelly, “Inter-Denominational Relations and Religious Toleration in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland: the ‘Paper War’ of 1786-88” in *ECI* iii (1988) and Maurice J. Bric, “Priests, Parsons and Politics: The Rightboy Protest in County Cork, 1785-1788” in *Past and Present* c (Aug. 1983),

a polity - in natural justice, humanity or historical explanation - especially because the “tyranny” of the Penal Laws was keeping it in place. Neither could he see it encouraging the type of social rapport that was for him a prerequisite for stability and progress. Instead, oligarchy had not only divided “the nation” into mutually antagonistic interests but inflicted “the most deplorable wretchedness and misery” on the country at large.⁶ From this Carey also made a generic point that transcended religion and nationality: that oligarchy in any form was not a template for stability and justice, much less for progress and prosperity.⁷ Although he retained these views throughout his life, they were first expressed in a controversial pamphlet which was printed in Dublin in 1781, *The Urgent Necessity of an Immediate Repeal of the Whole Penal Code Candidly Considered*.⁸

In making his case, Carey argued that while the Reformation was a worthy stand against “outrageous” papal intrusions into civil matters, the irony was that the “galling yoke” of Rome had been replaced by something similar at home. Moreover, as Catholicism came to be associated with disloyalty to the new polity, the estates of its lay leaders were “marked out” for attainder. Carey suggested that while this was understandable where and when such leaders had rebelled against the established state, the procedures of the various “inquisitions” which sat during times of comparative peace were in the words of David Hume, “contrary to the clearest principles of law and natural equity”. As a result, Catholic leaders did not see the law

100-23.

6. Carey, *Sketch of the Irish Penal Code*. 4-5. The reference to the division of “the nation” has been quoted from Edmund Burke in *ibid.*, 4n.

7. For the associated point that it was the Administration rather than the Irish parliament which pushed the repeal of the Penal Laws, see Eamon O’Flaherty, “Ecclesiastical Politics and the Dismantling of the Penal Laws in Ireland, 1774-82” in *Irish Historical Studies (IHS)* xxvi (1988), 33-50.

8. Although acknowledged as the reason for Carey’s temporary exile in Paris (1781-83), the *Urgent Necessity* is usually discussed by reference to the publisher’s advertisement of sale which was circulated in November 1781 (for which, see below). Following the pamphlet’s suppression, it was presumed that while it had been printed, it was never published, distributed or sold. However, an incomplete and somewhat unpolished version of the *Urgent Necessity* has recently come to light in Carey’s book collection which is housed in the Library Company of Philadelphia. I am grateful to Dr. Jim Green for bringing this to my attention and for facilitating access to it.

as a disinterested instrument which would protect their civil and religious rights. Carey wondered how in these circumstances, Ireland's Catholic leaders could be expected to respect a regime which did not even acknowledge them and argued that eventually they became "exasperated" and were "provoked" into rebellion. As such, rebellion was as much a moral as it was a practical imperative:

Irish Catholics ... found themselves entirely deprived of any other alternative, than absolute destruction, or manly resistance. They justly chose the latter: as it's most pernicious consequences could not exceed what they had already suffered, and had ever reason to apprehend, in future, under the sanction of law.⁹

Carey knew that many would not accept his argument. But he also suggested why. "Prejudice" had been nurtured over the years that in religious terms, Catholicism was "ridiculous and contemptible", that in political terms, it had placed itself against Parliament and therefore against the will of the people, and that there were no ends to which it would not go to unravel the reformed state and destroy the new establishment, political as well as religious. According to Carey, rumours of "plots, conspiracies, massacres, &c. &c." had been assiduously circulated to strengthen these biases, keep "the people in a continual alarm" and allege that Catholics could never be loyal citizens, all with the intention of reinforcing the oligarchic character of the Protestant polity. Carey saw it as his duty to question the basis of these prejudices, especially as they had been coloured by the most notorious "Catholic plot" of

9. *Urgent Necessity*, 22, 14, 57, 56. Hume is quoted in *ibid.*, 29. For the "marking" of Irish estates, see Thomas Leland, *The History of Ireland* 3 vols. (London, 1773) iii, 166, as quoted in *ibid.*, 57. Carey's discussion of the inquisitions, especially as managed by Chichester and Strafford, was drawn from Henry Brooke, *Tyrant of the Roman Catholics* (Dublin, 1762). For the inquisitions, see Nicholas P. Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, 2001).

all: the violent and bloody rising of 1641.¹⁰

While Carey's substantial "vindication" of the Catholics of 1641 did not appear until 1819, the *Urgent Necessity* argued in a preliminary way that Ireland's Catholics had been "unjustifiably calumniated" by incomplete and partisan histories such as Sir John Temple's *The Irish Rebellion* (London, 1646).¹¹ However, Carey did not see himself as a Catholic apologist *per se* and "studiously decline[d] every thing which might, in the most distant degree, involve a religious contest". Carey's stated purpose had a wider focus: to censure a historical record which in his view had contaminated the body politic, limited its ability to evolve organically and in harmony, and helped to generate a rationale for the Penal Laws as a "device" to consolidate the Cromwellian and Williamite Settlements.¹² It also obscured what for him

10. *Urgent Necessity*, 27 *et passim*, 14, 17, 48. See also the preface to the first edition of Carey's *Vindiciae Hibernicae* where Carey also claimed that the "falsehood and imposture" of the histories of the 1641 rebellion had led to "the most vulgar and rancorous prejudices" which in turn had led to "the odious code" of the Penal laws and were "made subservient to the sinister purposes of a party or faction ... [by] wicked and profligate men"; *Vindiciae Hibernicae: Or, Ireland Vindicated* (Philadelphia, 1819), ix, 21.

11. *Urgent Necessity*, 58. For the enduring influence of Temple's work on English attitudes to Ireland, especially "at times of crisis" and how it provided much "raw material from which Protestant memories were shaped and reshaped over the generations", see Raymond Gillespie, "Temple's Fate: Reading *The Irish Rebellion* in Late Seventeenth-Century Ireland" in Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer, eds., *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, UK, 2005), 315-33 [316, 333]. For Hume and Leland, see David Berman, "David Hume on the 1641 Rebellion in Ireland" in *Studies* lxxv (1976), 101-112 and Joseph Liechty, "Testing the Depth of Catholic-Protestant Conflict: the Case of Thomas Leland's 'History of Ireland' 1773" in *Archivium Hibernicum* (hereafter *Arch. Hib.*) xlii (1987), 13-28. For a wider analysis, see Jacqueline Hill, "Popery and Protestantism, Civil and Religious Liberty: the Disputed Lessons of Irish History 1690-1812" in *Past and Present* cxviii (1988), 96-129 and Nicholas P. Canny, "The Politics of Irish History and Memory: at Home and Away" (unpublished lecture, University of Notre Dame, 2010). For the ways in which these histories were memorialised (and in some cases rebutted), see T.C. Bernard, "The uses of 23 October 1641 and Irish Protestant Celebrations" in *English Historical Review* lvi, 421 (October 1991), 889-920 and John Patrick Delury, "Ex Conflictu Et Collisione: The Failure of Irish Historiography, 1745 to 1790" in *ECI* xv (2000), 9-37.

12. For a discussion of a somewhat similar purpose to the *Vindiciae Hibernicae*, see Martin

was an even more important point: that the 1641 rebellion had been raised in the name of traditional rights and liberties just as surely as the “Glorious Revolution” had been. In making this case, Carey stressed that Catholics could identify with the ancient English constitution just as readily as anybody else and refused to acknowledge that it should be appropriated by any one type of citizen over another:

I glory in the war of 1641: and hope the day will soon arrive, when all Irishmen will look up, with equal veneration, to its victims, as the English to a Hamden, or a Sidney. They will 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.¹³

Carey’s differentiation between the “papistical” and the “Catholic” was something to which he would return later in his life.¹⁴ For the moment, he observed that the majority of the population in Ireland were estranged from government and the government from them. Catholics were “disaffected” and in Carey’s opinion, they were made to feel so. If this was to be arrested, Carey suggested that Ireland needed a more inclusive polity that would promote “harmony”, mutual respect, toleration as well as a specific encouragement to Irish Catholics to “feel an interest in the state, by a participation in its advantages ... Then, having an equal interest in the constitution, shall they take the usual share in its support”.¹⁵ Such a polity

J. Burke, “The Politics and Poetics of Nationalist Historiography: Mathew Carey and *Vindiciae Hibernicae*” in Joep Leerssen, A.H. van der Weel and Bart Westerweel, eds., *Forging the in Smithy. National Identity and Representation in Anglo-Irish Literary History* (Amsterdam & Atlanta, Ga., 1995), 183-94.

13. *Urgent Necessity*, 10, 64, 56.

14. For a discussion of similar distinctions in Ireland, especially how they were used to block Catholic Emancipation after 1800 and intimidate even liberal Protestants who felt otherwise, see Jacqueline R. Hill, “National Festivals, the State and “Protestant Ascendancy” in Ireland, 1790-1829” in *IHS* xxiv (May, 1984), 38, 42 *et passim*; Hill, “Popery and Protestantism”, 104-7.

15. *Urgent Necessity*, 69, 73. An influential contemporary had already offered similar

would move beyond the narrow culture of seeing people as members of one or other church. However, the Penal Laws were preventing what Carey later termed “an enlarged and liberal spirit of national feeling” whereby Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter could be “amalgamated into one solid mass of friends to their common country”.¹⁶ Thus, while the *Urgent Necessity* was often seen as a tirade against the Protestant Ascendancy and an aggressive plea for Catholicism, in many ways, it was neither. Instead, it confronted an entrenched oligarchy which in Carey’s opinion was preventing all Irishmen - whatever their background - from promoting the common good. Carey’s question in 1781 was whether such a regime was appropriate for the later-eighteenth century. His answer was that it was not.

Such views would bring Carey to challenge Ireland’s Catholic as well as Established leaders and in particular, to question the Catholic Committee’s careful campaign to repeal the Penal Laws by diplomatic and pragmatic engagement with the government.¹⁷ As part of that campaign, Catholic leaders had already “displayed a magnanimity of national character” by supporting Dublin Castle during the Anglo-American War.¹⁸ Shortly after France had declared its support for the American Revolution, bishop Troy of Ossory called on Catholics to “be loyal” while in Athy, Co. Kildare Catholics were exhorted “in the most strenuous manner to observe that faithful and loyal line of conduct, which will render you pleasant to government

advice to “Confer benefits; expect affection; and receive gratitude ... Make people happy; and you will make them loyal”; see Thomas Campbell, *Philosophical Survey of the South of Ireland* (Dublin, 1778), 300. For Leland’s observation that it was “impossible” for Catholics to “remain loyal” during the 1641 rebellion, see Liechty, “Testing the Depth of Catholic/Protestant Conflict”, 21 *et passim*.

16. *Sketch of the Irish Penal Code*, 7.

17. The Catholic Committee had been founded in 1759 to co-ordinate a campaign to repeal the Penal Laws. See Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: the Catholic Question 1690-1830* (Dublin, 1992), 73-5.

18. *Urgent Necessity*, 62. For Carey’s record that this support was of both monetary and strategic value, especially after France allied with the American colonists in March 1778, see *ibid.*, 77. The most comprehensive treatment of Irish reactions to the American Revolution is in Vincent Morley, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-1783* (Cambridge, UK, 2002).

and worthy of its benign attention towards you". However, as the Athy address makes clear, such statements had less to do with the revolution itself than with the need to reassure the government that as a possible French invasion threatened to unseat the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland, the country's Catholic leaders could be trusted in the words of Kilkenny's Catholics, to "conduct ourselves in such a manner, as will fully evince our loyalty to his majesty, and satisfy our fellow Protestant subjects".¹⁹

Such statements also vindicated the spirit of the Test Oath of 1774. This oath repudiated the Stuarts in favour of a "promise to maintain, support, and defend ... the succession of the crown in his majesty's family", accepted that George III was not a "heretic" and that therefore, Catholics could "keep faith" with him.²⁰ Although for Catholic leaders it represented an important departure - in the first case, because it ignored the "broken promises" of the past, in the second because it abandoned traditional loyalties - Carey suggested that the initiative was not being reciprocated by a government which "too well relish[es] the Sweets of your [Catholic] Slavery, to be willing to loose the horrid Fetters" and as a result, "*very few* opulent catholics" had taken it.²¹ For him this was all the more unfortunate because by

19. These quotations have been drawn from Maurice J. Bric, "Ireland, America and the Reassessment of a Special Relationship, 1760-1783" in *ECI* xi (1996), 101. For the boost which the first phase of repeal in 1778 gave to pro-Administration feeling among Irish Catholics, see O'Flaherty, "Ecclesiastical Politics in Ireland", 38.

20. As in Vincent Morley, "Catholic Disaffection and the Oath of Allegiance of 1774" in Kelly, McCafferty and McGrath, eds., *People, Politics and Power*, 123-4. See also Patrick Fagan, *Divided Loyalties: the Question of the Oath for Irish Catholics in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin, 1997).

21. "Advertisement To the Roman Catholics of Ireland" as attached to the *Urgent Necessity*. For Carey's comments on how few took the oath (or were reluctant to do so), see *ibid.*, 89. For the view that the poor take-up on the oath among Catholic leaders is best explained by residual Stuart loyalties, see Morley, "Catholic Disaffection and the Oath of Allegiance of 1774". For Carey's characterisation of a "violation of faith", both before and after the Treaty of Limerick, see *Urgent Necessity.*, 38-42. Carey also argued that if Catholic

enabling Catholics to associate with Hanoverian government, the Test Oath could generate a new type of polity without endangering the essential apparatus of the established state or compromising private religious belief. Indeed, far from accepting that such initiatives could strengthen the government, members of the Administration often regarded them as covert attempts to subvert it.²² As a result, they continued the backward look to justify their polity as well as the exclusive basis on which it had been configured. For many, the survival of the Protestant Ascendancy demanded no less. For Carey, it was clear that as a mode of governance, oligarchy could not be defended any longer. This was in marked contrast with the “liberal conduct” of contemporary Europe which despite being “absolutist” and Catholic for the most part, was abolishing many conventions which had been introduced on the basis of religion. This was “much superior” to what was happening in Ireland with the result that he feared that the historically admired English constitution would be tarnished and with it, the ways in which Britain’s renewed and wider culture of “empire” might be seen.²³

Carey regarded those who did not agree with him as self-interested, self-righteous, or both. For him, his critics were also in effect fomenting a rebellion among a majority of the

leaders had not “foolishly relied on their enemies’ word” at the time, “government would, at this day, probably wear a different aspect”; *ibid.*, 41.

22. For another context for similar worries, see Maurice J. Bric, “The Tithe System in Eighteenth Century Ireland” in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (PRIA)* lxxxviC (1986), 271-88 where Woodward expressed the fear (although not until 1787) that Rightboy protest against tithes had not only the “subversion” of the Church of Ireland in view but that of the state itself: “the [Established] Church ... is so essentially incorporated with the State, that the Subversion of the one must necessarily overthrow the other”; see Richard Woodward, *The Present State of the Church of Ireland* (Dublin, 1787), 6. That the controversy surrounding the Test Oath influenced Carey’s later writings on American Catholicism is clear from his *Calumnies of Verus; Or, Catholics Vindicated, From Certain Old Slanders Lately Revived* (Philadelphia, 1792), as discussed in Michael Steven Carter, “Mathew Carey and the Public Emergence of Catholicism in the Early Republic” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 2006), 211-30.

23. *Urgent Necessity*, 87-8, 63.

people who had “[no]thing to lose, and every thing to gain, by commotion” against “virtual” slavery. The unfolding American Revolution was showing the way forward. As colonial Americans had by then “nearly *emancipated herself* from Slavery”, Carey called on his fellow-Catholics to bring their own “slavery” to an end. In doing so, they would also break the connection with England and thus deprive oligarchy in Ireland of an essential support which it had long abused to “take into their own Hands the executive Part of our Government; and with a dictatorial Power, prescribe Laws to their Fellow-Subjects”. For Carey, the invidiousness of the one had been possible only by the persistent invidiousness of the other. However, as he drew parallels with both the 1630s and the 1770s, not only Dublin Castle but also the Catholic Committee took fright, especially after he poked the elephant in the room:

the very least that can be done ... is to restore them [Catholics] to the state in which their *ancestors* were placed by the Limerick articles ... The present generation of protestants are ... indispensably bound to restore those rights; and thus expiate the injustice of their ancestors.²⁴

Having also “excited” his Catholic readers in the very title of his pamphlet “to a *just Sense* of their civil and religious rights”, Carey implied that if the Penal Laws were not repealed, revolution would follow and that Ireland’s Catholics would undo the Protestant establishment at the earliest opportunity.²⁵ Nothing could have been more unwelcome to the Committee. Whatever its differences with the Administration, it was convinced that they were best solved by rational argument and diplomacy with Dublin Castle rather than by violence or “French intrigue”.²⁶ Far from being “pusillanimous”, as Carey described it, the

24. *Ibid.*, 70, 79; “Advertisement to the Roman Catholics of Ireland”; *Urgent Necessity*, 90-1.

25. “Advertisement to the Roman Catholics of Ireland”; *Dublin Evening Post (DEP)*, 11 Nov. 1781.

26. For the assumption that Irish Catholics were still being unduly influenced by France, see

Committee believed that it was also important to preserve its “natural leadership” from the would-be leaders of popular protest and radical movements. No less than Dublin Castle, it appreciated the potential of these alternative “moral economies” for its own social and political leadership as well as for that of its church.²⁷ As a result, and perhaps not without surprise, after the *Urgent Necessity* was advertised in both the *Dublin Evening Post* and *Faulkner’s Dublin Journal* on 10 November 1781 and promotional handbills “of a still more alarming nature” were circulated in Dublin, nearly sixty Catholic leaders - including Lords Kenmare and Fingal - denounced it as “disloyal and seditious”, resolved to discover and prosecute “the libellous and inflammatory author”, and eventually had the proposed pamphlet suppressed.²⁸ In the event, Carey evaded possible prosecution by fleeing to France where he remained in temporary exile until 1783. As he did so, he realised that oligarchy could operate outside as well as inside the Establishment and that it was not confined to any one church.

Broadening the Polity: A Plea

Carey’s dismay did not diminish after he returned to Dublin. On 13 October 1783 he

Gerard O’Brien, “Francophobia in later Eighteenth-Century Irish History” in Hugh Gough and David Dickson, eds., *Ireland and the French Revolution* (Dublin, 1990), 40-51. For an example how such continuing suspicions were part of contemporary politics, see the (Dublin) *Hibernian Journal*, 10 May 1784 where it was reported that an emergency meeting of “the Select Committee of the Roman Catholics” in Dublin dismissed as “idle” an allegation that Ireland’s Catholics had “invite[d] the natural enemies of the kingdom to invade the land” and that the story was little more than “a paltry trick ... to form idle distinctions ... [and] to review the old English cant of -Protestant interest - and Catholic interest - to divide and destroy”.

27. “Advertisement to the Roman Catholics of Ireland”; “Thomas Bartlett, “An End to Moral Economy? The Irish Militia Disturbances of 1793” in *Past and Present* xcix (May 1983), 41-64; James Kelly, “The Genesis of the ‘Protestant Ascendancy’; the Rightboy Disturbances of the 1780s and their Impact upon Protestant Opinion” in Gerard O’Brien, ed., *Parliament, Politics and People: Essays in Eighteenth-Century Irish History* (Dublin, 1987), 93-127.

28. The advertisements stated that the pamphlet would be published on the following day. For the circulation of handbills, see *DEP*, 15 Nov. 1781. The resolutions of the 57 Catholic leaders is in *ibid.* See also R.D. Edwards, ed., “The Minute-Book of the Catholic Committee, 1773-92” in *Arch.Hib.* ix, 61-3

launched *The Volunteers Journal: Or Irish Herald*

for the great purposes of perpetuating ... Public Spirit ... to point out what further may be necessary to be done for effecting ... the Renovation of our Constitution ... [and] to [promote] the closest bonds of harmony and concord in every denomination of Irishmen.

While the *Journal* left few doubts about Carey's continuing radicalism, it also maintained that the campaign for parliamentary reform should incorporate the arguments of the Catholic Committee to extend the franchise to Catholics. For Carey, the one made no sense without the other. The *Journal* rejected as "absurd the argument, that communicating liberty to our Roman Catholic brethren would be the means of subverting the Protestant government of this country". This was not just a matter of superceding religion as a badge of Irish citizenship. As one of Carey's correspondents put it, it underlined that when Ireland put its "intestine divisions" behind it, "the giant of discord fled before us, and from a nation of slaves we became a dignified people". Division suggested dependency. The opposite - harmony - suggested independence and virtue. To argue otherwise was to continue the "slavery" of Ireland.²⁹

Such attitudes also questioned the integrity of Parliament itself which in the opinion of one of the *Journal's* correspondents in April 1784 had been "reduced ... from being the admiration of the world, to be the contempt of even their own countrymen". This contrasted with its situation in 1780 and 1782 when it had successfully made the case for "free trade" and legislative independence, respectively. However, many reformers believed that Dublin Castle

29. (Dublin) *Volunteers Journal (VJ)*, 25 June 1784; "The True-Born Irishman No. XII" in *VJ*, 1 Dec. 1783; "To the Volunteers of Ireland" in *VJ*, 5 Nov. 1783. For the tensions between these two levels of reform, see James Kelly, "The Parliamentary Reform Movement of the 1780s and the Catholic Question" in *Arch. Hib.* lxxiii (1988), 95-117. For this phase of Carey's career and his commentary on the politics of contemporary Ireland, see Edward C. Carter II, "Mathew Carey in Ireland, 1760-1784" in *The Catholic Historical Review (CHR)* li (Jan., 1966), 515-26.

was trying to row back from these concessions, especially with respect to how they were affecting commercial relationships between Ireland, Britain and the extended empire of which they were all part. For Ireland, Luke Gardiner M.P. proposed that within this wider economic area, Irish manufactures were best nurtured and encouraged by imposing protective duties on British imports. As the effective manager of the Administration's business in the House of Commons, as well as the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, John Foster M.P. opposed these proposals. As James Kelly has observed, his "preference was for the de-regulation of Anglo-Irish trade rather than protectionism, because [he] ... believed that this was the way to foster a community of interests and commercial prosperity". The issue faced its first major hurdle in the House of Commons on 2 April 1784 during which "a mob" invaded the gallery and "harangu[ed] the members" on the need to protect Irish goods from British competition. After the measure was defeated, a "considerable number of ... distressed manufacturers" greeted those 123 M.P.s who had defeated the motion with "hisses, groans, &c."³⁰ On 5 April, the *Journal* reported that the public were so incensed with Foster that he was symbolically "hanged" outside the Houses of Parliament.

The *Journal's* lampoon had included a mock speech from the dock in which Foster supposedly acknowledged his "fraud and corruption ... self-interest ... that virtue was all a cheat and that none but fools and madmen practised it". There was also a small engraving which showed Foster hanging from a noose under the inscription, "Thus Perish all Traitors to their

30. "To the Right Honourable J-hn F-st-r" in VJ, 9 Apr. 1784; James Kelly, *Prelude to Union. Anglo-Irish Politics in the 1780s* (Cork, 1992), 81; VJ, 7 Apr. 1784. For the debate, see *The Parliamentary Register: or, History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons of Ireland* iii (Dublin, 1784), 122-43. For the subsequent debate on "commercial propositions" which were intended to regulate Anglo-Irish trade to their mutual advantage, see Kelly, *Prelude to Union*, 131-87 and A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster. The Politics of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy* (Oxford, 1978), 49-60 et passim.

Country”. When Foster referred to this in the House of Commons, initially on 5 April, he proposed that the *Journal* had “calculated to sow sedition among his Majesty’s subjects, to alienate their minds from his Majesty’s government ... in opposition to the laws of the land”. On the following day, as the man deemed to be “solely responsible” for the offending articles, Carey was ordered to be taken into custody and brought before the bar of the House.³¹

Undaunted by the summons, the *Journal* published two further engravings on 7 April, one depicting Foster’s tarring and feathering, the other showing his body stretched out next to a coffin and over which was the following “motto”,

Behold the fate of the unnatural parricide, the villainous traitor, who having this morning justly suffered the punishment due to his manifold offences against the almost ruined constitution of his much injured country and her sorely distressed artists, was this evening cut down, and now lies under the gibbet without a single hand to lift the hated corpse into its last dreary mansion!³²

For Foster, these libels had gone too far. For Carey however, both the parliamentary debate and his ridicule of Foster were part of two important campaigns. The first of these aimed to re-ignite the non-importation movement which had been so effective in obtaining free trade and which could be used once again to strengthen Irish manufactures. The second

31. *DEP*, 6 Apr. 1784; Brian Inglis, *The Freedom of the Press in Ireland 1784-1841* (London, 1954), 25 *et passim*. For Carey’s account of his detention, including the alleged trespass on both his own personal rights and the wider freedom of the press, see “An Appeal to the Public” in *VJ*, 23 Apr. 1784.

32. Quoted from the *Evening Chronicle* in *VJ*, 7 Apr. 1784. This engraving was re-published in *VJ* together with the “epitaph” of “Jack [Foster] the Bloodsucker” whose “public execution” had been “unanimously demanded” as an “act of justice”. Later on, even after Parliament had deemed Carey guilty of libelling Foster, the *VJ* 26 May 1784 was undaunted and published a lengthy “Epitaph” of “Jack Financier [John Foster the Chancellor of the Exchequer], Who, With inflexible constancy ... Persisted in his country’s ruin ...” Foster was made Chancellor of the Exchequer on 22 Apr. 1784 having chaired the Committee on Ways and Means since 1777.

underlined the importance of a “free press”.³³ Foster’s indictment of Carey was an essential riposte to both as well as a plan to silence one of their leading champions. It had also been influenced if not driven by the determination of Dublin Castle to destroy the *Journal*.³⁴ As a result, for radicals such as Carey, the controversy was not only about the right to criticise a member of the Administration, even in graphic terms. It was also about protecting something which had been

a pillar of strength in the worst of times, against the worst men, and on the most critical occasions and was adorned with public spirit, intrepidity and national honour ... the prop of patriotism, and the bulwark of virtue ... the richest gem in the cap of liberty.³⁵

It was about the right of the citizen to be informed and independent and as a result, to be a man of integrity and virtue.

As Foster presented the “Bill for Securing the Liberty of the Press” (known informally as the Libel Bill) on 8 April 1784, it was clear that he understood the freedom of the press in a different way. He told the House of Commons that in his opinion

the manifest design of that bill was to preserve the liberty of the press by curbing its licentiousness, which of late had grown to such a degree of enormity as to become a national reproach.³⁶

For his opponents, it was “a bill of resentment, not of redress” as well as “a most desperate and violent aim to effect the subversion of the Constitution”.³⁷ However, with its passage and the

33. For the former, see for example the appeal to buy only Irish woollens, and therefore to promote “public spirit” in Ireland in “To the Friends of Protecting Duties” in *VJ*, 16 Apr. 1784.

34. Carter, “Carey in Ireland”, 522.

35. *VJ*, 9 Apr. 1784.

36. (Dublin) *Freeman’s Journal*, 10 Apr. 1784. For the text of the bill, dated 8 April 1784, see *VJ*, 12 Apr. 1784.

37. Quoted in Malcomson, *John Foster*, 49.

earlier rejection of protection duties, the *Journal* concluded that “the patriotic spirit of the nation” had been unable to “withstand the insidious efforts of designing and interested men”. The whole business had revealed a Parliament that was becoming increasingly compromised as well as unable and unwilling to break from its “grievous fetters” and represent “the genuine sentiments of the nation”. It was also allowing “aristocracy” to reassert its influence over it to such an extent that the *Journal* wondered if the cures of 1780 and 1782 might turn out to be worse than the disease. As a result, whatever about the specifics of debates such as that on protection duties, the parliamentary supporters of the Administration had regrouped and not only compromised the independence of the House of Commons but “divid[ed] the nation” in pursuit of their own narrow purposes.³⁸

In the meantime, Carey was arrested, detained and appeared before the Commons on 19 April to answer the charge that being the supposed publisher of *The Volunteers Journal*, he had printed a “malicious, scandalous and seditious libel, tending to excite *rebellion* among the people, and to create a division of this country from Great Britain”.³⁹ Foster left M.P.s in no doubt about his opinion: that Carey “deserved the greatest punishment that could be inflicted on him” and that he should be committed to Newgate to await trial. Although Carey denied the charges - as well as the authority of the Commons to summon him in the first place - for all his protests that his rights were being trampled on by a corrupt place, he soon realised that his altruism was not going to be recognised. He decided to take it with him to America although not before *The Volunteers Journal* published another engraving showing the beheading of

38. *VJ*, 21 May, 5 Apr., 14 June, 12 Apr. 1784.

39. *VJ*, 21 Apr. 1784. On 16 April, in a letter “To the People of Ireland”, the *VJ* offered a “simple narration” of the events surrounding Carey’s indictment. See also *VJ*, 14, 19 Apr. 1784. During all these proceedings, Carey denied that he was the owner of the *Journal* and as such, not responsible for the alleged libel.

Strafford with the notice that

thus may every Tyrant fall, who, despising a much-wronged nation's voice, would, to gratify the inordinate lust for power of a detested faction, trample on a people's rights.⁴⁰

By then, Carey was preparing to flee to Philadelphia. Although debts as well as an uneasy relationship with his father may have also influenced him to leave Ireland, he had concluded that in so far as the impending court case was concerned, a good retreat was better than a bad stand.⁴¹

Ireland in America: An Accommodation

Although the *Urgent Necessity* was written when Carey was only about twenty years old, both it and *The Volunteers Journal* revealed the main themes which would concern his long and varied career in America: opposition to "oligarchy", promoting a fair and responsible system of representation, protectionism, freedom of the press and a celebration of the individual. Now in America, the political complexion of the new republic - and in particular, the adoption of the First Amendment in 1791 - was appealing and congenial.⁴² A transatlantic journey had not changed Carey's views that the ideal polity was where its citizens could work together to secure the interests of the wider community and thereby to promote their own virtue as well as the happiness of the whole. The irony was that they could be challenged from an

40. VJ, 21 Apr., 12 July 1784.

41. Carey's troubled relationship with his father as well as his debts are suggested by various statements that were made in early-1785 by James Dowling who bought the *Volunteer Journal* from Carey in June 1784; see VJ, 21, 24 Jan 1785.

42. Patrick W. Carey, "American Catholics and the First Amendment, 1776-1840" in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (PMHB)* cxiii (July 1989), 323-46. For Carey's career in America, see Edward C. Carter II, "The Political Activities of Mathew Carey, Nationalist, 1760-1814" (Ph.D. dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1962); Earl L. Bradsher, *Mathew Carey, Author and Publisher: A Study in American Literary Development* (New York, 1912); Kenneth W. Rowe, *Mathew Carey: A Study in American Economic Development* (Baltimore, 1933); and Lawrence A. Peskin, *Manufacturing Revolution: The Intellectual Origins of Early American Industry* (Baltimore, 2003).

unlikely source: the increasing number of Irish immigrants who were streaming into Philadelphia after 1783. At issue was the ease with which such immigrants could be absorbed into the new republic. In 1782 Jefferson had suggested that

They [immigrants] will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave, imbibed in their early youth; or, if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness, passing as is usual, from one extreme to another. It will be a miracle were they to stop precisely at the point of temperate liberty ... They will infuse into it [legislation] their spirit, warp and bias its direction, and render it a heterogenous, incoherent, distracted mass.⁴³

A year later, a writer to the (Philadelphia) *General Advertiser* brought many of these reservations together when he wrote that

It would be a difficult matter to convince an unprejudiced mind, that foreigners merit the same degree of public confidence, which is due to the natives of our country ... for if the interest of the country clash with the interest of the country which his private views have called him to, the presumption is that his original prejudices will determine his conduct.

Given that Carey had arrived with a reputation for controversy, some felt that they could apply these caveats to him and he was soon called to account in the columns of Eleazer Oswald's *Independent Gazetteer*. While in part, the Carey-Oswald exchanges between December 1785 and January 1786 were prompted by Carey's decision to establish the *Pennsylvania Evening Herald* on 25 January 1785, they allowed the two editors to discuss the nature and direction of contemporary Pennsylvania. For Oswald and the *Gazetteer*, the state's governing Constitutionalists had discarded the experienced and the "well-born" of a previous generation for their own "mob government" and "offensive *Upstart[s]*". These *arrivistes*

43. Quoted from Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* in Andrew A. Lipscomb, ed., *The Writings of Jefferson* 20 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1903-4) ii, 120-1.

included the more visible “outsiders” of the new republic - the “foreign-born” - and in particular, the “Irish colonels” who were at the core of George Bryan’s leadership. For his part, Carey saw no reason why the “new men” of American politics should not include immigrants whom he believed could in the well-known words of Crèvecoeur, be “melted into a new race of men” and as a result, contribute with honour to the evolution, progress and stability of “the most perfect society now existing in the world”. In Ireland, he had often argued that recognising Catholics as full members of the polity would enhance rather than endanger the polity. With these memories, Carey regarded the Constitutionals as representing the epitome of an inclusive, integrated and thriving polity. For him, they were intent less on replacing one interest by another than on uniting those who had long been “outsider” with those who had long been “in”.⁴⁴

Oswald and Carey aired their differences when they discussed *The Society of the Lately Adopted Sons of Pennsylvania*, a Constitutionalist network most of whose members had been born outside the country. Oswald was particularly critical of the society as a platform for “foreign distinctions” and Tammany-like control over the votes and political behaviour of its members. For Carey, nothing could be further from the truth as the Sons’ preamble of association made clear: “jealousies, engendered by national distinctions ... invariably ... strained the principle of common attachment, which is the firmest support of every country”.⁴⁵

44. Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-Invention of America*, 62 et passim; Joseph S. Foster, *In Pursuit of Liberty. George Bryan and the Revolution of Pennsylvania* (University Park, Pa., 1994), 145. For Bryan’s “Irish colonels”, see Ronald M. Baumann, “The Democratic-Republicans of Philadelphia: the Origins, 1776-1797” (Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1970), 20. Crèvecoeur is quoted from Ronald H. Baylor, *The Columbia Documentary History of Race and Ethnicity in America* (New York, 2004), 130.

45. (Philadelphia) *Independent Gazetteer* (IG), 28 Jan. 1786; *Adopted Sons of Pennsylvania: Principles, Articles and Regulations ... of ...* (Philadelphia, 1786). The Sons are

As he repeated his views, Carey attracted an unfortunate criticism which was both personal and general in nature. Oswald ridiculed Carey's career in Ireland, his disability (he had been lame since a child) and the circumstances in which he had fled Ireland in 1784 (supposedly disguised in women's clothing). Carey gave as good as he got. However, he was less concerned with the debate on the Sons *per se* than with the wider impact of Oswald's invective and in particular, with the suggestion that immigrants were a potential threat to social and political stability. He also rejected the view that by taking part in public life in America, Irish immigrants had "reviled the country that feeds ... [them] instead of treating it with respect". "National reflections", he argued, were "in every case, as *illiberal* as they are *unjust*".⁴⁶ In Ireland Carey had insisted that a united people was essential for progress and prosperity. Now in Philadelphia, he was not going to alter his opinions.

On 18 January 1786, two days after *The Plagi-Scurriliad* was published, Carey faced Oswald in a duel thus bringing this particular dispute to an end. However, the underlying *casus belli* continued to simmer, not least because of the ways in which the new republic was being threatened by the implications of war in Europe. As Irish immigrants became a supposed fifth column for French interests in the United States, the concerns of the 1780s about an "enemy within" were revived during the 1790s. Once again, Carey became a visible target for venting renewed doubts about the loyalty of Irish immigrants and whether or not they could

discussed in greater length in my *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-Invention of America*, 69-77.

46. "A Foreigner" in (Philadelphia) *Pennsylvania Packet* (PP), 2 Dec. 1785; (Philadelphia) *Pennsylvania Evening Herald* (PEH), 25 Jan. 1785. The lowest point in the exchange between the two men occurred after Carey published his 294-line poem, *The Plagi-Scurriliad: A Hudibrastic Poem. Dedicated to Colonel Eleazer Oswald* (Philadelphia, 1786), described by Aneas Lamont as "the most *bitter* thing that has appeared in America"; Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), Lea & Febiger Collection, Incoming Correspondence (1785-96), x Lamont to Carey, 22 Jan. 1786.

be trusted to behave in the best interests of the United States. On this occasion, his principal *bête-noir* was William Cobbett, editor of *Porcupine's Gazette*.⁴⁷

The focus of the Carey-Cobbett exchanges was the *American Society of United Irishmen*, the original of which was founded in Belfast in October 1791. In seeking “a free form of government, and uncontrolled opinion on all subjects”, this society challenged the country’s political leaders to foster a culture of government that would be more accessible to men of all classes and backgrounds. However, its mission was not confined to Ireland and members were asked to pursue “the attainment of LIBERTY AND EQUALITY TO MANKIND, IN WHATEVER NATION I MAY RESIDE”. This was not rhetorical flourish because after the United Irishmen was proscribed in May 1794, some of its more radical leaders emigrated to Philadelphia where, partly because of its all-embracing policies, partly because of its international links, and partly because of its support for Jefferson and those who stood for him in elections, the society became an important addition to the landscape of Philadelphia politics. However, it was one thing to see a society grow out of a reform movement in Ireland and to challenge the *status quo* there. It was another to see it trying to apply its version of reform to the United States. Therefore, Federalist chagrin was to be expected, especially after its American “section” was publicly noticed in Philadelphia in August 1797.⁴⁸

47. For the part of John Ward Fenno, editor of the Federalist-leaning *Gazette of the United States (GUS)* in supporting Cobbett’s arguments, see Bric, *Ireland, Irishmen and the Re-Invention of America*, ch. 5. It should also be noted that Carey was somewhat uncomfortable engaging in these public controversies if only because it highlighted the kind of “factionalism” which he opposed. On 6 Sept. 1796, he wrote to Cobbett that he “regret[ed] exceedingly the introduction of my name into your life”; HSP, Lea & Febiger Collections 1st series, Letterbook iii (1792-7).

48. [William Cobbett], *Detection of a Conspiracy Formed by the United Irishmen, with the*

There was also a wider belief that as a result of their supposed political activities, Philadelphia's Irish immigrants were inherently disruptive and therefore, beyond attaining a "character which ... [they] were never intended for". That the United Irishmen were seen as blindly Francophile, espousing a version of republicanism that in some ways sat uneasily with the growing "cult" of America as well as having "caused" a violent and bloody rebellion in contemporary Ireland also made the argument that these Irishmen were a threat to the political and social order of the United States. Cobbett put it in blunt terms:

I appeal to any man of common sense, whether this infernal combination can possibly have any other object in view than an insurrection against the Government of America.

His belief that

though some traitors have been found amongst them, the *natives* were not so much to be relied on, in the prosecution of any design, evidently hostile to the interests and honour of their country.

emphasised the point. The society and its adherents were "without principles, without country, and without character".⁴⁹ They were also without "patriotism" in that they had put their own "gratification" before the "tranquillity" of government. As they did so, "*American* interests [had been] neglected - and the *American* character degraded".⁵⁰

Such views offended Carey as an Irishman as well as how he understood political

Evident Intention of Aiding the Tyrants of France in Subverting the Government of the United States of America (Philadelphia, 1799), 6. See also Maurice J. Bric, "The United Irishmen, International Republicanism and the Definition of the Polity in the United States of America, 1791-1800" in *PRIA* civ (2004), 81-106.

49. *DEP*, 7 Mar. 1799; *Detection of a Conspiracy Formed by the United Irishmen* in *Porcupine's Works, Containing Various Writings and Selections, Exhibiting a Faithful Picture of the United States of America* 12 vols. (London, 1801) viii, 216, 199, 200. See also James Morton Smith, *Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties* (Ithaca, NY, 1956).

50. The quotations are from Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-Invention of America*, 253-4 and were made in the context of controversy surrounding the two state senate elections in Philadelphia (Oct. 1797-Feb. 1798), for which see *ibid.*, 250-60.

reform: that in broadening the polity, differing opinions should not be taken as a *prima facie* expression of disloyalty. In Ireland in making the case for admitting Catholics to the franchise his *Volunteers Journal* had already made the case that within the enlarged polity that would follow, Catholics would have responsibilities as well as rights.⁵¹ In America it was no different for the foreign-born who were naturalised citizens of the polity there. As a result, at least as Carey saw it, to paint Irish immigrants with the brush of disloyalty, violence, agitated political behaviour and possible revolution revealed an elitism that was no less entrenched than what he had seen in Ireland. In his opinion it was also disingenuous of his critics to raise the “Jacobin phrenzy” as a cloak for their real concerns: the broadening of the polity and its implications for the nature and leadership of the polity as it had existed until then.⁵² For Carey, Irish immigrants were not hiding inside a latter-day Trojan horse to undo the United States. They wanted to strengthen the country, not ruin it. However, the polity had to accommodate them even if in doing so, there were some who continued to believe that such people were incapable of acting in a disinterested way or in the interests of the community as a whole.⁵³

Carey understood that these debates posed particular challenges for Irish immigrants and their networks in Philadelphia. In view of his aversion to clubs and societies, references to his own assumed links with the American Society of United Irishmen were at least ironic.

51. See for example, *VJ*, 16 June 1784.

52. Marshall Smelser, “Jacobin Phrenzy: Federalism and the Menace of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” in *Review of Politics* xiii (1951), 457-82.

53. For Carey’s eloquent confrontation of party-political conflict during the War of 1812, see Edward C. Carter II, “Mathew Carey and ‘The Olive Branch’, 1814-1818” in *PMHB* lxxxix (Oct. 1965), 399-415. By 1819, *The Olive Branch* (Philadelphia, 1814) was in its tenth edition and had sold over 10,000 copies; *ibid.*, 409. For earlier comments on the “disgrace” of “faction and violence”, see under “Faction” in his *The School of Wisdom* (Philadelphia, 1803); see also n.64 below.

While Carey accepted the “sociability” of club culture and its place in urban life, he also believed that however it was explained, it also had obligations to help the less fortunate and thus to promote their independence, the *sine qua non* of the virtuous citizen. Little wonder that some seven years after arriving in Philadelphia, he helped to establish the *Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland*, of which he became foundation secretary (1790-91, 1796-1800). Carey’s private papers reflect his active engagement with the Hibernians, from helping Irish immigrants to find lodgings and employment to assisting those who had fallen on hard times. As a result,

emigrants have been not only rendered more happy in their situations, but more useful members in society ... and consequently the temptations to wander from the paths of rectitude diminished.⁵⁴

However, for all his humanitarianism, Carey was careful not to present the society as one which would be defined by the circumstances and issues of contemporary Ireland, even on St. Patrick’s Day. In Ireland, he had been appalled how “anniversary-preachers” had sometimes allowed their rhetoric to get the better of common sense with the result that festive occasions had often constituted a “most formidable [threat] to the interests of harmony” by repeating a “long catalogue of causes of discord” to an unsuspecting audience.⁵⁵ Perhaps under his

54. See HSP, Lea & Febiger Collection, Incoming Correspondence (1785-96); *PP*, 3 Mar. 1790. For a detailed history, see John H. Campbell, *The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and the Hibernian Society of Philadelphia, 1771-1892* (Philadelphia, 1892). For the wider importance of such societies, see Albrecht Koschnik, “*Let a Common Interest Bind us Together*”: *Associations, Partisanship, and Culture in Philadelphia, 1775-1840* (Charlottesville and London, 2007) and Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-Invention of America*, 151-62. See also Lance Banning, “Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation” in *JAH* lx (June 1973), for a critique of the use of benevolence as a means of “social control” and establishing such organisations as “the moral arbiters of American society”, 23-41 [23].

55. *Urgent Necessity*, 21. For this point, see also *Vindiciae Hibernicae*, 22 and Hill,

influence, Carey's Hibernians offered toasts that were relatively low key and cautious in how (if at all) they recognised the issues of the day in Ireland and America. In any event, Carey saw such them as as a complement to what some historians have marked as an emerging "cult" of America which in many ways, completed the inclusive Patriotism of his early years.⁵⁶ To present them otherwise was to encourage the kind of division that in his view, warped virtue and demoralised the polity.

Carey also believed that the toasts and orations that were made on such occasions should be complemented by fostering an informed and therefore an honourable and virtuous citizenry.⁵⁷ For these reasons he had championed the liberty of the press in Ireland. Shortly after he arrived in America, Carey also "pour[ed] out incessant execrations" against the attempts which were being made in Massachusetts at the time to curb the press there and warned that "should any wretch pollute the air with such a proposal" in Pennsylvania, the "plagues of Pharaoh" would await him.⁵⁸ Carey's belief in an informed citizenry led him to establish influential periodicals such as the *Columbian Magazine* (1786) and *The American Museum* (1787) the second of which was described by George Washington on 25 June 1788 as

easy vehicles of knowledge more happily calculated than any other to preserve the liberty, stimulate the industry, and meliorate the morals of an enlightened and free

"National Festivals, the State and 'Protestant Ascendancy' in Ireland", 38, 42 *et passim*, and "The Disputed Lessons of Irish History", 104-7.

56. See David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes. The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill & London, 1997).

57. See Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People. The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America 1650-1870* (Chapel Hill & London, 1996). For Carey's career as a publisher, see James N. Green, *Mathew Carey, Publisher and Patriot* (Philadelphia, 1995) and William Clarkin, *Mathew Carey: A Bibliography of His Publications* (New York, 1984). For Carey's belief in the importance of reading for personal development, as evidenced by his membership of library societies in Dublin, see Carter, "Political Activities", 71.

58. Urgent Necessity, 14; PEH, 3 Aug. 1785.

people.⁵⁹

Similarly, as he published the Douai Bible, Carey stressed to his fellow-Catholics that without “the books of their religion ... they must be in a great measure ignorant not only of their religious principles, but even of the moral duties”.⁶⁰ Such concerns also led him to ensure that those of his fellow-countrymen who chose to emigrate from Ireland would be fully informed before they left as well as fully aware of their responsibilities to the wider community once they arrived in America.

Carey’s writings on emigration underlined these points and why they were important. In his *Reflections on the Subject of Emigration from Europe* (1826), Carey argued that while America might be perceived as an “asylum”, this did not mean that emigration was suitable for everyone.⁶¹ In making this case, he was trying to ensure that for those who left, emigration would not be a burden on their adopted country or on themselves. If this happened, it would compromise public virtue and encourage a culture of dependency which as Jefferson had noted

59. Washington to Carey as published in *Magnolia; or Southern Monthly* (Sept. 1841), 416.

60. Quoted from an address “To the Roman Catholics of America” (15 Aug. 1789) in Michael S. Carter, “‘Under the Benign Sun of Toleration’: Mathew Carey, the Douai Bible, and Catholic Print Culture, 1789-1791” in *Journal of the Early Republic (JER)* xxvii (Fall 2007), 459-60 [465-6]. For these reasons, Carey also believed that if his publishing ventures failed, it would be “hurtful to the community at large”; quoted in *ibid.*, 467. In urging “the Protestants of the United States” to buy his bible, Carey stressed that by doing so, they would demonstrate “that they are superior to that wretched - that contemptible prejudice, which confines its benevolence within the narrow pale of one religious denomination, as is the case with of bigots of every persuasion”; quoted from an address “To the Protestants of the United States” in *ibid.*, 459-60.

61. Mathew Carey, *Reflections on the Subject of Emigration from Europe, with a View to Settlement in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1826), x, iii, 20-7. Carey indicated that this pamphlet was “chiefly intended” for England and Ireland; *ibid.*, xi. For his advocacy that “a suitable agent” should be sent to Ireland “with an authenticated statement of the situation of this country”, see his “Emigration from Ireland, and Immigration into the United States” (1828) in Mathew Carey, *Miscellaneous Essays* 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1830, republished in New York, nd), i 321.

in his *Notes on Virginia*, “begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition”.⁶² Thus, what America offered was not a mere list of “opportunities” or indeed, an open “asylum for the oppressed of all nations”. It was “advantageous” only where immigrants could become independent and were prepared to work hard in order to do so. In this regard, Carey’s views were little different from those of Benjamin Franklin whom he quoted with admiration:

Dr. Franklin truly stated that ‘this was a country of labour’. And it has undergone no alteration since the days of that illustrious philosopher ... let me repeat in the most forceful language ... that no man ought, on any account whatever, to cross the Atlantic to settle in the United States, unless he be seriously disposed to industry and economy.

Those who were either unable or unwilling to work should stay where they were, if only because such people could not promote the type of industry which defined virtue and led to freedom. In 1787, Franklin had observed that “only a virtuous people are capable of freedom”. If virtue was impossible without independence and independence without industry, then indiscriminate emigration to America was not “sound” even in a nation that could “so advantageously receive” labour from Europe.⁶³ It would create a culture of distress and as a result, compromise the ability of the polity to integrate its diverse parts into a harmonious unit.

62. Quoted from *Notes on the State of Virginia* in Edmund S. Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox” in *JAH* lix (Jun. 1972), 9. However, as Morgan noted, Jefferson also suggested that artificers had the capacity to be industrious and thus, to be independent and free. If they were denied that opportunity, they would become “the instruments by which the liberties of a country are generally overturned”; quoted of Jefferson in *ibid.*, 9. As a result, the wider responsibilities of more settled citizens were clear.

63. *Reflections*, x, iii, ix, x, iv. Franklin is quoted in Drew R. McCoy, “Benjamin Franklin’s Vision of a Republican Political Economy for America” in *WMQ* xxxc (Oct. 1978), 606. For the importance of “well rewarded” labour in advancing “the best state of society”, see also Carey’s “Emigration from Ireland, and Immigration into the United States” in *Miscellaneous Essays*, 321. See also Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Williamsburg, 1980).

For not dissimilar reasons, Carey continued his benevolent activities into the nineteenth century.⁶⁴

Carey's *Reflections* were published at a time when the campaign to repeal the Penal Laws was entering its final phase. However, unlike the original Catholic Committee, Daniel O'Connell's Catholic Association of the 1820s appealed for American support as it made its final drive towards Catholic Emancipation. In 1828, when the Philadelphia chapter of the *Friends of Ireland* was established, Carey was the obvious choice as its president. However, this acknowledged Carey's status as a person who was interested in Catholic Emancipation as an issue of human rights rather than as a man who wanted to reconnect with the politics of Ireland, even if it was where Carey had been born. When the Friends met in Philadelphia to celebrate O'Connell's success, their resolutions saluted Irish Catholics on their "success in the establishment of their rights as British subjects". However, they also recognised those Protestants who had backed the passage of the relevant legislation and applauded them for their "liberality and philanthropy".⁶⁵ Two years later, as the Friends reorganised, again under Carey's presidency, they stressed the need for the "combined efforts" of Protestant, Presbyterian and Catholic to achieve the repeal of the union: "be united in feeling, in sentiment,

64. For Carey's involvement in the *Society for Establishing Sunday Schools* (1791), infant schools (1827) and "public charities" in general, see Carter, "Under the Benign Sun of Toleration", 465, and Carey, *Miscellaneous Essays*. In particular, Carey's *Essays on the Public Charities of Philadelphia* (1828) spell out his views on the moral benefit of promoting benevolence among "the poor". For similar reflections, see under "benevolence" in his *The School of Wisdom*, an anthology which he "intended principally for youth" to encourage "a respect and reverence for the forms of government under which we live"; *ibid.*, 51, iii.

65. *United States Catholic Miscellany (USCM)*, 30 May 1829. See also Thomas F. Moriarty, "The Irish American Response to Catholic Emancipation" in *The Catholic Historical Review* lxxvi (July 1980), 353-73.

and sympathy, and you will infallibly regain the legislative liberties of your country".⁶⁶

In some ways, these resolutions suggested that Carey had not travelled very far from the *Urgent Necessity*. As Catholics pushed for the right to sit in Parliament, they implied that in doing so they were no less virtuous than anybody else nor the polity more so for the concession. Just as in 1818, Daniel O'Connell would make a distinction between being Catholic and Popish, so did Carey differentiate between Catholicism as a structure and as a religion. Indeed, it was the relative privacy of both that had enabled religious liberty to have such "a benign effect" in America and to sustain "more truly religious persons" than anywhere in contemporary Europe.⁶⁷ What had made this possible was the focus on the congregation over the hierarchy, and the hierarchy over Rome. But then, as Carey wrote in 1821, "a different order ... prevails in this country". Writing about Irish priests, he added that all

too frequently the relations between the pastor and his flock partake of the nature of extravagantly high toned authority on the one side and servile submission on the other ... this [American] people will never submit to the regime in civil or ecclesiastical affairs that prevails in Europe ... The extreme freedom of our civil institutions has produced a corresponding independent spirit respecting church affairs ... which it would be a manifest impropriety to despise or attempt to control by harsh or violent measures ... an overweening idea of the extent of episcopal authority is not suited to this meridian.⁶⁸

66. *The (Philadelphia) Irish Shield* 15 Apr. 1831. For Carey's characteristic interest in contemporary Greece and his central role in establishing a committee of assistance, see his "The Case for the Greeks Stated" (7 Dec. 1826) and "To the Citizens of Philadelphia" (1 Mar. 1827) in *Miscellaneous Essays*, 297-300.

67. *Reflections*, 17.

68. Quoted from Mathew Carey, Address to the Rt Rev Bishop Conwell and the Members of St. Mary's Congregation (14 February 1821) in Jay P. Dolan, "The Search for an American Catholicism" in *CHR* lxxxii no.2 (Apr. 1996), 175. For "lay trusteeism" an aspect of this, see the perceptive article by Patrick W. Carey, "Republicanism within American Catholicism, 1785-1860" in *JER* iii (Winter 1983), 413-37. For wider context, see Dale B. Light, *Rome and the New Republic. Conflict and Community in Philadelphia Catholicism between the Revolution and the Civil War* (South Bend, Ind., 1996).

These comments were offered in the context of the bitter dispute between the Derry-born bishop Henry Conwell (1819-26) and the lay trustees at St. Mary's Church and underlined Carey's support for what Dale Light has described as the congregation's "rhetoric of dissent and forms of expression based on the principles of popular sovereignty". When in 1826 Conwell agreed to allow the trustees a veto over his appointments, Rome refused to support him and instead, installed the Dublin-born Francis Kenrick as coadjutor (1830-42). Kenrick not only faced down the trustees but in Edith Jeffrey's words, introduced "a degree of central control previously unknown" in the diocese.⁶⁹ Moreover, seeing no reason why Catholicism had "to adapt to its American context", his episcopacy highlighted what was to be enduring tensions within American Catholicism between "traditional" and more "modern" modes of authority.⁷⁰ Carey's attitudes were clear from the start.⁷¹ He not only championed the majority of the congregation at St. Mary's but criticised those Catholic priests who did not embrace the more flexible polity within which all citizens, whether Catholic or not, existed in America.⁷² When his comments attracted the hostile attentions of the *Society of Irish Orange Men*, he appealed to his critics to "preach harmony, kind feelings, and good will to all men" and to

his fellow citizens at large, of every denomination and description ... to inculcate the divine doctrine of mutual forgiveness and forgetfulness of the crimes of ages of barbarous ignorance, insatiate rapacity, blind bigotry, infuriated fanaticism, and bloodthirsty cruelty.⁷³

69. Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 103; Edith Jeffrey, "Reform, Renewal, and Vindication: Irish Immigrants and the Catholic Total Abstinence Movement in Antebellum Philadelphia" in *PMHB* cxii (July 1988), 415.

70. Richard A. Warren, "Displaced 'Pan-Americans' and the Transformation of the Catholic Church in Philadelphia, 1789-1850" in *PMHB* cxxviii (Oct. 2004), 357; Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1992).

71. For "a respectable and numerous meeting" of the congregation at St. Mary's church in Apr. 1827 which agreed resolutions critical of then bishop (Conwell) for forwarding to Rome, see *USCM*, 19 May 1827. The meeting had been chaired by Carey.

72. Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 105-6, 108-9 *et passim*.

73. Quoted in Light, *Rome and the New Republic*, 217. For the publications and other ways in which those who were "fanning the embers of religious bigotry and intolerance"; *ibid.*, 217-9, 385-6.

In doing so, Carey underlined that for all the prejudices that had existed with respect to Catholicism, the origins of which he had put so carefully in both the *Urgent Necessity* and *Vindiciae Hiberniae*, American Catholics stressed their prior loyalty to the American republic over anything or anybody else. To the extent that they functioned as a body corporate, they were a “National American Church with liberties consonant to the spirit to the spirit of government under which they live”.⁷⁴ In this, Carey also reflected the thoughts of his friend and contemporary, bishop John England of Charleston (1820-42) that Catholicism was not incompatible with American republicanism.⁷⁵ On 14 May 1841, in an “Address on American Citizenship”, England was to argue that a republic

becomes the vision of an idle dream, if the people become corrupt ... it cannot subsist where there is no virtue ... the permanence and prosperity of our institutions can be secured only by each individual’s exercising his political rights according to his conscience, and not from interested private views.⁷⁶

74. Quoted of Dr. Matthew Driscoll in a letter to bishop Maréchal of Baltimore, 15 Dec. 1817, in Carey, “Republicanism within American Catholicism”, 417. For the economic corollary, see the resolutions of “The Friends of American Industry” (Philadelphia, 25 Sept. 1831) to promote the “National Interest” by encouraging “American Industry” as in *Hazard’s Register of Pennsylvania*, 1 Oct. 1831. Carey acted as vice-president of this meeting. For an earlier “Tribute of Gratitude to Mathew Carey, Esquire, In approbation of his Writings on Political Economy. Presented by *Some of the Friends of National Industry*” in April 1821, see *Niles’ Weekly Register*, 28 July 1828.

75. For this point, see Carey, “Republicanism within American Catholicism” and *An Immigrant Bishop: John England’s Adaption of Irish Catholicism to American Republicanism* (Yonkers, NY, 1982); and Daniel F. Kearns, “Bishop John England and the Possibilities of Catholic Republicanism” in *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* cii (Jan., 2001), 47-67. For the ways in which the realities of American politics influenced England in this regard, see R. Frank Saunders and George A. Rogers, “Bishop John England of Charleston: Catholic Spokesman and Southern Intellectual, 1820-1842” in *JER* xiii (Autumn, 1993), 301-22. For Carey’s argument that religious liberty should not be confined and thus extended to Jews, see Carey, “American Catholics and the First Amendment”, 330. For an interesting commentary on the evolution of a “lay Catholic republicanism” in contemporary France, see Suzanne Desan, *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France* (Ithaca, NY, 1990).

76. Quoted in Kearns, “Bishop John England”, 53, 54. For similar views of 8 Jan. 1826 when he became the first Irishman who had not been elected to that body to address Congress,

That same year, in a eulogy which he delivered after the death of President Harrison, England also cited the need for toleration as the true test of republicanism, observing that departing from it “may cause political principles to be blended with religious distinction, and then we have at once a union of church and state, the antagonist of civil liberty”, a point which he had also made in his address to Congress on 8 January 1826. It could have been Carey speaking in 1781.

Conclusion

Throughout his life, Mathew Carey saw himself as a radical in the sense that he wanted to broaden the established polity. Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, he believed that it was only through reform that the essential structures of society and politics could reassure their integrity as the managers of the body politic. This was an obvious challenge for leaders in place not least because it confronted their sense of themselves as an elite. However, when Carey suggested that rebellion would follow if they did not respond, he found himself being criticised from all sides, Catholic as well as Protestant. This left him with an abiding opposition to oligarchy the preservation of which had in his opinion been responsible for so much personal harassment in Ireland. Nonetheless, while Carey never abandoned these views, neither did he stop believing that a wider polity was essential towards social harmony and productivity. In doing so, he also stressed that Catholics who would be emancipated into such a polity had clear responsibilities while both they and the Establishment should also put the prejudices of the past behind them as well as debate their present in a more objective public

see “Address before Congress” in Sebastian G. Messmer, ed. *Works of the Right Reverend John England, First Bishop of Charleston* 7 vols. (Cleveland, 1908), vii, 35.

sphere. As such, the successes of the campaign to repeal the Penal Laws were not about marking mere achievement. They were about marking loyalty and the concern of Ireland's Catholics to reinforce the state by accommodating themselves into it, not dismantling and then reconstituting it.

For Carey, the point was especially important for the place of the Catholic Church not so much because it was the obvious "outsider" in his Ireland but because its reconciliation with those who had been the "insiders" for several generations challenged all sides to rise above their respective histories towards the common platform of Irishmen. Almost as soon as he landed in Philadelphia he made similar arguments about moving towards a more inclusive "American character". However, in asking people to move beyond their respective pasts, he was also asking them to promote a polity which should include people of different backgrounds. Similar challenges had faced those who had fashioned the "Protestant Ascendancy" in Ireland as well as the Catholic Committee which made the case to supercede it.

Carey had seen how these debates had turned in Ireland and remained influenced by them. Little wonder that when he died in 1839, he was remembered as an "esteemed philanthropist" who had celebrated the essentials of Jefferson's "empire for liberty".⁷⁷ As Edward Carter concluded, Carey "was never a doctrinaire party man".

Always the nationalist, he refused to sanction any group, section, or theory that threatened the nation's unity ... [he] disapproved of voting the Hibernians as a unit ... [and] he desired that minority group to become American in all ways.⁷⁸

To this extent, he represented a type of Ireland in America that was not an unquestioning and

77. Niles National Register, 21 Sept. 1839. The reference to "the empire for liberty" was not included in the newspaper report.

78. Carter II, "The Political Activities of Mathew Carey", 268, 264, 271.

unquestioned appendage of Ireland, no more than his American Catholicism was an unquestioning and unquestioned appendage of Rome. He represented the culture of eighteenth-century radicalism and its commitment to a new type of empire for which in an age of reinvented empires in the Old World, Jefferson had given new meanings.